

**WHY THE CENTER – PERIPHERY DIVIDE  
MAKES NO SENSE: MODERNITY AS A TRAVELING  
SPHERE OF OPTIONS**

Theory has an undetermined nature, which cannot be exclusively traced back to its eclectic origins. It is true that this type of humanistic knowledge and discourse rose at the intersection of two quite opposite processes. On the one hand, there was the steady tendency of transforming the traditional literary culture into a plausible form of empiricism, largely compatible with the norms of scientific research in general, for which “theory” would mean the systematic organization of carefully collected facts. Whether this implies stylistic “deviations” identifiable at all linguistic levels (as is the case with the line of evolution inaugurated by the Formalists – e.g. Jakobson 2007), or socio-cultural (i)regularities associated with concepts such as the frames of mind (as practiced, for instance, by cultural materialists and their followers – e.g. Williams 2000, Gallagher & Greenblatt 2000), is rather immaterial to the purpose of my present argument.

On the other hand, and in a deeply opposite manner, the appeal of theory lies in its tendency of detaching itself from the hegemony of empiricism and preserving the glorious heritage of intellectual speculation. This side of its genealogy pledges no allegiance to the standards and procedures of hard science, and plays instead on the autonomy of the humanities and on their right to produce a form of knowledge derived not from an accountable correspondence with a given state of fact, but from the pure play of our intellectual faculties. This perspective articulates pursuits as different as the free exercise of intuition, the delightful liberty of thought and expression, inherited from Montaigne’s essays (Fumaroli 1994, Burnyeat 1983, van der Zande & Popkin 1998), and the passion for worldmaking of a tradition best symbolized by Hegelian dialectics (Bloom 1959, Sontheimer 1976, Compagnon 1998).

This contradictory origin, pointing out to divided loyalties, could satisfactorily explain the “gender psychology” of theory. Precisely, the tensional lack of closure of its gender-identity. Which suggests the oscillation between impressive upsurges of creative energy and a radical lack of self-trust associated with the self-diagnosed cultural disease that brought the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the moniker “age of nervousness” or “anxiety” (Gay 1984: 3, 71-108, Pietikäine 2007: 1-8, Tone 2008: 1-27).

The mythology of the debilitating effect of civilization over the vitality of modern man generated, as it is well-known, not only diverse walks of artistic

expression usually compacted under the notion of *Decadence*, but also different and quite influential theories on society and consciousness. It is not without cause that some of the doctrines that presided over the birth of the notion of theory, like Nietzscheanism and Freudianism, became culturally influential precisely in the said “age of nervousness” (Schrift 1990: 77-94). That would partially explain why theory preserved the vibration and self-styling of this “nervousness” up to our times.

This would also add to the epistemological nexus of self-doubt I initially exposed, a different angle on the inner tensions of theory – having to do with psychological identity conflicts or with the mythologized confrontation between “reflexive intellect” and “vital instinct”. On the same line, it could be speculated that the periodically renewed interest of theory in different stages and species of Marxism has to do with an equally recurrent anxiety of the intellectuals over their social status – an anxiety originated in the wake of the 1900s, but continually modulated, according to new historical contexts (Hofstadter 1963).

This profusion of inner tensions and conflicts, and their free interplay or hybridizing, could offer a comforting explanation for the undetermined and “nervous” nature of the discipline of Theory.

However, in the following I will take a different interpretive path – one that, in my view, is more encompassing, not only because of its explanatory power, but also because it can approach theory in a less Euro- or West-centric manner.

I will try to derive Theory’s rhetoric and sensitivity hinting to perpetual inquisitiveness from an understanding of modernity that admits contradiction and paradox in its very core, making them a “natural” part of its very condition.

What I will attempt in the next section of the present paper is to de-define modernity – as a preliminary step to offering a comprehensive explanation, aspiring at global validity, for the very condition of un- or rather de-definiteness of Theory itself.

#### *The de-definition of modernity: a happy disillusionment*

The dominant representation of modernity is based on a number of premises that not only underlie the public (i.e. political, social, cultural) discourse, but are usually reproduced also by thinkers that claim to challenging the stereotypic vision of the matter.

The main such premise, and the seminal one, since all the others seem to derive in some measure from it, is that modernity is a *project*. Which implies a high level of consistency between all the restructuring programs and processes supposed to constitute its substance. That is to say that rational bureaucracy and managerialism, rule of law, science and technology, secularization are spontaneously naturally consistent between themselves. Which means that modernity could be described, in terms that have been used for describing Talcott

Parsons's sociological vision, as "a coherent, unitary, uniform, and worthwhile whole" (Gilman 2003: 75).

This vision of convergence implies with necessity an understanding of human society within which the economic, social, cultural, political spheres are constituted around a common kernel of basic rules.

A second principle that allows for a unified notion of modernity is that its project is not only coherent in itself, but that it is self-consciously devised, assumed and promoted by its agents: modernization is the process of gradually turning the project into a real-life functioning society.

Finally, given the alleged self-evidence and intrinsic rationality of modernity as a model and a system of values, it should be assumed that whatever obstruction occurs in the way of its global expansion, it should be seen as the reaction of local concretions of irrationally-held attitudes and beliefs.

It is essential for the progression of my argument to prove that all these three premises are essentially utopian and hardly tenable. In the following sections I will consider and reject them one by one.

*Modernity is not a coherent project:*

Even if modernity is construed as a whole by different trends of doctrinaire thinking, this thesis is at odds with a massive corpus of empirical evidence. It is true that criticism has been addressed to the "unfinished project of modernity" (Habermas 1997), but, in spite of the intuitive reading of this formulation, which would imply that the very concept of modernity is fraught with inconsistency, the actual crux of such criticism is the alleged gap between the mental, i.e. inherently projective, dimension of modernity, and the dimensions of its actual political and social reality.

But the criticism of the coherence tenet should go much deeper. What interests the present line of argument is that *ab initio* modernity holds a bundle of seminal inner incongruities, which go far beyond the pale of the economically ridden Marxian vision of "structural" contradictions. But they also differ from the diagnosis of self-contradiction held in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectics of Enlightenment* (1969), which implies that every revolutionary and progressive step made by an indefinite force akin to the Hegelian Spirit of History is followed by the pressure of contrary reactionary forces for a step backwards.

The type of contradictions that I have in mind cannot be reduce to the rather elementary progress-reaction dialectics, but have to do with value oppositions to be found at the very core of what came to be called the "great transformation" (Polanyi 1985). It has been repeatedly noted that the apparent coherence and convergence expressed by the revolutionary arch-slogan *Liberté-Egalité-Fraternité* actually pointed to lines of acute tension that constantly threaten to dismember the project of modernization. Revolutionary enthusiasm massively downplayed the

autonomy of the values thus proclaimed, but wishful thinking was never able to eradicate actual aspirational and axiological incompatibilities. Most specifically, the idea that the goods of liberty and equality can be pursued concomitantly has been notoriously and eloquently rejected (Berlin 1979).

But liberty versus equality is just one of the contradictions growing among equally modern values and aspirations (Bell 1976). An extended (though open-ended) account of those should necessarily include: personal responsibility versus communalism; national versus democratic solidarity; cooperation versus competition; innovation versus conservation; historical teleology versus historical skepticism; moral absolutism versus moral relativism; foundational values versus reasoned consensus; institutional secularization versus intellectual secularization; innovative and visionary passion versus finely tuned skeptical prudence.

Obviously they are still to be counted, but the above list might suffice to make the point essential for the present demonstration: that in spite of the momentary outbursts of passion of different types of progressive elites self-styled as carriers of the spirit of history, modernity, in all its regional or local guises, does not function as a regulatory matrix, but rather discloses a field of open-ended doubts and questions.

A concentration of this evolution, a real cultural gem reflecting/ anticipating a global process in a highly suggestive local occurrence, is the Renaissance. Contrary to what is commonly thought, and even to how its very agents thought of their experience, what really happened in this crucial epoch was not the unearthing of a wholesome intellectual Antiquity. Instead, the explorations of the pioneers of modernization reactivated a complex network of cognitive and moral debates between the Platonists, the stoics, the epicureans, the skeptics.

*Modernity as agency is self-styled rather than self-aware:*

What the underdeveloped should really hold against the already developed is not that the latter perniciously obscure their recipe for social peace and economic plenty, but that they cannot spare the more unfortunate nations the shock and trauma they themselves went through in the course of their modernization. The fact is that the developed countries have been in the business of confronting radical ambiguity long enough in order to have reached different forms of social equilibrium, but not long enough to be able to extract from their trial and error credible rules for a painless economic and social development.

There are international institutions, basically funded by the developed countries, which have acquired some experience in limiting the inefficiency of economic or social policies of underdeveloped countries, or in dealing with humanitarian crises in those parts of the world where extreme poverty meets extreme violence. But very few has been, and probably could be done in helping the nations newly absorbed in the whirl of modernization to face philosophical and

religious pluralism, secularization, the *Entzauberung* of the world, and all the opportunities and risks inherent to an environment characterized by high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity.

Such traumatic experiences are not essentially different from those made by the developed countries in their early and not so early modernization. The core cultures of the Western world reached a satisfying balance between different goals or philosophical goods (political, intellectual, economic, and judicial freedom), but there is no consensus among scholars and educators with respect to the presumable chain of decisions that generated those enviable results.

It is relevant that the most comprehensive descriptions of the emergence of the West describe it as the non-intentional, non-personal outcome of a large interplay of factors. This being a tenet common to different schools of thought, from hard-line (Wallerstein 1989) to sophisticated (Luhmann 1995) system theoreticians, to analysts of discourse (Foucault 1975), to advocates of emergence (Hayek 1988), or genuine explorers of complexity (Elias 1987).

*Modernity cannot be coherently opposed to Tradition:*

Since contemporary academia witnesses an ongoing debate over the Western civilizational take-off, with corresponding contentious opinions on how this rare combination of prosperity and liberty could be preserved and expanded (McCloskey 2010, Morris 2010, Ferguson 2011, Kenny 2013), the outsiders or late-comers to the process of modernization should have grown by now painfully aware of the fact that there is no easy way of replicating this success story. The main reason being that the *raisonneurs* of Western development do not really have a story, definitely not one with a credible epic closure. In other words, the present winners of the global civilizational contest do not really know what brought them in poll position.

This view of the matter, once accepted as plausible, leads with the force of logical necessity from approaching the problem of globalizing modernization to acknowledging the globalization of the problem of modernization. And further on, to a critical assessment of the stereotypical representation of a global “battle of the giants” between Old and New.

The setbacks or utter failures in the modernization programs in different parts of the world are frequently seen as bad chemistry developed between a rationalized institutional framework and the substance of a given cultural heritage, wrought by pre-modern attitudes and mores (Harrison & Huntington 2000). But this is by far not the only problem weighing over non-Western modernizations. Every serious analyst of such processes has to consider the quintessential indefiniteness of the modernization process itself. As already stated, it is in the nature of modernization to activate opposing social tendencies and, at the same time, to make opposing values and motivations meet in one and the same consciousness.

Actually, the polemical field generated by the “great transformation” does not simply displace, but more often than not refashions, reactivates or simulate competing or conflicting tendencies existing in the cultural underlayer.

The famous late 17<sup>th</sup> century quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns samples in a highly symbolic manner the above assumption because it anticipates cultural and political polemics that erupted in various parts of the world over the coming centuries. At the surface, the stakes that mobilized the two camps opposing within the French Academy were essentially of a literary and artistic nature, with the Moderns cast in the role of forefathers of the subsequent European inclination for breaking rhetorical and moral canons. In fact, it is surprising to note that in France, as well in the other cultural areas where the debate gradually spread, such as Augustan England or *Sturm und Drang* Germany, the authors most daring in point of shaking the literary decorum actually sided with the Ancients. They exalted the Greek and Latin aesthetical systems of checks and balances as an expression of noble containment of the vital energies, opposed to the self-proclaimed formal excellence of the Moderns, accused (in a vein that we came to associate with Jean-Jacques Rousseau but that expressed a much wider state of mind), of being a transparent guise for intellectual sterility (Levine 1991, DeJean 1997).

On the political side, the paradox seems even greater, since the conservative, past-oriented Ancients tackled such matters, theoretically overcome by the “revolution” of times, as republican political order, while the Moderns were praising the absolute monarchy (Norman 2011: 89-98, Kitromilides 2013: 156-174).

Such reversed connections can be retrieved to the apparent paradox that as an ideology “conservatism” is, beyond any doubt, a direct product of modernity (Kirk 2001, Rudolph & Hoeber Rudolph 1967). The tide of rationalization did not promote by itself a compact philosophy, but rather offered instruments for the full-fledged manifestation of world-views and life-styles whose inherent differences lay latent up to that moment in the intricateness of premodern cultural systems. A process which is at least partly explained by the theory of “reflexive modernity”, which places the weight of the profound transformation of Western societies on the social obligation of arguing and explaining one’s stands on life and society (Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994).

#### *Uncertainty as Grand Equalizer:*

In the preface to the 1965 edition of his 1955 *Beyond Culture*, Lionel Trilling wrote:

One cannot be aware of the large sub-culture (as we have learned to call it) of youth, of those characteristics that are shared by the young of many lands, without giving credence to the supposition that a world-view continuity of cultures tends to come into being and that it is possible to make predictions about it.

If such predictions can be made at all, even those that seem to be based on that “very narrow class” to which my fluctuating “we” has sometimes referred may have at

least a tentative validity. The class of New York intellectuals is not remarkable for what it originates [...]. yet as a group it is busy and vivacious about ideas and, even more, about attitudes. Its assiduity constitutes an authority.

The structure of our society is such that a class of this kind is bound by organic filaments to groups less culturally fluent which are susceptible to its influence. The great communications industries do not exactly rely for their content and methods upon the class of New York intellectuals, yet journalism and television show its effects. At least one of the ways in which the theater and the cinema prosper is by suiting the taste which this "narrow class" has evolved. And between this small class and an analogous class in, say, Nigeria, there is pretty sure to be a natural understanding (Trilling 1965, x-xi).

Trilling perceived the importance of a state of mind that, for previous phases of globalization, was still called "the spirit of the age". The Romanian interbellum literary critic and (in an intimate symbiosis closely reminding of Trilling's own ambivalence) social thinker Eugen Lovinescu explicitly used the Latin concept of *saeculum* as a premise of his theory of "synchronicity". This was an attempt to conceptualize the ideological atmospherics and the transnational psyche that brought, since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, liberal-democratic revolutions to the Romanian lands (Lovinescu 1997, Ersoy, Górný & Kechriotis 2010: 40-47).

Witnessing a later wave of democratization, the one of the 1950s and 1960s, Trilling was equally aware of the fact that in spite of its global scope, this movement was promoted by rather small intellectual groupings scattered all over the world which shared a common sense of adversity towards the otherwise very different traditions in which they emerged:

Yet around the adversary culture there has formed what I have called a class. If I am right in identifying it in this way, then we can say of it, as we say of any other class, that it has developed characteristic habitual responses to the stimuli of its environment. It is not without power, and we can say of it, as we can say of any other class with a degree of power, that it seeks to aggrandize and perpetuate itself (Trilling xv).

The vision of the famous liberal critic clearly exposes the tenet that modernization is a consistent global process set in motion by a coherent global actor – a network of dissenting intellectuals. What I want to question in this model is not, as it usually is the case, the existence of a global sensitivity, but rather the grounds on which such a grand scale spontaneous adjustment could be premised. Writing on (and in the midst of) moments of impetuous belief in change, Lovinescu and Trilling could not escape the illusion that various movements that seemed to convene around the globe were inspired by a consistent program. The same powerful impression was generated by the evolutions that brought the fall of Communism (Tismăneanu 1993) or, more recently, by the so-called Arab Spring (Ahmari & Weddady 2012). But once the initial enthusiasm loses momentum, a whole range of differences become more and more obvious, until the image of the revolutionary unity is completely replaced by that of a spectrum of options, beliefs and preferences.

On the above grounds, I think the vision of the globalized adversary culture could be amended on at least one major point. The analogies in ideology or behavior of different emancipation processes around the world are not justified primarily by a common cause. This may well exist with respect to certain forms of global activism (even if, in such cases, the difference between the global agenda and the rather regional participation, i.e. restricted to radical elites of the developed countries, will always be an issue – Krastev 2014). But as far as the larger picture is concerned, it is not determination, but doubt that is common to different modernizing processes (or, more precisely: to the patterns of thought and behavior of the main agents implied, often in a competitive manner, in different modernization processes round the globe).

The condition of uncertainty, of having to manage a whole field of interpretive options, is what underlies even some of the most aggressive radical ideologies.

Different “objectual-semantic horizons” (Bakhtin 1981: 201) configured according to different social and cultural collective experiences become equally close to or remote from the structural indefiniteness and from the core open questions described above. In other words the order instituted between the agents implied in the modernization process is given not by their position with respect to an *Idealtypus* (Weber 1988), but by their distribution in a problematic field.

Rather than a global network transmitting messages of change from a given center of command, or a spontaneous and unaware rhizomatic cooperation, the global perspective on modernization could be better represented as a community of doubt, as an expanding, or more precisely a traveling sphere of interrelated moral and intellectual options.

#### *Theory as Politics of Cultural Disquiet:*

The vision of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2003) morally equalized by the powerful existential impact of a common core of theoretical interrogations brings us to reconsider a well-established conceptual distinction, the one opposing doctrinaire discourses of *engagement* to objective and analytical approaches of modernization processes.

The mid-level between implication and detachment can be approximated by the concept of “adaptation”. Understanding your (cultural, social, political) environment, negotiating an acceptable version of “reality”, finding a moral balance with your fellows or with yourself – all these are situations which also imply a reflexive, theoretical involvement (to a measure that makes the two aspects, “active” and “passive”, almost undistinguishable from each other).

Therefore I will take the step of assuming that emergence of theory and its global diffusion is an expression of a specific adaptive behavior. Regular social adaptation implies a dynamic orientation accounting for oscillating environmental factors and for the risks and opportunities deriving from their perpetual interplay.



The practice of theory is the equivalent of social adaptation in the world of mental experiments and states of consciousness. Theory has to face turbulences that are not external, but have to do with states of inner insecurity, which mobilize and match, in various forms, not only different rhetorical registers and devices, but also different kinds of intelligence, or paths of cognition (different, for instance, in point of building concepts and articulating judgments).

More often than not theory isn't a discourse on method. It is rather an adaptive response made necessary once the fundamental incongruences of modernity have been deeply internalized. The condition of German intellectuals facing the aftermath of World War II has been described with the phrase "politics of cultural despair" (Stern 1961). In order to accommodate a much larger spectrum of historical, actual, but also potential responses to the theoretical conundrums of modernity, the phrase should be adapted to "politics of cultural disquiet".

Where disquiet should count as a continuous effort of self-exploration, self-justification, and self-approximation. The politics of cultural disquiet mean, in fact, the politics of living with disquiet and adapting to uncertainty, weather that would imply theoretical efforts of *purging* or *managing* anxiety.

This "continuous aspect" of theoretical disquiet resounds, on the one hand, with the experience of cultural displacement expressed in the concept of "homeless mind" (Berger, Berger & Kellner 1973), but also with more auspicious concepts such as "philosophy as a way of life" (Hadot 1999), or "passionate life" (Solomon 1999).

With respect to the localization of theory, the de- and re-definition that I propose has, first of all, a significant consequence on the division center-periphery. Since modernity is not seen as a mother of invention, but rather as a source of presumably unsurpassable uncertainty and disquiet, the difference between its original/ central promoters and late/ marginal third parties tends to become immaterial.

Given the nature of the modernity conundrum, the "center" stands no better chances than any other imaginable location in solving it. Of course, centrality brings and will continue to bring huge advantages in point of symbolic capital. But as far as the chances of standing up to the quintessential provocation of modernity, i.e. converting the negativity of uncertainty into complex forms of thought and expression, and transmogrifying vibrant doubt into creative energy, the center is in no way susceptible of any significant advantage.

It could even be argued that a technically peripheral location in the world community of theory-producers holds a couple of less obvious, but palpable advantages that are worth mentioning.

A "marginal" can simultaneously relate to arguments and argumentative cultures developed by major schools of thought and intellectual traditions which, given their path-dependent self-centeredness, will tend to indefinitely ignore each other.

“Marginality” has the possibility to displace and remix historical time. The belated reception of canonical stations of modernization such as Renaissance, Classicism, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Modernism creates in the intellectual perception of the “marginals” a natural heterocronicity, a simultaneity which seems impossible in the cultures where these trends originated. Heterocronic contiguity generates interesting hybrids in point of artistic forms, but also of private or public mores, or theory for that matter.

Similarly to the manner in which the capacity of poetic imagination has been credited with the capacity to discover and develop promising forms of expression that have been abandoned by cultural evolution (Eliot 1998), a non-Western secretor of theory can connect to lines of thought or action that the Center abandoned or sees as being part of a merely ornamental heritage.

But the most important of the mixed blessings bestowed on peripheral theoreticians is the impossibility of eluding their condition of complexity and ambiguity. This has to be acknowledged from the very beginning, and is inescapably present in both the premises and conclusions of all their intellectual undertakings.

This apparently uncomfortable awareness creates a significant competitive advantage, because the theoretical representative of the periphery enjoys – very much in the line of Montesquieu’s Persian traveler – the privilege of reminding his peers from developed countries and pioneering societies that they cannot escape confronting, on a very intimate and personal level, indeterminacy, unpredictability and doubt. A reminder also meant to help its addressees overcome their self-satisfaction, not necessarily by criticizing Western modernity from the point of view of cultural Otherness, but by pointing back to what modernity essentially is: a bundle of intense conceptual oppositions generating a tensional field of options.

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MODERNITY AS A TRAVELING SPHERE OF OPTIONS  
(Abstract)

There are two dominant explanations for the global reach of modernization processes. On the one hand, we have the representation of a vast network of mainly economic interests, centered in the highly developed Western world that gradually covers the whole planet. On the other hand, the global span of modernization is seen as the gradual imitation and internalization by marginal cultures and civilizations of a consistent system of emancipatory values that emerged in Western Europe and North America. Even if severely opposed, these two doctrines share an essential assumption: modernity and modernization derive from a set of positive, non-conflictual beliefs. But modernity can be understood, in complete opposition to „consistency-theories“, as a social and cultural process which essentially expands at a global scale the intellectual contradictions of modernity: liberty versus equality, responsibility versus solidarity, cooperation versus competition, innovation versus conservation, historical teleology versus historical skepticism, moral absolutism versus moral relativism. At the same time, modernity is the process of elaborating ways of coping with structural social and cognitive indetermination, and the virtual sphere that contains all possible patterns of response. Once we re-draw the picture of modernity as a global process along these lines, the distinction center-periphery, at least for intellectual processes, loses much of its grip. My main argument is that irrespective of its place of insertion in a presumed hierarchical network of civilizational influences, the theoretical mind is confronted with, and responsible for, finding plausible, even if vulnerable and transitory answers to essentially the same cognitive and ethical conundrums.

*Keywords:* multiple modernities, cultural disquiet, homeless mind, adaptation, philosophy as a way of life.

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DE CE ESTE ABSURDĂ DIVIZIUNEA CENTRU – PERIFERIE:  
MODERNITATEA CA SFERĂ MIGRATOARE DE OPȚIUNI

(Rezumat)

Există două explicații principale pentru accesul global la procesele de modernizare. Pe de o parte, avem reprezentarea unei rețele vaste de interese, predominant economice, cu centrul în lumea occidentală foarte dezvoltată, care tinde să acopere treptat întreaga planetă. Pe de altă parte, anvergura globală a modernizării este privită de către culturile și civilizațiile marginale ca imitație progresivă și internalizare a unui sistem consistent de valori emancipative apărute în Europa Occidentală și în America de Nord. Deși aflate într-o opoziție flagrantă, aceste două doctrine împărtășesc o presuposiție esențială: modernitatea și modernizarea derivă dintr-un set de convingeri pozitive, nonconflictuale. Dar modernitatea poate fi înțeleasă, în deplin dezacord cu „teoriile consistenței”, ca proces social și cultural care în principal extinde la scară globală contradicțiile intelectuale ale modernității: libertate versus egalitate, responsabilitate versus solidaritate, cooperare versus competiție, inovație versus conservare, teleologie istorică versus scepticism istoric, absolutism moral versus relativism moral. În același timp, modernitatea reprezintă procesul elaborării de metode pentru confruntarea cu indeterminismul structural social și cognitiv, precum și sfera virtuală ce conține toate modelele de răspuns posibile. Odată ce refacem desenul modernității de-a lungul acestor linii, distincția centru-periferie, cel puțin în procesele intelectuale, își pierde în mare parte ponderea. Principalul meu argument este acela că, indiferent de locul inserției sale într-o presupusă rețea ierarhică de influențe civilizaționale, gândirea teoretică are atribuția esențială de a găsi răspunsuri plauzibile, chiar dacă vulnerabile și efemere, la aceleași dileme cognitive și etice.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* modernități multiple, neliniște culturală, gândire fără adăpost, adaptare, filosofia ca mod de viață.