

# Boundaries of Modernity: History—Nature— Society—The World

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“Crossing the line, reaching point zero, *divides* the performance in two parts; only the middle has been reached instead of the end. Definitive security regarding the end is still very remote. And that is precisely why hope is still possible.”

Ernst Jünger, *Across the Line*

“Modernity” is a concept, which, in the contexts of various studies and analyses, is related to the era in European history that began with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and extends to this very day. In discussions about modernity, its beginnings have been pushed back to a much earlier time and also there is no consensus regarding the stages and chronology of modernity. As any philosophical and historical category, “modernity” reflects the efforts to find orientation in history, legitimize (or, just the opposite, criticize) certain novelties and construct social political discourse. Yet the dense pile of research by historians, idea researchers, philosophers, and others about the time since the French Revolution not only testifies to the feverish interest of this era in itself but also about the era as a self-reflective problem whose solutions imply decisions regarding how the era would proceed.

From the very beginning of the era, a constant battle has raged over both its legitimacy and continuation. There has also been continual talk (and with particular intensity at some stages) of the end of modernity and “leaving” or “exiting from” modernity. In the 1980s, Jürgen Habermas criticized the predictions of and wishes for leaving modernity when, in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, he argued with Arnold Gehlen and protested against the diagnosis prepared by “neoconservatism”, i.e. that modernity might be buried in a system of “concrete” economy, state, technology and science, which can no longer be influenced and behind whose monolith walls cultural entropy reigns, and that it could be thus “crystalized” and exhausted of its potential (Habermas 1993: 11).<sup>1</sup> Habermas himself wished the modernity project to continue and hoped that the resources of a fully understood rationality, emancipated from its deficient forms by way of self-criticism, had not been exhausted

1 This diagnosis was put forward by Gehlen in one of his most influential works *Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter* (Gehlen 1957), which was published in Ernesto Grassi’s *Rowohlts deutsche Enzyklopädie*—the series of books which reflected the philosophical and social-political discussion that was taking place at that time in West Germany (Morat 2009: 321).

or “crystalized”.<sup>2</sup> This hope, however, ran against the fact that from the very start modernity has possessed a very self-critically ambivalent (even up to its self-reversal) recessive trajectory and that there has never been just a project of “one” modernity. “Modernity” has existed and continues to exist as a conflict between several parallel “modernities”, a battle for the future through visions of modernity.

Still, even the very different modernity projects share some features and trajectories of self-criticism in common. In this article I provide four sketches of the perspective of self-criticism by and recession of modernity. Four discourses for grasping modernity as a project are presented, involving both getting over and continuing it. These approaches reveal the aporia that modernity (and approaches themselves as self-critical continuations of modernity) possesses.

This article aims to show versions of modernity, in each of which the protagonists realize the aporia of their projects and, by resolving it, face the temptations of “leaving modernity”. To this end, four versions of modernity or four modernity discourses are sketched out within the framework of the article. The sketches of these four versions turn first, in the medium of history, to romanticism; second, in the medium of nature, to cultural criticism; third, in the social and technological medium, to the theory of the dictatorship of secondary systems (which is topical to this day, despite having been conceived in the middle of the 20th century, for such are its fixed social systemic phenomena); and fourth, in the medium of the relationship with reality, to the Frankfurt school of criticism and third generation ideas after Habermas. These four attempts at grasping, critiquing, and continuing modernity are not uniform: (1) from its very beginnings, romanticism is not ideologically homogeneous and in the 19th century evolves in different directions and on different levels; (2) the stream of cultural criticism is sufficiently ideologically homogeneous, albeit very politically bipolar and containing radical expressions of the critique of modernity and the modern era, but also—in following the leftist, liberal, conservative, and right-leaning political and social views—possessing a wide range of modernity continuation offers; (3) the perspective of secondary systems theory, and (4) the perspective of the third generation of the Frankfurt school which is likewise bipolar, the leftism of the Frankfurtian modernity as an incomplete project and the pessimistic rightwing tendencies of Hans Freyer entail in fact looking in opposite directions, undoubtedly *united* by the diagnosis of modernity (alienation, technique, governance, anonymity, mass culture).

In the perspectives of these four sketches of self-understanding, self-criticism, and self-perpetuation of modernity, outside the political and social programs and tendencies, I have tried to look into the aporias and battles of modernity to whose ambivalence the protagonists of the sketches testify—i.e. to look into the “face of modernity” (without reducing and improving its features). To the sketches of the aporias of modernity I have dedicated the four sections of this article, in which the aporias have been revealed, taking as their point of departure one concept (history, nature, society, the world, respectively).

- 2 Habermas expands on his idea and provides it with theoretical support in close connection with his “theory of communicative action” and texts from the 1990s on democracy, justice, the fate of European philosophy and the social sciences, etc.

## 1. History: from past myths to fighting for the future

In 1798, one of the leaders of romanticism, Friedrich Schlegel, published fragments in the first volume of *Atheneum*, among which there was this statement: “A historian is a prophet looking backwards” (fragment No. 80) (Schlegel, Schlegel 1984: 69). This was not just a description of a researcher or interpreter of the past (i.e. historian). It involved the relationship between time dimensions: the past in these words is closely tied to the future: someone is predicting the future here while looking at the past. Instead of the present, it is the past that gives meaning to the future. Which past is meant? Is it the past of the “facts” of history: a historian describing the past “the way it was”, as later formulated by the historian Leopold von Ranke (v. Ranke 1877: VII)?<sup>3</sup> Would the past “facts” diligently described by a selfless researcher of history really tell us anything about the future (moreover, provide it with sense and direction)? If we are to believe the old adage that history is the teacher of life (*historia magistra vitae*), it could lead to the conclusion that knowledge of the past would prevent past mistakes from being repeated in the future. Yet it is probably clear that it is not a moral lesson that someone learns (or fails to learn) in investigating and evaluating the past that is of concern to Schlegel in the *Atheneum* fragment. Along with young people from his generation, he has trustingly (and daringly) walked out to the edge of the much wider ocean of time and ventured into it. Instead of morals, it is the beautiful and the noble that accompany him on his journey. The attractions and dangers felt in childhood tales and dreams stare at him also from history: poetic images from myths, legends, and stories wander the borderline between the somewhat clearly grasped yesterday and the murky and unconscionable day before, which increasingly blends with the darkness that holds the beginning of all days. In his extensive lecture series popularizing romanticism and contrasting it with Enlightenment, Friedrich Schlegel’s brother August Wilhelm talked about the day as the symbolic twin of the mind, as it too had to sink into the darkness every night. There, as in the primeval chaos, thousands of sparks of imagination are flying, hundreds of streams of life are flowing before being named and becoming that which is ordered and accumulated by understanding and explained by the mind. The sun of the mind breaks into a thousand sparks of the imagination (cf: Schlegel 1884: 68-69). All historical eras and all historical achievements draw from the original spring of the primeval night. It is possible to continue with what has been inherited as something complete “from the fathers” (i.e. tradition), but at some point there is a need to go to the origins of all cultural forms, to the incomplete, creative source. To remind us of the flow of this effervescent spring deep in any cultural achievement and then “go to the mothers” (Goethe’s *Faust* I, 1) and create from the primevally sizzling—this is at the heart of the Romanticism’s *program*.

To (again) provide the usual with the look of the unusual, to provide (again) the usual with the form of the noble: this is the romantic *method*. Another romantic author, Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), wrote in the well-known fragment No. 37 of his *Fragments and Studies* (1797/1798):

3 On the meaning of this statement by von Ranke,—that with its help, the historian wanted to limit the impact of his subjectivity and allow the past to appear in its own historical greatness and tragedy, thus testifying to the historical existence—, see: Vierhaus (2003: 358 and further).

The world must be romanticized. Only then we can find its primeval meaning. Romanticizing is nothing but quality potentializing. In our everyday I we discover a higher self and identify our I with it. We too are series of quality potentializing. This operation is still unfamiliar. To what is known by all I accord a special, mysterious significance, a puzzling look to the common, to the familiar the respect of the unknown, to the finite an infinite glow—that's how I romanticize. [...] [That is] romantic philosophy. *Lingua romana*. (Novalis 2001: 384-385)

Only he who gives in to the lure of ancient myths and stories and his own imagination, which sinks into the primeval creative chaos and brings surprising treasures to the light of day, only he is invited to become the architect and prophet of the future. Only he who is capable of quality potentializing, i.e. augmenting the invisible behind the obvious, seeing the unfamiliar in the familiar, and making the commonplace mysterious; only he will see future in the past.

The question arises however: Why is romanticism so concerned not only with the past but also with the future? Why does the backward looking romantic have to be a prophet? In his backwardness, the romantic could dream ancient dreams and immerse himself in the original night of the flow of time. But no—there is talk of the future. What kind of future? And for what purpose does the romantic poet conjoin the darkness of the past with the darkness of the future across the prosaic moment of the present?

The future is a field for endless battles already in the Enlightenment. The projects of future society and future state, stories and projects of utopian authors turn into a long string of future visions that runs through the 18th century. After the French Revolution, the number of stories about the future increase: the range of future prospects, hopes, plans and visions grows by mathematical progression. The entire modernity since the end of the 18th century is the century of architects of the future—from Rousseau to Marx, from Fichte to Nietzsche, from Novalis to the ideologues of nation states. Looking back in history, everyone prophesies while at the same time constructing the past and the future.

In *Christianity or Europe* (1799), Novalis wrote: “Where there are no gods, ghosts reign” (Novalis 2001: 513). Which of the future and past constructs of modernity are “gods” and which are “ghosts”? Almost a century later, Nietzsche answered this question in Fragment No. 150 of Part 4 of *Beyond Good and Evil*: “Everything surrounding a hero becomes a tragedy, everything surrounding a demigod, becomes a game of satyrs; and surrounding a god everything becomes—what? Perhaps the ‘world’?” (Nietzsche 1954: 637). In which world do we wish to live? And is it (i.e. life in a historically created world) a matter of an individual choice? It rather seems not: gods are replaced by “ghosts”; replacing the “old” world, the collective unconscious creates new myths and invents the past in its dreams and nightmares; the secret orders sung by conspiracy theories determine the course of history, ethnic groups vomit fiery streams of songs and dances, the truth of history is on the side of the working class, and even a business needs “a corporate spirit”.

The departed gods have left behind an empty space where now the modern myths and ghosts are roaming. Reason is one of them. It has been attributed to the universe, cosmos, life, and humans. Intelligent design attempts to take the place of *all* the departed gods. Something that is difficult to describe and name is forming around all of these ghosts. Nietzsche wrote about a god around whom “a world” comes into being. Around ghosts, it’s simulacra, world historical battle-filled scenarios, social swarming, education and re-education programs and projects, and penitentiaries form. But is “a world” coming into being? Modern society (roaming along with ghosts) is a society without a world. It is the grim dialectic of modernism in which the romantic, having gone out to look for the primeval, finds himself with the construed, artificial, forced, ideologized, and calculated. A prophet, he finds himself in the bureau of prognostications where they calculate the distribution of votes among leftist, centrist, conservative, and radical right parties. In the early 19th century, Heinrich von Kleist in his article “On the Puppet Theater” (v. Kleist 1980) expressed hope that the modern era, albeit incapable of returning to the paradise from which it has been chased, still will find itself able (by circling the meridian) to enter paradise from the other side: culture, which has become so reflexive and metacritical of itself in some way will overcome the loss of its origins and naïve non-reflexiveness, returning to the beginning, only in a different form, informed by reflection. The power of the modern reflexive culture has turned out to be rather fragile after all: it is precisely in the name of the power of reflection and reason that excessive construction and ideological production have taken place in modernity. The clear vision of *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Adorno and Horkheimer is most convincing in their description and analysis of cultural industry and rationalized production of new myths (Horkheimer/Adorno 2002: 94-136). These analyses, however (just like the social criticism developed by the Frankfurt School) owed much to early 20th century thinkers who were not at all left-leaning, such as Ludwig Klages. He created myths of life and the primeval while at the same time coming up with arguably the most eloquent descriptions of the negativity of the modern era (e.g., in the manifesto “Man and Land”). Klages’s prophecies point to a range of modern ghosts that have replaced the departed gods: progress, science, industry, capitalism, consumer society. The “invisible hand” of these ghosts directs our lives.

Men hardened in the material battles of the 20th century come up with a new myth of “steel romanticism”: total mobilization. It is impossible to flee modernity in a peasant’s footwear; modernity is fate, and fate must be loved; so a new aesthetic of the technical world, a symbiosis of science and the educated masses, apotheosis of modern reality must be found. The nation oriented toward learning and innovations, which joins others in another battle. For what? What has to be fought for? Is this battle only the convulsions of modern man before the arrival of *Übermensch*? Myths accumulate one atop another—technical, archaic, trembling in apocalyptic expectation of the future or created in an *amor fati* determination. The program of new mythology of romanticism is continuing and living even in forms alien to their creators. The scientific myth blends together with the enigma of the cosmic reason and longing for the archaic blends with the myths of consumer society.

It would probably be wise to try to understand: are these the only alternatives among which to make a desperate choice: between one myth and another, one prophet and another, one

ghost and another? Is there not another possibility safely tucked away in the darkness of imagination and the light of reason? Reflecting on the enthusiasm of modernity (and, more comprehensively, the modern era) for doing, one said that before doing we should first determine what “doing” and “action” really are (Heidegger 2010).

## 2. Nature: from the language of nature to radical cultural criticism

As we know from the times of Heraclitus, nature (*physis*) likes to hide (Fragment No. 123). It is hiding behind the diversity and overabundance of its expressions and phenomena (*phainēsthai*). But nature also hides behind the many images and notions applied to it, over time, by humans. In their efforts to uncover the secrets of nature, humans have inadvertently got entangled in the nets of culture—the labyrinths of symbols, systems of signs, meanings of words, and ritualized activities. Even when it seems that science has helped us to capture the very nature of things, we end up only with that which we ourselves have put into them. Humans receive answers only to the questions they ask themselves. Yet these questions are inevitably impacted by the cultural perspective. The “nature” concealed behind the screen of culture does not speak; it is mute or, at best, announces itself in undecipherable codes. With their self-construed questions, humans must force mute nature to speak and respond. The modern-time science is a way of asking questions, receiving answers, and turning what has been obtained into resources, means, and innovations.

This approximates the point of departure of the romantic Novalis’s so-called natural-science novel *The Disciples at Saïs* (1802) (Novalis 2001, 95-99). In a city of ancient Egypt, disciples are looking for another approach to the human relationship with nature. Modern science has taken as a given that nature does not speak; its many sounds—birdsongs, voices of animals, the bubbling of water and rustling of leaves, the rumble of landslides, and the howling of winds are meaningless sounds akin to the clatter of cogwheels. Nature is matter to be approached according to the wishes and desires flashing in the human cultural network. Yet such an approach to nature has been wrong from the start, muse the disciples at Saïs. Nature speaks. Man has simply forgotten its language, forgotten how to listen to what nature says. The disciples proceed to search for nature’s language or, to be more precise, they are looking for the key to unlock the skills necessary to hear what nature says. It will no longer simply reply to questions posed by humans but speak for itself—when they shut up. Nature will begin to speak the language still resonating in man, albeit too softly, too obscured by the diverse images of nature produced by culture. This language has been perverted by a certain course cultural development has taken and it has become rare, momentary flashes of memory, which people of the modern “disenchanted” world (Weber 1919: 16) fail to join in the original coherent speech.

The motif of the language of nature is found throughout the European modernity (18th-20th c.). Inspired by romanticism, it is not only poets or modern shamans and soothsayers

who seek a primeval harmony with nature, adherents to the reform movement and receivers of rhythms of nature, but it is also scientists. If not for this quest, the concept of “organism” would not find any purchase: i.e. that nature is not a mechanism but an interplay of organic forces with its own special expression and articulation that match the world/environment surrounding the organisms generated and existing in this interplay. If not for this quest, there would be no 19th century philologists and their search for a prehistoric Indo-Germanic/Ancient Indo-European language. It was in fact found, and the researchers of pre-history created another great story about the ancient Indo-European world, its myths, and gods from ashes brought to the light of day. Many 19th century philosophers and scientists viewed Ancient Greece and what was passed down in it close to expressing what was dictated by nature itself. And then the worlds of Ancient Indo-Europeans and Ancient Greeks were no longer enough: Johann Jakob Bachofen in his work *Das Mutterrecht: eine Untersuchung über die Gynaiokratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Bachofen 1861) as well as others discover ancient Europe—the world of matriarchy before the arrival of Indo-Europeans in Europe. Perhaps then people could still listen to nature and hear what it had to say? Perhaps then people were still sufficiently perceptive instead of actively loud and demanding? Perhaps then they heard the language of nature? Romanticism launches a multilayered and self-contradictory project of a “re-enchantment of the world”—one of the most ambivalent stories of modernity, which, in variations, continued (parallel to the obsession with technological progress and posthuman visions) in the 20th century and has been continuing to this day.

In his paper “Man and Earth” published in 1913, which can well be considered the first ecological manifesto, philosopher Ludwig Klages discusses *ex negativo* a once existing option—the perceptive, yielding (“pathic”) listening to nature.<sup>4</sup> In his manifesto, however, he mostly sharply criticizes modern science, capitalist market economy, and Christianity whose trinity is the pillar of the civilization that has forgotten the language of nature. Klages passionately condemns this trinity for creating a death civilization and ruthless exploitation and extermination of nature. He writes:

Make no mistake: ‘progress’ is the lust for power and nothing besides, and we must unmask its method as a sick, destructive joke. Utilizing such pretexts as ‘necessity’, ‘economic development,’ and culture, the final goal of ‘progress’ is nothing less than the destruction of life. This destructive urge takes many forms: progress is devastating forests, exterminating animal species, extinguishing native cultures, masking and distorting the pristine landscape with the varnish of industrialism, and debasing the organic life that still survives. [...] All technology is subservient to this progress and an even greater force is in its service: science. (Klages 2013: 18-19)

4 H.-P. Preusser has this to say about the meaning of “pathic” as used by Klages: “Since the functioning of the world is no longer permitted, it is no longer real. [...] The pathian revolts against this”, for his self yields to the “stream of experience” (Preusser 2015, 149).



Overall, “progress, civilization, capitalism are different aspects of the intention of a single will”.

This intention is obvious not only in the human attitude toward the living but also in the way that humankind itself has been alienated from the natural landscape, environment, and the phenomena that are characteristic of them and have formed the lives of people living in them. Klages observes a most intimate relationship between science and a particular form of economic and social way of existence of society:

Today, no thinking person can have any doubt that the brilliant success of physics and chemistry serve only capital. [...] the special achievement of new science is the replacement of all quality differences with a set theory in all areas; it functions as a fundamental rule imposed by will; it erases the magnificent diversity of the soul’s glowing values, which now [...] has been transformed into a monetary value. (Klages 2013: 26)

These pronouncements by Klages are not, however, simply a criticism of social or economic processes, but an attempt to point at wider and older relationships underpinning them:

Capitalism and its enabler, science, are a realization of Christianity, which [...] in the name of an only spiritual divinity declared war on the countless diversity of world’s gods and now are dragging their feet on a leash of the thought of an all-encompassing One. (Klages 2013: 28)

The so-called interconnected world, particularly emphasized by Christianity and perpetuated by science and capitalism, is only a power tool with whose help as much of natural treasures as possible should be grabbed, without paying any heed to “the life of the still primitive peoples” or “the right of diversity of natural phenomena”, or the hidden ability of an individual to hear the language of nature, which (translated into the terminology of the unified, globalized world), mean only the ungovernable, uncontrollable, and thus the undesirable and exterminable in man. A person who has heard the language of nature is no longer subject to the grasp of modern civilization, in which it is self-referentially strangling both nature and man. “The language of nature” is an element of *cultural criticism*—nature and its language become a radical and revolutionary slogan calling for a new, i.e. well-forgotten archaic, primeval, i.e. *original* life. “Nature” is a keyword of the modern conservative revolution (or at least one of the top ones in the series). As one of such keywords, “nature” is no longer the “nature” as understood by the ancient Cynics, as something to return to. The recourses of the conservative revolution are quite self-reflective and oriented toward the future—just as “already for Rousseau and Schiller”, the faction of friends of nature in the conservative “return to nature” revolution is a call to recognize the problems of civilization instead of returning in the literal sense (Bollenbeck 2007: 14).

I must hasten to add that it is not just a slogan of *this* revolution. In modernity overall, “aesthetics and the experience of nature have been established as the spheres of resonance *sui generis*” (Rosa 2013a: 10); i.e. man looks to them for possibilities for a special, unalienated interaction with the world. One of the many examples here could be the concept behind

the Norwegian series *Beforeigners* whose first season was in 2019. The series depicts a world where, because of a glitch in time's unidirectional movement, people from previous eras appear in the present. A large part of the narrative is taken up by a social upheaval and misunderstandings because of "time migrants" or people with a "multitemporal background." The series also shows various groups of modern people—neo luddites who voluntarily have given up all the "benefits" of modern civilization and consider the arrival of people from previous eras as a sign for an eschatological change in times. Similar groups of people within modern culture have in fact existed and continue to exist. There are many examples. To be sure, their referent is not always "nature" to which they want to "return". Interestingly enough, those of the groups for whom the "return to nature" motif is the main constituent of their group identity include very politically and socially polarized participants: their cultural critique can be left- or right-oriented, conservative or anarchist—these radically opposing orientations are no obstacles for "returning to nature". That is in fact similar to the classical examples of modern cultural criticism: even though Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a critique of contradictions of modern society and description of its inner logic is not an invitation to "return to nature", this work too is unimaginable not only without Marx but also Klages and Bachofen's matriarchy myth extolled by Klages. Studies in 20th century history of philosophy clearly show that the leftist cultural criticism of Frankfurt was inspired by the ideas of rightist esoterics and conservative revolutionaries (see Dörr 2007). The relationship with nature is a prevalent modernity theme both in a socioeconomic and self-critical sense. At the same time, it is a theme indicative of the aporias of modernity, which sharpens along with the sharpening of the other prevalent themes of modernity and repeats with the flashes of its other immanently perpetual problems.

The vision of the language of nature and the relationship with nature it underpins indicates that "nature" is not only nature. Within the modernity framework, it becomes a seminal element in the critique of civilization and a protuberance of the aporetic nature of modernity. It is that today as well. As such, it has become another symbol of the cultural network with whose help the modern man has tried to get behind the cultural screen to avoid losing reality, which permanently threatens to disappear behind the constructs of nature (as well as history, world, society). Does it mean that man is thus following the "call of nature"?

### 3. Society: from lifeworld to the reign of secondary systems

In his work *Soul in the Age of Technology* (1957), the aforementioned anthropologist Arnold Gehlen wrote:

Just like the Enlightenment-era faith in reason has been formalized into readiness for new [rationalized: R. B.] forms and plans of organization, the legitimization of happiness in this world (the other Enlightenment discovery) is an offshoot of the other need of industrial society—consumption (Gehlen 1957: 79)

Faith in reason has turned into a plan for social organization and rationalized governing; the depiction of this world in which there is no longer any need to include otherworldly points of reference has become an industry of consumerism and mass culture.

By the time Gehlen made this pronouncement in mid-20th century, his teacher, the sociologist Hans Freyer, had already sketched a more detailed portrait of industrial society. In his late period, mostly in his book *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* (Freyer 1955), he described the stages of industrial society he saw realized in the course of modernity.<sup>5</sup> In modernity, a society is formed and undergoing fast development whose life and possibilities on various levels is determined not by a lifeworld that has formed naturally or in a slow historical process (in other words, our everyday world of primary perceptions and habits) but by so-called “secondary systems”. With the portrayal and critique of these systems, Freyer manages to provide not only a surprisingly brilliant overview of industrial society, but also to give a specific description of the “technologizing” of society, i.e. that phenomenon of modernity in which technology not only becomes an essential part of human life but takes over its other areas (language, behavior, action, planning, cultural and social memory, domestic life, communication, future horizons etc.).

Freyer divides the development of the industrial society in two stages. The *first stage* is characterized by free market (including a free labor market), competition, and growth of the proletariat. In the *second* stage, state and society, which in the first stage are still separate, knit together (in the direction of the welfare state). A new pluralist democracy is formed, and a system of labor rights and contracts and a social middle class develop.

The second stage of industrial society is characterized by four “trends” (Freyer 1955: 15-78), which are active already in the first stage but are particularly prominent in the second one (chronologically, it refers mostly to Europe after 1945). The trends are as follows:

- (1) The doability of things. Instead of waiting for the benevolence of nature, doing things (*manufactura, fabrica, homo faber*) is a principle of life; moreover, it is the case that “the boundary, which delimits doability, becomes difficult to identify” (Freyer 1955: 23).
- (2) Organization of labor. The doability of things brought out in modernity receives an additional emphasis from the way it is organized: the doability of things is at the same time rationalized and organized work whose organization is perfected through science and research; the principle of this work is the control of its productivity, systemic productivity; to do this work, a specifically educated and civilized individual is needed, one that fits in the division of labor, the process of production and the growth of productivity; paradoxically, it

5 Thomas Gil, who has analyzed the philosophies of history of modernity, remarks that in the second half of the 20th century, it was already habitual to talk not of “industrial” but rather of “postindustrial”, “communication”, “information”, “knowledge”, “science”, “risk”, “experience”, “consumption” etc. societies. According to him, that however does not make Freyer’s perspective outdated, for, if we take a closer look, Freyer talks of the stages of industrial societies, and the description of the second stage of such societies fits well with those descriptions of the second half of the 20th century in which the analysis of the growing together of state and society, complexity of governance and organization, plural democracy, labor rights and regulations, as well as socioeconomically and scientifically generated risks dominates (Gil 1996: 150).

is the requirements of labor organized in the so-called age of education and knowledge that generate de-qualification of the labor force, i.e. limits an individual's productivity to *particular* aspects: the principle of the organization of labor is that "instead of a machine involved in the process of human work as a more highly developed tool, human labor, reduced and transformed, is involved in the machine process" (Freyer 1955: 38).

(3) Civilizing of man. The reduced human involved in rationalized production processes is regarded only from the viewpoint of functional usefulness: their abilities and skills have to fit controllability, standardization, homogenization, uniformity; an individual is civilized if they fit systemically planned competences required for the production process; these competences in turn are matched by a particular type of behavior and normalcy, which is to be provided with the help of scientific findings, turning the research of psychology, management and other social sciences in this direction ensuring and supporting the production process: "feelings must be turned into contracts, expectations into predictions, hopes into a calculation of possibilities, desires into plans. These are the intricate yet sturdy walls within which civilizing takes place" (Freyer 1955: 47); true—beyond these walls, the "unconscious" and "natural" exists, yet it is reduced to a sensation, a Western, a football game in a big city stadium (Freyer 1955: 60).

(4) The completability of history. Progress is the mode of existence of industrial society. Its principle is development based on ceaseless growth. Yet it is also paradoxical: progress is supported in the sense of "more and better" of *the same*, but not in a radically *different* direction. An average member of society is not thinking of the world as radically different but only that in which there is more of what already is present in the circulation: for the concern is about reaching a world in which

[...]everything has become doable, all workforce has been perfectly organized, and humanity is completely civilized. [...] Struggle for the content [of such a world: R. B.] is unavoidable, yet it is nothing more than scholastic arguments of managers—for a more rational coordination, arguments among educators and psychiatrists about the psychology of a totally civilized human being, the arguments among technologists about what would be the most purposeful convertibility of materials and forms of energy in the given situation concerning resources [...] The completability of history is reality in the sense that the volumes of what can be subjected to planning and what is already planned keep rising, as do the number and power of the forces getting involved [with these plans: R. B.]. (Freyer 1955: 78)

History as a struggle for possibilities and forms of freedom has finished (or is close to being finished) in a totally organized and technologized civilization.

The four "trends" modelled by Freyer are not static. They not only converge but also become manifest or real "through" something, in some *medium*. This medium, or media, are simple enough. Once created, they organize and determine the social order and system in a modern society. The power of these media is in that they are rationally constructed, they provide

simple patterns for action and areas of life; without much effort, they can penetrate any area of lifeworld, covering its uncertainties and ambiguities with an unambiguous regulation of codes. Such media are *secondary systems*. Freyer devotes much space for the conception, description, and analysis of these systems. Secondary systems are most intimately tied to the place and role of *technology* in an industrialized society.

In all the social and economic processes of modernity technology comes to dominate—in culture as much as in production. Modern society is a society of “technology become reality” (Gil 1996: 151). It is the *technologized* industrial society that has created a range of secondary systems, which medially realizes the main logic of this society. These systems are not natural but have been rationally (operationally) generated; things and their systems (apparatuses, technology, machinery) are socially and institutionally used, and, in such a way, that they are quickly beginning to *determine and adapt to themselves* the style and essence of social and institutional proceedings.

Historians have long since understood that even very ancient institutions, which were considered almost primevally natural, for instance, the village structure [in the Middle Ages: R. B.], were a well-thought-out way of management, and its introduction were guided by forces interested in purposeful development of production. [...] Yet all the rational constructs, at least the long-lasting and influential ones were based on social order, which existed previously: it was not created by these constructs, which were thus rational constructs on a pre-existing [lifeworld: R. B.] foundation. (Freyer 1955: 86)

The secondary systems model, on the other hand, is “constructed according to a completely different formula.” Here construction is not taking place on a given foundation, i.e. in an already existing social space (Freyer 1955: 88). In the face of these systems, everything that is socially complex, historical, individuated (i.e. lifeworld) is reduced; these systems do not take into account man as a complex historical being, instead reducing them to particular competences, abilities, and functions. Traffic regulations, the insurance system, centralized government institutions, functionalization schemes for businesses—all of these are examples of secondary systems, and they indicate that people enter them in a reduced form: they reduce or fragment man because in every instance they are concerned with only some simple ability or aspect of man; they are “second”, rationalized and operationalized “nature”, for they have been separated from the natural and historical; they require learning, conformity, and adaptation. They do however need particular qualities, resources, and energies, which they do not generate themselves (people, labor, relationships, resources).

Industrial society represents an *overlap and network of such secondary systems*. It functions through and with secondary systems; they are the concrete form of industrial society. The secondary systems network strategies of technologization, and standardize and functionalize these strategies as a pattern for action in other (and newly generated) secondary systems. It is not only the socioeconomic dimension that functions through them in a technologized form—increasingly, it is also culture: the secondary systems affect the way of speaking, language, behavior, mode of perception, self-interpretation, and way of thinking. Technical

language takes over all areas of language. Non-technical uses of language are made technical (Freyer 1955; Freyer 1970). Language and soul are produced in a technological age. As a brilliant metaphor and factual description at the same time, Freyer conjures a scene from an industrial society governed by secondary systems:

Where the secondary systems of the social order obviously appear—but they do so very rarely, most often and usually they seize a person in a way they do not notice —, an almost identical picture emerges. A subway train, which enters a city station through a network of lights and dozens of automatized switches or a single world bureaucracy through the accounting system, a decision is passed and regulated as if through an independently functioning machine—that is the overall picture of activity in the style of the ‘secondary systems’ model. (Freyer 1955: 92-93)

In his article “Uprising Against the Secondary World”, the writer and essayist Botho Strauß called the enthusiasm for the secondary (as regulating one’s life) in the context of art as “a technological mutation of culture as a whole” (Strauß 2012: 51). The secondary world no longer knows what is “primary”, it forgets even to ask what could be primary; for only the secondary can be controlled.

#### 4. The World: from accessibility to management and vice versa

And yet can modernity still perceive anything that cannot be managed? Does man in modernity still perceive, hear, see, and feel the rationally unmanageable? Would it really be completely captured and written into the socioeconomically technologized system in which even the “unconscious” and “natural” amounts to calculations and an object? True, it is modernity, which in the legitimacy of this world has strived to expand the opportunities provided by the world—it is the man of modernity who has wished to hear “nature”, see “reality”, hear the reply from the “world” (instead of something otherworldly). It is modernity that has provided so many new possibilities—both in terms of quantity and quality—to feel, experience, yield, learn, hear, see, taste, and experience.

The Frankfurt critical theory third generation author Hartmut Rosa, who has much discussed acceleration in culture (Rosa 2005; Rosa 2013a; Rosa 2013b), writes that the form of life that is called *modern*, really does spin a perception of the world as being at the disposal of and subjected to someone.<sup>6</sup> Yet liveliness and real experience reside only where the world

6 Historian Wolfgang Reinhard has impressively described the history of modern Europe as a history of discovery, subjugation and exploitation of the world (Reinhard 2016), which at the same time is the history of globalization where European modernity enters a relationship with world cultures and regions—thus discovering the other and the different for itself. One could say that Reinhard here both provides an insight into the long prehistory of modernity and describes the material and geographical dimension of modernity.

is *uncontrollable* and it avoids our grasp. True, real experience is possible where the illusion of controllability falls apart. Perhaps that is the reason why modernity generates the feeling that we live in an illusion, in a diastasis, in a breach with the world and that it has become the screen for projecting our plans, goals, and desires because it has been robbed of the main “index” of genuineness? It returns exactly and only when a *resonance* with the world is the case—only then the *world* itself returns. A world that would be completely managed, planned, and known would be a “dead world” (Rosa 2019: 4) or it would not be a world at all.

H. Rosa writes: “Life takes place like a game between what is accessible to us and what, being inaccessible, still applies to us; life takes the form of a borderline between these poles” (Rosa 2019: 4). What is uncontrollable constitutes human experience. To ask about the relationship of modernity with the world means to ask how institutions and cultural practices in contemporary society relate to the world and how the modern subjects are placed in the world, i.e. how we *relate to the uncontrollable* individually, culturally, institutionally, and structurally. Rosa believes that the everyday practices and social conflicts of (late) modernity stem from a relationship with the world in which the emphasis on controllability and subjection dominates. Late modernity as a whole tends toward controlling the world and *for that very reason*, the world appears *as* a point of aggression or a series of aggression points, i.e. as objects to be known, reached, conquered, managed, used, and felt and for that very reason, a resonance with the world (which includes the unmanageable and unreachable) is not possible. Instead of the world, “a replacement world” in which fear, frustration, burn-out, despair, aggression, and discontent reign, where alienation from the world and oneself is the rule (cf: Rosa 2019: 9).<sup>7</sup>

For that reason, Rosa sketches in a sociology of the relationship to the world,<sup>8</sup> centering on the assumption that the subject and the world are not simply the given but the result of a certain relationship, a certain intentionality toward the present in which we are born and which we then learn to call the “world”. The kind of relationship it is determines *what kind* of people we are and *what* we encounter as the world. Our relationship with the world is not given along with our simple becoming a person but depends on social and cultural conditions under which we are socialized. Subjects and the world form a mutual relationship, they are “constituted in it” (Rosa 2016: 62), understanding as the world (with a reference to H. Blumenberg (Rosa 2016: 65)), the totality of *possible-to-experience*.

What is this totality of “possible-to-experience” in (late) modernity? Rosa is very harsh: it has turned into “exploding *to-do* lists” (Rosa 2019: 14)—entries in the planner where there

7 Other representatives of the third generation of Frankfurt critical theory, such as H. Rosa and Rahel Jaeggi, consider “alienation” as a central and still relevant concept in describing modernity (See: Jaeggi and Loick 2013; Jaeggi 2016).

8 “We should check not only the knowledge of the world of modern subjects or their ‘mentality’ but rather their relationship to the world per se (and thus inevitably their relationship to themselves), and it is constantly and primarily bodily, emotional, sensual, and existential and only then mental and cognitive” (Rosa 2013: 11).

are only “points of aggression” representing the “world”: shopping, doctor’s appointments, work, birthday celebrations, yoga course, travel, adventure, going to a bar: “done”, “take care of this”, “crossed out”, “managed”, “solved”, “done”, “liquidated” etc. Of course, we can ask, has it not always been like that in human life? Has the world not always been a point of resistance to man? No, the *normalization* and *naturalization* of an aggressive relationship with the world is the result of several centuries of transformations in society with “dynamic stabilization” and “continual increase in accessibility” at their epicenter (Rosa 2019: 14). The definition of a modern society reads as follows: “A society is called modern, which can stabilize itself only dynamically, i.e. to preserve its institutional status quo through continuous (economic) growth, (technical) acceleration, and (cultural) innovations” (Rosa 2019: 15). Moreover, it seems in this society that a good and happy life means to increase our ability to achieve and our range of possibilities—that which can be attained, obtained, achieved, felt, and enjoyed. Our life is better if we manage to attain more of the world, *at least* to hold it on the leash of attainability, always “close at hand”. The imperative of modern life reads: “Act in such a way that the availability of your world would be ever greater” (Rosa 2019: 17). The world has to be reached: make money and learn foreign languages and new travel destinations will open for you, “the world of mountains”, “the world of tango”, “the world of penguins”, “the world of diving”, “the shopping world of Dubai”: all of these are fragments of the world that in some way can and should be “conquered”, “obtained” or “achieved” and it pays off because it expands “our horizons”, which in turn makes our lives good, dynamic, worth living and therefore—happy.

Yet in modernity we are structurally (from the outside) and culturally (from the inside) urged and driven to such a relationship with the world; world as aggression points—they have to be known, learnt, achieved, managed, controlled; moreover, it is best if it happens quicker, more effectively, simpler, cheaper, safer (Rosa 2019, 20).

- 9 There is no doubt that, from the anthropological perspective, the ability to distance oneself from one’s surroundings and to manage things is an *essential* human ability. It can however become a problem where *historically* and *socially* it is made the basic mode of all areas of life. Rosa believes that resonance or responsiveness is a more primeval anthropological mode of the relationship between man and the world: it is the essence of man’s presence and there before the ability to obtain a distance from the environment and control over the world. On an anthropological level, Rosa characterizes resonance as a triad of three elements: (1) affection generated by the world (something in the world “touches” or “speaks” to us), (2) emotion (self-effected response to an address through which a relationship is formed), and (3) mutual transformation (cf. Rosa 2019: 42). Interestingly, these descriptions of resonance include references to problems tackled by many strains of 20th century and contemporary philosophy. Rosa himself refers to phenomenology (B. Waldenfels), Heidegger, and Marxism, at times seriously departing from the tenets of his Frankfurt School predecessors. This can be considered a hint at the search for such ontological, anthropological, and social elements, which, in the development of critical theory, have yet to be worked out. Rosa’s orientation to a rapport with the world is obvious, and it is a much more general (and theoretically more dangerous) approach than Habermas’s emphasis on communicative relationships in society or Axel Honneth’s (another Frankfurt School representative) emphasis on recognition (*Anerkennung*) in society as the central problem of modernity (df: Peters and Schulz 2017: 14).



Let us look closer: What does it mean “to make accessible”? It means to make something (1) visible, (2) reachable, accessible, (3) manageable, (4) useable. The following match these aspects: (1) science, which tries to expand the boundaries of knowledge (scheme: “Existing Knowledge-Research-New Knowledge”), (2) technology, which helps to manage what science has revealed as a part of the world, (3) economic development (scheme “Money-Goods-More Money”) provides it all with resources. Once brought into motion and coupled, the EK-R-EK and M-G-MM schemes are a great stimulus. Finally, (4) the legal regulations and the political and administrative apparatus tend to calculate and guide the social processes, which are the preconditions and consequences of the amalgam of science, technology, and economics. To plan and submit to jurisdiction is the task of the legal and political administration. The joint functioning of these four items constitute *power and power relations*. These relations are all directed toward a single goal: “Power [in modernity: R. B.] is manifested in the extension of world accessibility” (Rosa 2019: 24).

But it so happens that in modernity “the world that has been made scientifically, technologically, economically, and politically accessible, keeps mysteriously avoiding us; it is avoiding us and becoming unreadable and mute; moreover, it appears to be fragile and, finally, even as threatening, i.e. constitutively unmanageable” (Rosa 2019: 25). Modernity’s problem is “a terminated catastrophe of resonance” (Rosa 2019: 32). *Resonance* is the name for such a relationship with the world that would not be alienated. Resonant relations are such in which the uncontrollability of the world is accepted, i.e. the world is accepted as one to be listened to instead of controlled and managed.

“The world becoming silent [...] is the greatest fear of modernity” (Rosa 2019: 34). Modernity fails to hear the world and thus itself and *at the same time* fears this silence. The relationship of non-relations (absurd, denial of the world, hostility of the world to man, inner worldlessness, external loss of the world etc.) detected by existentialism and other strains of 20th century philosophy provide eloquent testimonies to this contradiction.

Resonance with the world is an event open to experience, contradicting to the social logic that envisions continual increase and optimization; resonance cannot be accumulating, preserved, and instrumentally augmented; it cannot even be predicted or planned for. As soon as we want to do anything like that, resonance vanishes; as soon as we want to break into it, it can no longer be reached. Rosa criticizes the attempts, in late modernity and capitalism, to translate the need for a relationship with the world *as* a wish for an object. The tension between the need for resonance *and* the need to subdue, to make available is the basic contradiction of the relations observed in modernity. The world that can resonate, talk to humans and address them has been hidden behind a screen of the world with which resonance is impossible but which presents a “world” that can be subdued. Desires are projected on this screen, and things are accordingly “wrapped” into a coating that seems to indicate that they can be subdued. An “aura” of readiness to be subdued and obtained is created for things.

But it is precisely *there*, where it is impossible to subdue, life is enjoyable; where things defy complete understanding—*there* is life and liveliness;<sup>10</sup> *there*, where resonance is generated, life acquires new, alluring prospects. Where a thing possesses an “inner voice”, an “inner will”, it is directed at me and I perceive it as speaking to me—that is where resonance is. From “objects of knowing” and “goods to acquire” things could once again become “things of resonance” (Rosa 2019: 64).

Summarizing the sociology of his relationship with the world, Rosa emphasizes that the *mixing* of availability and manageability is the reason for the muting of the world and things in modernity (Rosa 2019: 67).<sup>11</sup>

The tension between the desire to make the world manageable and longing for the world to enter a resonance relationship with us appears very distinctly in modernity—it is its basic conflict (Rosa 2019: 107). The signs of alienation of society struggling under the yoke of bureaucratic regulations and management optimization are observed in thinking, talking, and action. “Identifying thinking”, whereby things are trivialized and seen as “only” and “nothing more than...”—as if they were grasped and known—is ubiquitous. This way of thinking “robs us of any possibility of listening to any encountered thing as unmanageable. We encounter things as known, manageable, obtainable, buyable, doable” (Rosa 2019: 113-114). Rosa tries to show us that by allowing an encounter with things only in the control and management mode, they “turn their back to us”, becoming threatening, unreachable, horrifying. “Unmanageability that is generated in the management processes leads to radical alienation” (Rosa 2019: 130).<sup>12</sup>

10 It is interesting to compare the points made by Rosa, a left-leaning Frankfurt School representative, with statements made by 20th century right-leaning authors. A good example is Ernst Jünger, mentioned at the beginning of this article. In his *African Games* (1936), he wrote: “To know that there are still wild places where no one has set foot was of great delight to me” (cit.: Kiesel 2009: 49). Jünger brilliantly depicts both modernity’s longing for the new, the undiscovered, the adventure, and yet a relationship with a world that is not yet completely subdued and controlled.

11 The change in the relationship between man and the world was written up by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor who has deeply influenced Rosa’s thinking (starting with Rosa’s dissertation on identity and cultural practice in Taylor’s political philosophy (Rosa 1998)). In his *Sources of the Self* (1989), Taylor demonstrates, among other things, how this relationship has transformed in modernity (Romantics have described the co-constituting of the subject and the world, thus demonstrating modernity’s potential for self-criticism). The “buffered Self”, secluding itself from the world (the relationship with the world has become distant and mediated and therefore functional and contingent) is analyzed by Taylor in his book (2007) and serves as a model for the alienated relationship with the world (cf: Rosa 2016: 63).

12 “Where everything could be controlled, the world has nothing to say to us; where it becomes unmanageable in a new way, we no longer hear it because it is no longer accessible to us” (Rosa 2019: 131). An example of such a world is radioactive radiation. It is no longer a world with which man can resonate. Man’s relationship with the world (the so-called lifeworld) dissolves, disintegrates, becomes totally traumatized, and unable to resonate.

Can modernity be continued without radically refusing it? Rosa is convinced that it can, if only:

the world is no longer a point of aggression but of resonance, where we encounter something not in the acquisition, management, and control mode but in a way that involves hearing and self-effected listening and responding, which are directed at mutually responsive reachability. If something like that is possible, then the logic of acceleration [which was the determining principle of capitalism: R. B.] loses its meaning and psychological driving force. A different world then becomes possible. (Rosa 2019: 123)

A different world along with a different, post-growth, post-acceleration society.<sup>13</sup>

The central question for Rosa is: does resonance cancel “alienation”? This question, in the context of modernity can be formulated as follows: is modernity possible such that it is self-critical vis-à-vis its inner logic of control, subjugation, and accelerated growth?<sup>14</sup> The post-growth society would allow acceleration, growth, and innovations, yet it would no longer be driven by their dynamic. A resonant relationship with the world in such a society would be a precondition for a happy life that would be recognized as successful (Peters, Schulz 2017: 15). A changed relationship with the world would also change the kind of happy and successful life for which man would strive: “The quality of life, as I wish to demonstrate [...], does not depend on the material well-being achieved or to be achieved or on the sum of life possibilities but rather of the possibilities and abundance of experiences of resonance” (Rosa 2013a: 16).

## Conclusion

Four modernity discourses in the four sketches of the aporia present in modernity—the new mythology of romanticism, the recourse of cultural criticism to nature, the view of technology of the secondary systems theory, the promise of resonance with the world against alienation—find themselves balancing on the borderline between the possible and the factual. It is also the borderline of modernity. It is clearly visible in the four aporia (1) between the thesis of open-endedness of history and the real battle of sociopolitical and cultural-ideological constructs of the future, (2) between modern industrialization and glorification of nature

13 Within the framework of a project supported by the German Research Society (“DFG-Kolleg-Forscherguppe Postwachstumsgesellschaften: “Landnahme, Beschleunigung, Aktivierung, Dynamik und (De-)Stabilisierung moderner Wachstumsgesellschaften”), Rosa turns to the examination of a post-growth society.

14 “It is an accelerating society that does not allow a resonant relationship with the world because it drives itself to alienation: for Rosa, alienation consistently involves the lack of a constitutive, responsive relationship” (Peters, Schulz 2017: 16).

and the desire for the return of the primitive, (3) between the introduction of technological innovations and the transformation of technology from “secondary” to “primary”, (4) between the desire to control things and processes and the negative consequences of this desire. These aporias swell when one (trying to think within the framework of modernity) approaches the boundaries of modernity.

In every instance of these four aporias, we can repeat what Rosa says about modernity as a whole: “Resonance is modernity’s promise; alienation is its reality” (Rosa 2016: 624); aporias show to what great extent modernity does not achieve its promise and also to what great extent the tension inherent in the aporias gives rise to ever new hopes and new strategies to make good on modernity’s promises.

If such a diagnosis of modernity *horizontally* encompasses or strives to encompass all its differentiated manifestations, then *vertically* it is an example for a differentiated thought about an age where to lose its level of self-reflection would mean to lose the possibilities of the thought achieved in the course of modernity. We can conclude that the range of possibilities for legitimization, cancellation, overcoming, surmounting, continuation, turning points, “other modernity”, post-modernity and other ways of reflecting on it and the potential of self-criticism of modernity *is one of the most impressive achievements of modernity*. To lose this level of thought would mean losing the possible future. The greatest enemy of self-reflective modernity is not reflections on overcoming or abandoning it (“voices of sirens”), but a mindless yielding to the whirlwind of modernity’s social, ideological, economic, and political complications “and so on”.

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# Modernitātes robežas: vēsture – daba – sabiedrība – pasaule

Raivis Bičevskis

**Atslēgvārdi:** modernitāte, modernitātes aporijas, romantisms, kultūrkritika, sekundāro sistēmu teorija, rezonanse ar pasauli

Raksta mērķis ir parādīt modernitātes apraksta versijas. Šo versiju protagonistī katrā no tām apzinās savu projektu aporijas un, tās risinot, saskaras ar “aiziešanas no modernitātes” vilinājumiem. Šo versiju skices pievēršas, pirmkārt – vēstures medijā – romantismam; otrkārt – dabas medijā – kultūrkritikai; treškārt – sabiedrības un tehnikas medijā – sekundāro sistēmu kundzības teorijai; ceturkārt – cilvēka un pasaules attiecību medijā – Frankfurtes kritiskās skolas trešās paaudzes idejām pēc Hābermāsa. Četri modernitātes diskursi, kuri parādījušies četrās modernitātes aporiju skicēs – romantisma jaunā mitoloģija, kultūrkritikas rekursus uz dabu, sekundāro sistēmu teorijas skatījums uz tehniku, apsoliņums pret atsvešinātību no rezonances ar pasauli – balansē uz iespējamā un faktiskā robežas. Tā visai skaidri saskatāma rakstā ieskicētajās četrās aporijās (1) starp vēstures atvērtības tēzi un nākotnes sociāli politisko un kultūrideoloģisko konstruktu reālo cīņu, (2) starp moderno industrializāciju un dabas glorifikāciju un vēlmi atsaukt pirmatnējo, (3) starp tehnikas inovāciju ieviešanu un tehnikas pārtapšanu no “sekundārā” par “primāro”, (4) starp lietu un procesu kontroles vēlmi un šīs vēlmes negatīvajām konsekvencēm. Šīs aporijas samilst, kad kāds (mēģinot domāt modernitātes ietvarā) tuvojas modernitātes robežām. Četru modernitātes pašizpratnes, paškritikas un pašturpinājuma skiču perspektīvās – viņpus politiski sociālajām programmām un nosliecēm – mēģināts ielūkoties modernitātes aporijās un cīņās, par kuru ambivalenci un neviennozīmību liecina skiču protagonistī; skiču aprakstos un analizēs izstrādātās modernitātes aporijas uzrāda modernitātes robežas, no kurām tā aizvien atkal no jauna atgrūžas un kuras atkal sasniedz.