

ULRICH BECK

the
reINVENTION
of politics

Rethinking Modernity in the Global Social Order

The Reinvention of Politics

For my Mother

*The Reinvention of
Politics*

*Rethinking Modernity in the
Global Social Order*

ULRICH BECK

Translated by Mark Ritter

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Introduction

There is an essay by Wassily Kandinsky (1982) with the peculiar title 'And'. In it, Kandinsky inquires as to the word that characterizes the twentieth century in contrast to the nineteenth century. His surprising answer is that, while the nineteenth century was dominated by Either-or, the twentieth was to be devoted to work on And. Formerly: separation, specialization, efforts at clarity and the calculability of the world; now: simultaneity, multiplicity, uncertainty, the issue of connections, cohesion, experiments with exchange, the excluded middle, synthesis, ambivalence.

The vagueness of And is the theme of the latter world, which is ours. Its farewell to order, its overflowing chaos, its extravagant hope for unity, its helplessness in the face of merely additive growth, its limits and limitlessness, the increasingly illusive borders and the anxiety that they arouse – all that lures and thrills in And. The Either-or does not really terminate in the inconclusiveness, one could even say the undifferentiated mercifulness, of And. If so, then only imperfectly, vaguely and dangerously. Certainly, the irredeemable globality of the world speaks in favour of And. The And even worms its way through the armed borders, but this only makes the dangers general and indefensible.

Every new era of political existence has its key experience. The monarch's 'divinity under law', his divine right, ended with the storming of the Bastille in 1789, and democracy, 'the rule of the people' within the boundaries of the nation state, began its increasingly questionable triumphal march. Two hundred years later, the breakthrough of And is characteristically announced by two experiences: the reactor disaster in Chernobyl and the collapse of the Berlin Wall. In the first,

the Either-or institutions of industrial society and their claims to exercise control and provide security are being refuted by the global risk society. In the second, the Either-or categories of East-West and left-right have collapsed as well.

Precisely because the second fundamental experience of And, in Kandinsky's sense, flew by so quickly, it is important to preserve it in memory. Communism was not swept from the world-historical stage by brutal force, nor with bound hands in front of a firing squad, nor in some blood-soaked big bang. It disappeared like a nightmare upon waking, like a fairy tale in reality.

'The year 1989 was just coming to an end,' writes Peter Handke,

a year in which, from day to day and from country to country, so many things seemed to be changing, and with such miraculous ease, that he imagined that someone who had gone for a while without hearing the news, voluntarily shut up in a research station or having spent months in a coma after an accident, would, upon reading his first newspaper, think it was a special joke edition pretending that the wish dreams of the subjugated and separated peoples of the continent had overnight become reality. This year, even for him, who had a background devoid of history, and a childhood and youth scarcely enlivened, at most hindered, by historic events (and their neck-craning celebrations), was the year of history: suddenly it seemed as if history, in addition to all its other forms, could be a self-narrating fairy tale, the most real and realistic, the most heavenly and earthly of fairy tales . . . now that history was apparently moving along, day after day, in the guise of the great fairy tale of the world, of humanity, weaving its magic (or was it merely a variant on the old ghost story?). (Handke 1994: 57f)

Nineteen eighty-nine was the year of And. The dancing at the Berlin Wall symbolizes the peaceful revolution of And, starting from nowhere and unexplained, unexplainable, to this day. If the borders in Europe that had fallen away are now being reconstructed, invoked and re-flagged, this still remains a reaction – a reaction to the sheer intolerance of And.

The global, diffuse and formless character of And is upsetting to many people. The dis-alienation of the alien and the concomitant dis-possession of that which is one's own, both involuntarily produced by the age of And, are experienced as a threat. Without Either-or, they say, they cannot live and, they add, cannot even conceive of the And. So And is by no means the beginning of paradise on earth. Circumstances of a completely new type are probably beginning here. The world of Either-or in which we think, act and live is becoming false. In one way or another, this is the beginning of conflicts and experiments

beyond Either-or, or, in the terms of this book, the *reinvention of politics*.

A book that has as many versions and facets as this has flown under a number of flags in its journey. It set off as *Beyond Left and Right*, and that is how it was announced. Now it has the proud and controversial title *The Reinvention of Politics*, to which should be added 'after the end of the East-West conflict order'. The title could also have been short and simple: *And*. If I lacked the courage to do this, then it was because the book is even less able to meet this expectation.

The book circles around the difference between two epochs of modernity – simple or industrial versus reflexive modernity, which is now coming into view and calling for the reinvention of politics. If one wanted to simplify and condense to the greatest possible degree the assessment which is tied up with this, one could use the words of Kandinsky: the 'age of *and*' is destroying and replacing the 'age of *either-or*'. But as has been said, that would be too ambitious, perhaps too hopeful, even clairvoyant, exceeding even the powers of a frivolous sociologist. Yet it remains true; this tiny little word '*And*' with its modesty bordering on invisibility contains keys to new modernities.

Kandinsky published his essay in 1927 (see Kandinsky, 1982: 706). It is depressing how little has been contributed since then to the discovery and clarification of the riddles hidden in the three letters '*And*'. And yet it is a reassuring insight that all the insanity of this century has emphasized the urgency of the task of coaxing the secrets out of this conjunction. What Kandinsky foresaw for the twentieth century will thus perhaps be passed on to the next: the question of *And*.

It does not seem exaggerated to say that sociology, as well, will have to be reinvented after the end of the Cold War. Of course, a conceptual renaissance of sociology presumes sociological and social controversy over the guiding theoretical and political ideas. A contribution to this is to be presented here. The concept of 'reflexive modernization' is at the centre. This does indeed connect up with the traditions of self-reflection and self-criticism in modernity, but implies something more and different, namely, as is to be shown, the momentous and unreflected basic state of affairs that industrial modernization in the highly developed countries is changing the overall conditions and foundations for industrial modernization. Modernization – no longer conceived of only in instrumentally rational and linear terms, but as refracted, as the rule of side-effects – is becoming the motor of social history.

Industrial modernity is disintegrating, but something else is coming into existence. Both are possible, necessary perspectives and questions that are opened up by the theory of reflexive modernization. This must be elaborated, therefore, in two quite different ways of seeing, studying and arguing: the disembedding question and the re-embedding question. Both are to be treated here, as far as possible, and even more space will be devoted to the issue of what happens if, in Max Weber's terms, the 'guiding value ideas' of industrial modernity dwindle and fade.

When does modernity start and when does it end? How is modernity to be understood as 'simple' or 'reflexive'? Are there multiple modernities? An indissoluble ambiguity clings to questions of this type. Not just because the concept of modernity is so pale and so broad, so apparently strict and yet so vague that there is room in it for everything from minor repairs all the way down to a complete renovation of the very foundations of Enlightenment. It depends on the dividing lines, which the surveyors who lay out cultural periods tend to place quite differently. There is an attempt in chapters 1 and 2 at least to begin answering these questions.

In order to be assessable, comprehensible and judgeable at all, the catchword 'reflexive modernization' must be elaborated in several dimensions. These cannot be pressed between the covers of a book. They even point to different genres of literature. As a theory-forming idea, 'reflexive modernization' must get into the ring with other contenders, that is, it must take on the modernization theories of Weber, Simmel, Durkheim, Marx, Parsons, Foucault, Habermas and Luhmann, all the way to Giddens, Bauman, and many others, by being sharpened, contoured and relativized; in short it must prove itself.

A second way of illustrating the specific features of this theoretical view is oriented more according to socio-structural descriptions and can be developed as a phenomenological diagnosis of our times. Here one can deal with love, individualization, social inequality, the proliferation of science, ecology, law, economics, and so forth, in order to demonstrate in all these fields that which falls under the general category of 'reflexive modernization'. Of course this concept no more has one single unambiguous empirical correlative than does the concept of 'fruit', and since the empirical description must be presented differently and to different audiences than the theoretical structure and comparison, it is advisable to separate these two levels, if not absolutely, then at least relatively to one another. This book is concerned *not* with the general and comparative theory of reflexive modernization,¹

but instead with its consequences for political action, indeed for the concept of the political in general.

This is precisely where the essential difference lies with respect to my books *Risk Society* (1992) and *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk* (1994).² Whereas the new globality of hazards is illuminated in the latter, here 'reflexive modernization' is being both generalized and analysed with regard to changes in the concept, site and subject of *politics*. The conjecture is that the second modernity into which we slid some time ago is a *political* modernity, a modernity, that is, which stimulates the *reinvention of politics*.

An additional difficulty of comprehension that is inherent in the concept of 'reflexive modernization' is that theoretical/empirical and normative/moral statements appear to be surreptitiously connected and fused together here. This concept can be used like a magician's top hat, out of which one can pull, at one time, diagnoses, and, at another time, suggestions and formulas. The diagnosis states that industrial modernization is undermining industrial modernization; ethics, on the other hand, argues that industrial modernization is becoming a problem for itself, perhaps making much more possible: more knowledge, more reflection, more criticism, more publicity, more alternatives, the way into a better modernity of self-limitation, of And.

The two must be kept strictly separated: there is no automatic transition from the discomfiting of classical industrial society to reflection on this self-abolition and self-modification. Whether the disembedding and re-embedding of the structures in industrial society will lead to a public and scientific policy-forging self-reflection of this epochal change, whether this will seize hold of and occupy the mass media, the mass parties and organized agents, whether it will become the object of broad controversies, conflicts, political elections and reforms, all this depends on many conditions and initiatives which cannot be theoretically decided and pronounced in advance. Quite to the contrary, self-abolition and self-modification in industrial modernity can equally well turn into and end up as types of *counter-modernization*.

The analytical core of this theory states, quite amorally and free of any hope, that reflexive modernization generates fundamental upheavals which either can provide grist for the mills of neo-nationalism and neo-fascism as counter-modernity (if the majority appeals for and grasps at new-old rigidities) or can be used in the opposite extreme for the reformulation of the goals and foundations of Western industrial societies.

Between the two extremes lie, at least in potential, the 'ambivalences of modernity' (Zygmunt Bauman). As will be shown in detail in

chapter 2, 'The Construction of the Other Side of Modernity: Counter-modernization', these provide new developmental opportunities for 'counter-modernity', understood as 'constructed certitude'. In this view, nationalism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia and violence are not the expression or eruption of suppressed atavism continuing to be a potent force behind the façades of civilization. They are instead responses to the fundamental experience of And, the product of a never-finished dialectic of modernization and counter-modernization.

This can be reconstructed retrospectively for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (for instance, in the 'naturalization of femininity' by the rising natural and human sciences and the concomitant restriction of women to the role of mother and housewife), but applies just as well to the present and future. The modernization of barbarism is not all that improbable as a variant for the future which is being enabled by reflexive modernization. Or in Kandinsky's simple terms, the onset of And can lead to a renaissance of Either—or in various forms of counter-modernity, from esoteric beliefs or new spiritual movements and religions to violence and nationalism all the way to the revival of old hatreds and wars.

Just how much disintegration can a person stand? The fact that reflexive modernization makes chaos even more chaotic, therefore leading to intolerable conditions, forces the question: what type of counter-modernity, what rigidities might be or become acceptable, and based on what criteria? This issue is discussed at the conclusion of chapter 2 on the example of the environmental crisis and the opportunities it presents for a remoralization of all fields of social action ('Ecological ligatures').

The conflict between counter-modernization, on one side, and renewal and radicalization of modernity, on the other, is by no means purely theoretical; it will determine the coming years and decades, and this book takes a position in it. My position is based on a view that informs the entire book and struggles to find full expression in it: after the Cold War, the West has slid into a victory crisis and the goals of social development must be spelled out all over again.³ What modernity is, can be or wants to be is becoming palpably unclear and indeterminate. An entire political and social lexicon has become obsolete in one stroke, and must now be rewritten. That is precisely what the *reinvention of politics* means.

The model of Western modernity, that occidental mixture of capitalism, democracy, a government of laws, and so forth, is antiquated and must be renegotiated and redesigned. That is the core of the much-discussed crisis of Western party-political democracy. Radicalization

and reform are now possible against the background of our strengthened self-confidence following the end of the East–West conflict. The achievements of European modernity – parliamentary democracy, a government of laws, human rights, individual freedom – are not at stake, but how they are cast into the moulding forms of industrial society certainly is. Much is needed, particularly a type of active thinking that will open our eyes to fundamental alternatives.

What, then, does the reinvention of politics mean? Not just rule-enforcing but rule-altering politics, not just politics for politicians, but politics for society, not just power politics, but political design, the art of politics. It can be shown on all levels and with all topics: there is no longer any security system in Europe, because the contractual parties that made the agreements no longer exist, nor do the political territories to which they referred, nor the interests they were supposed to bring to agreement. In that sense the drama in the former Yugoslavia cannot be isolated. Military conflicts are a threat everywhere, even between nuclear-armed neighbours, such as Russia and the Ukraine. Only the invention of a new European security system (at a European congress to be convened for that purpose) could lead out of this dangerous imbalance. That is nowhere in sight, and this is only one example: such things that do not exist but need to be created have been an essential source of the general malaise in Europe for some time.

Reinvention of politics thus does not mean a universalization of state and welfare state politics; not every action is political in the old sense of that term. Nor does this mean the ‘long march through the institutions’ envisioned by the student rebels of the seventies. What is meant is that more and more often we find ourselves in situations which the prevailing institutions and concepts of politics can neither grasp nor adequately respond to. This is of course nothing terribly new.

Politics and political institutions were never copied down or overheard somewhere, never derived from immutable natural laws; rather, they were always invented. Politics and art, and technology as well, bear this seal of self-creation. In this sense, the history of politics is the history of the invention of politics – from Greek democracy, through Machiavelli’s theories of power, Hobbes’ or Max Weber’s theories of the state, all the way to the provocative assertion in the women’s movement that ‘the personal is the political’ and the instructive though empty slogan of an ‘ecological restructuring of industrial society’. The principles of democracy, proclaimed today like the Ten Commandments, had to be invented against the resistance – and the empirical data! – of undemocratic systems. Their intellectual leaders were thus unable even to glean a hint of the speed of the changes and the

globality of the situations and hazards that would be set in motion with the triumph of the democratic industrial system.

In short, just as it was necessary in Greek antiquity to invent the forms of local democracy, and to invent those of national democracy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so it is necessary today to invent the forms of global democracy. Of course, no book and no author in his right mind can set himself such objectives. This is a bit more realistic: to argue a way free for this objective and make it a part of broad public awareness, that is, to open up the concept of politics in this special sense to the challenges of global industrial civilization at the turn of the twenty-first century. This would – perhaps – be a response to the challenge of 1989, the year of And.

In a small article with the suddenly pertinent title ‘The German as Symptom’, Robert Musil writes: ‘The current condition of the European mind is in my view not a disintegration, but an uncompleted transition, not overripeness but underripeness.’ And somewhat later one reads:

A sea of complaints have been poured out over our lack of a soul, our mechanization, calculability, and lack of religion, and the achievements of both science and art are regarded as excesses of these conditions. People need only check and, so it is said, see that even humanity’s allegedly greatest scientific achievements are nothing but excesses of this calculation drive . . .

‘The old ties – faith, pre-scientific ways, simplicity, humanity, altruism, national solidarity and civil subordination, the sacrifice of capitalistic individualism and its way of thinking – are recommended to the rootless people,’ Musil continues. His passing remark ‘socialism is full of this as well – people believe they must cure a decay’ can be ignored, since that belief system has itself decayed and is probably facing a long period of treatment. Then comes this assessment: ‘It is very seldom recognized that these phenomena represent a new problem which has no solution as yet; I am scarcely aware of a presentation which would even recognize this contemporary problem as a problem, albeit a new one, and not as an incorrect solution’ (Musil 1967: 15)

Not decay, not a wrong solution, not overripeness, but underripeness and a transition; everywhere the non-solutions of yesterday are struggling with those of the day before yesterday to master a future which is bursting all its boundaries. Breaking up these false alternatives with (an at least conceivable) *radicalization of modernity* is the concern of the *reinvention of politics*.

- There is a significant difference between the original German edition and this English translation: chapters 2 and 3 of *Die Erfindung des Politischen* have been replaced by a new chapter 'The Age of Side Effects', which is the English translation of my revised chapter for the German translation (published by Suhrkamp Verlag, 1996) of Beck, Giddens and Lash: *Reflexive Modernization* (Polity Press, 1994). The distinction between first (simple) and second (reflexive) modernity will be elaborated and applied (chapter 1, 'The Age of Side-effects: On the Politicization of Modernity').
- Then in chapter 2, 'The Construction of the Other Side of Modernity: Counter-modernization', this will be confronted with the theory of counter-modernization.
- Following that, the concept of politics will be supplemented and expanded with the concept of subpolitics in reflexive modernity (chapter 3, 'Subpolitics – The Individual Returns to Society').
- Two chapters follow, 'Ways to Alternative Modernities' (chapter 4) and
- 'The Reinvention of Politics' (chapter 5), both of which explore the thought experiment of a self-application of modernity, in order to open up fundamental alternatives.
- The book ends with an essay on 'The Art of Doubt', which sketches out and attempts to illustrate essential guideposts and highlights of reflexive modernity in the theory of science and philosophical ethics.

This structure of the book can also be understood from the attempt to elaborate the coordinates of politics in reflexive modernity, however tentatively. In chapter 1, the contrast *safe-unsafe* is developed. Chapter 2 revolves around the dichotomy *inside-outside*, in a specific way; the constructions of 'counter-modernity' are conceived as conditions of this delimitation. In this way advance clarification of the issue of strangers in global risk society is undertaken. The following chapters 'Subpolitics', 'Ways to Alternative Modernities', 'The Reinvention of Politics', vary the main contrast of this book: *political-unpolitical*.

One result of the analysis can be anticipated at this point: none of the dichotomies permits *a clear social opposition and group formation*. A constant feature of the conflict axes in reflexive modernity is rather that they tend to diffuse in one way or another. Relating this to chapter 2, even the 'stranger' is being detraditionalized in global risk society; the boundaries between intrinsic and extrinsic are becoming indistinct. This does not nullify the conflicts; rather, it intensifies them and makes them more erratic. In a word, the conflicts of And come into being.

No one writes a book alone. I must admit that without the calm – and uproar – of the *Wissenschaftskolleg* [Institute for Advanced Studies] in Berlin, the reader would have been spared this. Everyone can draw his or her own conclusions. In any case, I found the stay there extraordinarily enjoyable. This is the happy example of a cosmopolitan German institute that produces ideas which produce more ideas. The book was also written, rewritten and rewritten once again in sight of and under the protection of Lake Starnberg. It was discussed, commented on, encouraged and fought over in conversations with many people who have accompanied me in my work over the years. My mode of production, which forms the ideas while they are being produced, and the accompanying flood of manuscripts may have robbed many of both nerves and time. I beg pardon from and at the same time warmly thank: Wolfgang Bonss and Christoph Lau, who opened up their treasure chest of ideas for me; this book owes much more to them than can be documented here and in the notes. Ronald Hitzler spurred on many assessments and arguments with his lively encouragement and contradiction. Elmar Koenen often asked me questions to the point of speechlessness and stimulated a reform of the whole thing. Michaela Pfadenhauer has a way of wrinkling her brow and the ability to throw in a word of praise in just the right way to make me change or correct the direction of arguments. Martin Mulsow kept me informed on the crudest philosophical errors of my text. Angela Behring read closely and drew my attention to irritating omissions.

How can I thank the one whose company is present everywhere – in life as in the book – Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim? Quite simply, I think, by just writing one book fewer in the future.

Anyone who draws the conclusion from all of this that the author is the writer and compiler of suggestions given him by others is not too far wrong.

Ulrich Beck

1

The Age of Side-effects: On the Politicization of Modernity

What does 'reflexive modernization' mean?

We hear talk of the end everywhere – the end of the nation state, modernity, democracy, nature, the individual. It is time to inquire into the beginning which is hidden in every end. The perspective of reflexive modernization connects both inquiries; the question of what is breaking up is confronted by the question of what is coming into being, the question of the contours, principles and prospects of a second, non-linear, global modernity in a 'cosmopolitan intention' (Kant). Posing this question, of course, by no means implies being able to answer it.

For practically all fields of social activity, a gradual or eruptive collapse of previously applicable basic certainties is being asserted. The striking point is the ambivalence. What seems like decay and crisis to one person is a departure for new shores to the others. This is clearest in foreign policy where the 'eternal truths' of the East–West conflict reigned until 1989, but also in domestic policy, as well as in the left–right schematism of the political parties. NATO, the Bundeswehr, the European Union, the CSCE, first world and third world – everywhere empty linguistic formulas, broken coordinate systems and gutted institutions.¹

Yet the erosion of industrial modernity, as it developed since the nineteenth century in Europe and later radiated or was proselytized

across the world, is not a consequence of 1989. In the beginning was the environmental issue. It called into question basic premises of European thought and activity – the notion of limitless growth, the certainty of progress or the contrasting of nature and society.² The questioning of industrial modernity has for some time no longer been limited to the alarms from the environmental crisis; it is beginning to gnaw at almost all ordering models of society. In industry and industrial sociology, people are beginning to speak of the end of Fordist mass production and Taylorist hierarchies in the division of labour, even of the end of plants ('system rationalization' Bechtle and Lutz 1989; Beckenbach and van Treeck 1994; Lash and Urry 1994). There is turbulence in business, management and trade unions (Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft für Internationalen Dialog 1994). Nuclear family models and the analogous role formulas have lost their grip in view of the very commonplace confusion of marital or non-marital cohabitation and separation in one or several households, the possibilities of formal or informal divorce, on the one hand, and of post-marital parenthood, on the other (Lüscher, Schultheis and Weberspahn 1988; Beck-Gernsheim 1994).

New insecurities are infiltrating the secure milieu of the welfare state and erupting there. These may involve the loss of formerly secure benefits, threats to health or life itself from toxins, criminality and violence, or the loss of such certainties as the faith in progress, science and experts. The consequence is a new fragility of social positions and biographies – even behind the façade of established prosperity. How it should be understood, withstood and investigated no one really knows.

This is all the more true as social identities that developed along with industrial society – status-based class cultures or the separation between a man's world of careers and a woman's world of the family – are rapidly being disembedded (Beck 1992: part II). Thus the irritations of post-feminism are becoming the new trump card in the battle of the sexes (for instance, cf. Haraway 1993). Of course, such processes of individualization (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1993a, 1994)³ go hand in hand with processes of globalization (Wallerstein 1986; Giddens 1990; Robertson 1992; Lash and Urry 1994: part 4). 'We are the first generation that is living in a post-traditional order of cosmopolitan dimensions,' writes Anthony Giddens (1990). That also means that the old boundaries between public and private no longer shield us. New global communication networks and monopolies are coming into existence. Neighbourhood is becoming place-independent and global social movements are becoming a possibility. All this adds up to a fully mature 'victory crisis' of the political institutions and legitimations of

the West after the end of the Cold War. The European project of democratically enlightened industrialism is disintegrating and losing its foundations.

Anyone who takes a look at the shifts and erosion in the basic structure of European modernity must ask the question of how and where new structures, coordinate systems and orientations will come into being. If the issue of disembedding dominated the stability context of the seventies and eighties, the issue of restructuring is becoming central in the milieu of insecurity after the Cold War. And this is of course a central problem: if people look for new structure formations at all, they tend to do so in the old categories.

People count on the pathos of the nation to undo and unseat individualized society. Marriage, parenthood, love, living together and maintaining a household drift apart; the result of this is none the less squeezed into the comforting little word 'family' with all the unabashed ease provided by blindness to history. Economic growth is glorified without simultaneously seeing and recording the growth of hazards connected to it. We mourn the growing unemployment in and despite an economic recovery, but do not dare to ask how a society based on work that is running out of work must change its self-concept, how social identities and security are possible beyond work or can become so. That means that all the changes must start in thinking, with work on concepts. This is the reason why it is necessary to distinguish systematically between a *first* (simple) and a *second* (reflexive) modernity.

'Reflexive modernization' is initially a keyword in group formation, comparable to such keywords as 'Dadaism' or 'Expressionism' in art, a concept which does not pin much down but does indicate a tendency and permit distinctions. This community of opposition is seen first in the pronounced aversion to all varieties of an automatic, action-free and thus ultimately unpolitical 'modernization as usual' in society and sociology. These conceptions of simple modernization may feud with one another (as functionalism and Marxism did for a long time). They are accused and convicted of intellectual slovenliness. A modernization that makes an exception for itself, that does not subject its own premises and social forms to the law of disembedding and re-embedding of modernization, is no modernization at all. These *linear* modernization theories, positing themselves as absolutes and refusing to apply and relativize themselves to themselves, are struck by the fate that modernity keeps in store for everything it encounters and overruns: they become antiquated and ossified, the ideological relic of their own pretensions.

A second delimitation and restriction concerns the cognitive rituals of *postmodernity*.⁴ Many of its theorists and theories are certainly exciting, even productively stimulating for a theory of modernized modernity, because they (often involuntarily) conceive of it or anticipate it. Most, however, peter out on the sand of arbitrariness on which they consider modern industrial democracy to be founded. There is one contrast, however, which always defines their perspective. Post-modernism renounces what the theory of reflexive modernization recalls: the demand of the Enlightenment, especially when it is turned on itself.

The third delimitation is perhaps clearest in the case of the anti-moderns, now raising their voices provocatively everywhere. Theories of reflexive modernization develop a critique of industrial modernity which definitely gets down to the fundamentals; more precisely, they follow the self-criticism which is self-created and publicized in the conflict between functional subrationalities, or, most clearly, in the scientifically illuminated ecological crisis in society. In that sense their criticism is aimed at further development, not refusal, of modernity, at opening it to the challenges of a world of 'global homogeneity',⁵ which has lost the security of its foundations and oppositions. Theories of reflexive modernization try to capture the new savagery of reality with a conceptualization and theory formation that have learned from the idea of the radicalization of modernity. In that sense there is little in common with types of counter-modernization that attempt to turn back the wheel of modernity in theory and politics, no matter what the political camp to which they may belong. Theories of reflexive modernization are not nostalgic. They are permeated with the knowledge that the future cannot be understood and withstood in the conceptual framework of the past.

The competition among theories of reflexive modernization is thus the expression of an avant-garde demand. The institutionalized boredom of the ingrained routines in both science and politics is to be broken open and broken through, in the self-confrontation of modernity as stagnated in the model of nation state, capitalist and democratic industrial society with its own origins, claims and self-generated challenges. This is also an incitement to a struggle against prejudices in people's heads. Sociology should never be innocuous – particularly not when it calls its own foundations into question along with the foundations of modern society.

'Inside the West,' writes Gottfried Benn in his famous Berlin letter of 1948,