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Modernity and Indigenous Modernity

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The Concept and Definition of Modernity

Modernity is a mode of life that takes science and technology as the basis for understanding the world and, combining capital and the state, objectifies and efficiently manages nature and humanity.

Weber's Theory of Rationalization

Weber defined modernity as the 'rationalization of the entire society' and subdivided it as follows:

- Rational capitalism
- Rational legal-administrative systems (the rule-of-law state)
- Rational social differentiation

Main features of modernity

- A worldview dominated by reason and science
- Grounded in the principle of rationality and scientific evidence
- The establishment of a human-centered value system
- The pursuit of the absoluteness and universality of truth

The Achievements and Limits of Modernity

Achievements of Modernity

- Material abundance: realizing material abundance like the emperors of the past.
- Extended lifespan: average life expectancy extended from 30 to 80 years.
- Overcoming nature: liberation from the material terror of nature and starvation.
- Rational systems: the establishment of rational institutions such as the rule-of-law state and democracy.

"In the history of human evolution spanning over a million years, the modern era has proceeded brought humanity for the first time, freed humanity from the material terror of nature and starvation... and let ordinary citizens of enjoyment, in a postwar world like the postwar of the past."

The Limits and Crises of Modernity

- Excess of desire: problems arising from "unbridled desire."
- Globalized crisis: threats to human survival such as climate change and nuclear threats.
- The paradox of rationality: rationality itself brings about irrational situations.
- Human alienation: the alienation of humans subordinated to science, technology, and capital.

"Modernity has proceeded brought humanity for the first time, freed humanity from the material terror of nature and starvation... and let ordinary citizens of enjoyment, in a postwar world like the postwar of the past, a critique of modernity, has become greatly popular."

Medieval–Modern–Postmodern Comparison

	Medieval	Modern (modernity)	Postmodern (post-modernity)
Superstructure	God-centered	Human-centered	Ecological paradigm
Divinity / Authority	Rule of the sacred (神聖)	The principles of reason and rationality	Deconstruction of reason-centrism
View of truth	God is truth	The absoluteness and universality of truth	The relativity and unknowability of truth
Science	Superstition and magic	Science	The indeterminacy of (scientific) truth
View of art	The Good (善), or God (神), is beauty (美)	The secularization and self-purposiveness of art	The heterogeneity (異種性), hybridity (混種性), and deconstruction of art
View of the subject	A self subordinated to God	The subject	Intersubjectivity
Worldview	The space of life	Reality	Simulation
Center	Roman and Sinocentrism	Eurocentrism	Globalization and localization
Medium of communication	The script of the center	The script of the nation	Image
Social system	Feudal system · pre-industrial society	Capitalist industrial society	Late-capitalist post-industrial society

Based on the content of Document <Table 1>, an overview of medieval, modern, and postmodern.

Multiple Modernities and Alternative Modernity

Multiple Modernities (Multiple Modernity)

- Modernity is not a product of the West alone but manifests in diverse forms across each region and civilization.
- Systematized in the 1998 'early modernities' special issue of the journal *Daedalus*.
- Contributions by comparative-historical sociologists such as Eisenstadt, Wittrock, and Amazon.

Characteristics of Alternative Modernity

- Raised across diverse fields such as cultural theory, literary-political criticism, and anthropology.
- An attempt to overcome the rationalist limits of Western modernity.
- The consilience (統攝) model — shifting the boundary between the sacred (聖) and the profane (俗).
- 'Consilience 1': the sacred (聖) subsumes the profane (俗).
- 'Consilience 2': the profane (俗) subsumes the sacred (聖).

Multilayered Modernities

Stages in the development of modernity:

- Proto-modernity (proto modernity) — before Western modernity
- Western modernity
- Colonizing–colonized modernity
- Global modernity — the present

"The fetishism of European modernity is a major obstacle to building an alternative modernity today."

Examples of alternative modernity

- The Neo-Confucianism-based modern development of China's Song dynasty
- the modernity theory of Japan's Kyoto School (京都學派)
- Korea's Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought

The Eastern Origins of Western Modernity

According to recent research, it is being revealed that many concepts of Western modernity were influenced by or borrowed from Eastern thought.

Key figures in East-West exchange and their influence on modern Western thought

Matteo Ricci (1552-1610): the figure who moved the East's gods of Confucian classics into Latin and transmitting them to Europe.

Rousseau (1712-1778): of the Day of the West (National Right) was influenced by concepts then being studied in China.

Voltaire (1694-1778): captivated by Chinese thought, he presented the Confucian moral philosophy.

Adam Smith (1723-1790): system of suggestions for Europe and the 'invisible hand' was also conceived and developed from Eastern thought.

The East's influence on Western modernity

- The European "China craze" during the Enlightenment — Confucian thought offered an alternative to a Europe fractured by wars of religion
- meritocratic institutions such as the civil-service examination — a model of social order centered on ability rather than status
- a secularized rational tradition — the question posed to Europe by a moral Chinese society without religion.
- The West's evaluation of the East as pre-modern began in the process of justifying colonial rule.

The Concept of Indigenous Modernity

Indigenous modernity (Indigenous Modernity) is the concept that there was modernity within our tradition, and that, in relation to Western modernity, there was a modernity that drew on our own tradition.

Characteristics of Indigenous Modernity

- Developing from within tradition rather than imitating the West.
- Simultaneously embodying the characteristics of both modernity and post-modernity.
- Constructing the modern and the post-modern in compressed form.
- Emphasizing correlative thought and Liminality.
- Drawing on the "thought of the outside" beyond the West.

Examples of Indigenous Modernity

Donghak Thought: the immanent-transcendence thought that "the principle of the universe is furnished within the body, so the will of the people is the mind of Heaven."

Daesoon Thought: the modernity concept of Haewon-sangsaeng, synthesizing Eastern and Western thought, foreseeing the crisis of human extinction.

The Kyoto School and Wang Hui: Japan's and China's attempts at indigenous modernity.

"The indigenous modernity appearing in regions outside the West may be more suitable as an alternative modernity than the post-modernity sought within the West."

Donghak Thought and Indigenous Modernity

Donghak is a thought founded by Choe Je-u in the late Joseon period; based on the idea that "the principle of the universe is furnished within the body, so the will of the people is the mind of Heaven," it represents the East's indigenous modernity.

Characteristics of correlative thought · The philosophical significance of Donghak

- The first appearance of the concept of the nation-state
- The realization of the East's immanence thought
- The manifestation of Korea's indigenous modernity
- Not a mere resistance movement but a philosophical and civilizational innovation
- Emphasis on holistic, generative logic
- Contrast with Western analytical thought
- Grounded in the ethics of collectivism and empathy
- Transformation through Liminality (crossing the boundary)

Characteristics of Donghak's modernity

Unlike Western modernity, Donghak is a modernity that arose indigenously from within tradition, possessing the characteristics of both Western modernity and post-modernity. It presents a distinctive model of modernity formed within Korea's historical and cultural context.

Conclusion and Implications

The Contemporary Significance of Indigenous Modernity

In a situation of civilizational crisis brought about by Western-centered modernity, the indigenous modernity presented by Donghak and Daesoon Thought can be an original contribution of Korean thought and an alternative for resolving global problems.

Key implications

- 1 Redefining the concept of modernity: going beyond the Western-centered concept of modernity to reinterpret modernity from an integrated Eastern-Western perspective.
- 2 The value of correlative thought: moving beyond analytical thinking to a static holistic and relational mode of thought.
- 3 Consilience of the sacred (聖) and the profane (俗): presenting social and cultural solutions that bridge the divide between secularization and religionization.
- 4 The fusion of East and West in civilization: the potential for the creative fusion of Eastern and Western thought presented by Donghak and Daesoon Thought.
- 5 This static holistic and relational mode of thought: a national vision of reconciliation and harmony beyond conflict and confrontation.
- 6 Further cultural solutions: establishing the balance between application and world-historical position of indigenous modernity.

"The indigenous modernity presented by Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought must be re-evaluated as an alternative civilizational model that, going beyond the limits of Western-centered modernity, integrates the strengths of Eastern and Western thought."