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**Through the Iron Bars: Reason, Relationship, and Realm in Western  
Modernity**

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**Abstract**

Western modernity heavily relies on rationalization to achieve social maturity, in which people experience similar experiences and engage in indirect social relationships. Extensively surveying the critical debate of Western modernity in which thinkers like Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), and Jürgen Habermas (1929-2026) have actively participated and critically contributed to the understanding of modernity through social and political analysis of the Western experience. This paper argues that modernity functions iron bars enforcing limits to the use of reason, social relationship, and the realm of freedom for a human agent. Through a textual study of the critical debate, this paper explores perceptions of Western modernity, which applies transcendental reasoning to reach a higher level of abstraction and claims that all societies can have the same, ultimate experience. Though later philosophers who argue for the cultural dynamics of modernity reject such claims about Western modernity, this paper limits itself to a discussion of Western modernity and explores homogeneity, rationalization, and indirect social relationships as the key dynamics. Through qualitative study and textual analysis, this paper uncovers the place of reason, human relationship, and the place of agency in the discourses of Western modernity.

*Keywords:* modernity, rationalization, social change, homogeneity, agency, self

## 1. Introduction

Modernity aims to achieve a state in which social structures from diverse philosophical backgrounds come to appear alike. The heterogeneous structures of society are forced to accept, either from within or from outside, specific models that function in a scientifically measurable and valid way. Also, many indigenous approaches have not received adequate attention in promoting the cause of singular modernity. However, this paper assumes that such concerns are beyond the scope of the present discussion. As a project to rationalize various social practices founded on the fundamental structures of society, modernity becomes a project to produce asymmetrical structures. Now, modernity establishes validity through such structures.

## 2. Locating the Debate

This paper critically examines the Western discourse on modernity by beginning with Kant's discussion on the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. As successor to Kant, French philosopher, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) joins the critical debate on the Enlightenment which plays an instrumental role in deciding the course of understanding of modernity in the West. As McHugh (1989) critically observes, "In his posthumously published essay, 'What is Enlightenment?' Foucault traces ethos of modernity, and thus the genealogy of his own philosophical project, back to Kant's own remarks on the Enlightenment in 'Was ist Aufklärung?'" (p. 103). Like Kant, Foucault rereads the formation of the spirit of the present time by analyzing the historical forces and circumstances that inspire the whole system to result in a particular direction in the intellectual awakening of society.

Telescoping the evolution of modernity in the last two centuries, the paper builds on the critical scholarship that identifies reason, social structure, and human relationships as the key vertices of modernity. Primarily focusing on the textual scholarship from the West, the study attempts to understand the three features of modernity by sifting through the historical, social, and political analyses. I have followed new historicist approach to examine the discourse of modernity and explore the Western perception by critically analyzing the Western understanding of modernity through reason as human capability to analyze one's own circumstances and crave a path to rescue oneself from the traps. Similarly, human interactions give birth to certain level of connections and associations among themselves. How does modernity perceive them? This paper treats the social space as the realm in which certain degree of transformation occurs to give rise to human agency and social relationships. Through textual scholarship, this study explores

implications and limitations of the three critical concepts of Western modernity.

### 3. From Reason to Relationships

Validity of system results after proper integration of the basic areas of human foundations. Habermas (2005) explores these three areas as art, science, and morality. In European modernity, the Enlightenment sought to establish a link among these three domains of humanity to achieve harmony in human society and social life. He analyzes the process of modernity historically and locates the Renaissance as the point of departure for the individual advancement of the various cognitive domains of human life. He notes:

It was the Renaissance which first saw the emergence of a specific domain categorized exclusively in terms of the beautiful. Then, in the course of the eighteenth century, literature, the plastic arts and music were institutionalized as a specific domain of activity distinct from ecclesiastical and court life. Finally, around the middle of the nineteenth century, there also arose an aestheticist conception of art which obliged artists to produce their work in accordance with the conscious outlook of *l'art pour l'art*. The autonomy of the aesthetic was thereby explicitly constituted as a project. (p. 292)

Europe envisions the totality of all the cognitive domains of human life at the time. For instance, reason, imagination, and moral codes represent the key domains of human understanding which Habermas states that Europe aspired to bring together to form an organic whole. Habermasian analysis encounters a major blockade as he views each of the three domains having different speed on their own. It is almost impossible for science and morality to make pace with aesthetics and imagination. Hence, the European dream of unifying all the cognitive domains was never realized, thereby pushing the dream of modernity towards the verge of collapse because of many avant-garde movements that he calls “various conservative positions” (p. 300). Instead of accepting new social movements, Habermas views them as the unwanted factors that have arisen to disturb the unifying mission of the West.

One of the contradictions in Habermas's analysis is his inclusion of ethics, aesthetics, and reason within a single frame of modernity. His modernity seeks to explore the common ground for the most uneven dimensions of life. Homogenizing the diverse domains of human cognition to achieve a state in which scientifically valid totality becomes possible is central to the European mindset as an impetus to guide the course of history. So too, the notion of modernity aspires to force

asymmetrical structures in every society. Meyer et al. (1997) also argue that “World models have long been in operation as shapers of states and societies, but they have become especially important in the postwar era as the cultural and organizational development of world society has intensified at an unprecedented rate” (p. 145).

The world is shaped by specific models that make both claims: they are scientifically valid. They can deliver complete justice to people. The promise of modernity becomes so attractive that “reenchantment” (Tiryakian, 1992, p. 83) becomes a significant dynamic of the process. Through homogenization, the belief system is transformed so that the privileged class is forced to abandon that power and their control over the divine. Tiryakian (1992) points out that Europe experienced it when “Protestantism stripped the world of the magical mystification associated with the Catholic Church” (p. 83). The Renaissance witnessed the rise of secular values and reason. Such type of distance between the magic and the real (the reason) helps to generate equality on the one hand and vitality for modernity on the other. Such intellectual awakening implies that “human agency was the decisive in this world” (Tiryakian, 1992, p. 84), thereby making humans responsible for all their acts.

Modernity realizes through a powerful human agency who identifies the erroneous spaces in social configuration. Such agency employs critical reasoning as the tool of social analysis to explore the areas requiring human intervention. Implicitly, modernity entrust on human agents with the responsibility to think out the solution for the complexities of human lives in the set of social imaginaries. That is, humans become the cause of every action. They want to become master of their destiny on their own. As Wagner (2001) also notes:

... modernity refers to a situation in which human beings do not accept any external guarantors, i.e., guarantors that they do not themselves posit, of the certainty of knowledge, of the viability of the political orders or of the continuity of their selves. Despite the enormous variety of specific conceptualization of modernity, the great majority of them take it to be the key characteristic of modernity that human beings think of themselves as setting their own rules and laws for their relation to nature, for their living together and understanding themselves. (p. 4)

By bringing together the certainty of knowledge and viability of political imagination, Wagner points out that power setup does not always move along the path as envisioned in the beginning. Rather, its destination is often eroded when the social imagination encounters multiple junctures in its development. The core

agenda of social welfare requires proper attention in the course of historical erosion of social memory. As a necessity, modernity helps the human agency to stand larger than the social setup and point out the malfunctioning and/or dysfunctional (sets) of cogs or the machine on the whole in order to fix it anew. Then, the social imagination revives its lost agenda of social welfare for all the people.

Modernity challenges the accepted and set regular patterns of beliefs in society. As a regular perception, people tend to embrace certain habits that do not allow them to derive the benefits of social welfare. Often, people fail to critically reason out the cause of the distress they are living with. In the eighteenth century, Kant argues that only the awakened social and political agency recognizes the lapses of society through critical reasoning and rescue themselves from the repeating, dead patterns of their quotidian lives. Only after people recognize themselves as the agents of their own actions can they release themselves "from self-incurred tutelage" (Kant, 2005, p. 270). This awareness gives human reason courage and enables one to bring every problem to a valid and logical end that is both rationally and empirically viable. Kant states that arguments and debates make it possible for people to address issues in social life while defining the nature of critical reasoning and its social implications in public life. For him, "the public use of reason must be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men" (p. 271). He recognizes the vitality of human agency and the capability to explore the ground for everybody's satisfaction. He sets a condition that everyone be able to realize their innate capacity to use reason. At depth, modernity fails to acknowledge individual differences among people, which is supposed to contribute to a harmonious society.

Later, Foucault identifies Kantian arguments on the Enlightenment and use of reason occupy significant place in the history of social development. However, Foucault critically examines Kantian understanding of modernity where the perspectives of people matter more to the French critic. He presents modernity as a way of perceiving and defining social reality as rooted in society. As he argues, "For the attitude of modernity, the high value of present is indissociable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it ... and to transform it not by destroying but by grasping it in what it is" (Foucault, 1984, p. 41). Kant emphasized on the innate human capability to employ reason to explain and analyze their own context. Foucault believes more on the external forces negotiating with themselves contributing to making of the ethos of the moment. To Foucault, Kant had removed the external forces of formation of modernity by laying emphasis on the cognitive side of human agency. Foucault genealogically scrutinized and explored the inner tenets of the ethos of the present. The iron bars of modernity visibly set themselves firmly in Foucauldian theoretical standpoint as he forces the negotiation of social

forces outside human agency in historical context leading to formation of modernity. Foucault's historicization of the process (1992/1977, p. 114) acknowledges the dissimilarities. Foucault places tradition as the backdrop for modernity because it helps understand and interpret the experience of the present.

As a break from traditional practices, modernity makes tradition a point of departure from its mode of production and sustenance. In Europe, the advent of modernity also implies "the democratization of societies, especially the destruction of inherited privilege and declaration of equal rights of citizenships" (Bendix, 1967, p. 292). Traditionally, power is associated with divinity, and an agriculture-based society, with its kinship as the sole marker of social relationships, is maintained. In such societies, people develop an understanding of time as an unfolding process with historical content. Karl Marx emerges against this notion when he affirms that "a social class becomes an agent of historical change" (Bendix, 1967, p. 304). In traditional societies, recipients of social actions redefine themselves as agents of social change as the modernity surfaces and transform their social relationships. Calhoun (1992) analyzes this transformation when he finds premodern or traditional social organization as "depended primarily on direct interpersonal relationships" (p. 210). Every activity in the premodern state takes place in direct contact among community members. Hence, community life is at the heart of traditional, agricultural society.

Modernity primarily depends on indirect social relationships, in that direct social relationships entail the control of all spheres of communal life, thereby making the use of public reason, which Kant ardently believes, impossible. As Calhoun (1992) states, "Rather modernity is distinguished by the increasing frequency, scale, and importance of indirect social relationships. Large-scale markets, closely administered organizations, and information technologies have produced vastly more opportunities for such relationships than existed in any premodern society" (p. 211). Modernity shapes social structures so that they function more responsibly and are treated by humans as part of them—the social systems in modernity act as autonomous bodies responsible for their actions. Thus, the humanization of social structures enhances indirect relationships among people. Kant and Marx held that human beings can bring about change in understanding and in society alike. In sum, their focus is on the human being as an agent. Humans are capable of understanding themselves and relating to others. In this regard, human will and ability are recognized as agents capable of transforming consciousness.

Modernity is also viewed as the rationalization of social practices to better understand the prevailing social structure. Every attempt in this process is directed

toward getting logical justification and collective happiness, whereby everybody, by their power of reasoning, stands as the able ones with equal rights. Moreover, modernity assures everyone of a better life in which understanding the totality is possible. In addition, rationalization at both social and individual levels emphasizes the subjective potential of reasoning, expecting the emancipation of humankind from all forms of bondage and thus enabling freedom and democracy, two most inevitable impetuses for living. Critical reasoning allows human beings in a position to explore the roots of their distress and devise the methods of their rescue from therein. Although such approach varies from person to person, the Enlightenment assumes that all human beings inherently hold this innate capability to obtain their liberation from the erroneous social and political structures surrounding them.

Kant (2005/1784) states that the Enlightenment follows the "release from self-incurred tutelage" (p. 270); for the other, his focus on achieving the desired liberation lies in the subjective capacities of individuals. Later critics point that Kant has excessively relied on reasoning in relation to social relationship and political setup of society as he has treated it as cause and consequence of liberation in his discussion on the Enlightenment when he writes, "... if only freedom is granted, enlightenment is almost sure to follow" (p. 271). Critics like Foucault differently assess Kant's position when they argue about freedom and the Enlightenment. In a linear succession, they tend to place one after the other and raise question about Kant's confusion between the cause and consequence while placing the Enlightenment and liberation. As Kant vocally states, "Have courage to use your own reason!" (p. 270). Such proclamation implies reason as the cause of the Enlightenment that also broadens the horizon of the use of reasoning later. However, later critics point out that Kantian discussion blurs the line between the cause and consequence regarding the use of reason as Foucault (1984) critically analyze,

Kant in fact describes Enlightenment as the moment when humanity is going to put its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any authority; now its role is precisely at this moment that the critique is necessary, since its role is that of defining conditions under which the use of reason is legitimate in order to determine what can be known, what must be done, and what may be hoped. (pp. 37-38)

Foucault prioritizes the historical forces resulting from outside human cognitive possibilities and seeks disjoints of history to theoretically derive his understanding of modernity. To him, attitude (p. 38) matters more than reason. He locates

modernity in context, highlighting realm in formation of the ethos of the age. Such attitude impacts the collective perceptions of people and paves a new path for people to explore and walk together. Analyzing the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century in England, Foucault identifies that the historical forces transformed the ways of living by reconfiguring the economic and political imagination in Europe. Later, France and other European nations followed historically established model of England to achieve industrial revolution in their nations. Bendix (1967) analyzes the situation and explores that one of the fundamental aspects of modernization is social change since the eighteenth century (p. 331). Indeed, rationalization also leads to social change that demands the growth of democratic values.

As a key dynamic of modernity, rationality results in the creation and propagation of an asymmetrical social structure. It reproduces certain models across various domains of life and society, with a fundamental emphasis on economic, cultural, and social dimensions. Discussing the journey of European modernity, Eder (1992) finds that the cultural world opposes the programs of the working class and the bourgeoisie. He writes: "The world of unlimited development of industrial forces of production is replaced by a new legitimating practice: the programming of the economic, cultural, and social reproduction of society" (p. 332). In the meantime, mass awareness paves the way for the democratization of society, thereby transforming people's political perspectives. For Kant, only the reason helps develop a universal foundation for democratic institutions despite his belief in the subject-centered rationality. Subjective reasoning fails to reach its end because individuals differ. Hence, individually shaped approaches to argument cannot yield a foundationally acceptable universal model.

Habermas challenges the idea of subjective rationality to formulate his own notions of a foundational approach to a universally suitable model. He finds such a model in inter-subjective rationality. Like Foucault, he acknowledges the significance of the network in society. Everyone is networked with others, and power emerges from it. Habermas's intersubjective approach to modernity is based on his concept of communicative rationality, which he defines:

The communicative rationality recalls older idea of logos, inasmuch as it brings along with it the connotations of a noncoercively unifying, consensus-building force of a disclosure in which the participants overcome their at first subjectivity based views in favor of a rationally motivated agreement. (Habermas, 1987, as cited in Flyvbjerg, 1998, p. 212)

Communicative rationality serves as a foundational stone for strengthening

democratic norms and values, as people communicate to build consensus on the issue at hand. Thus, civic sense of modernity implies the advancement of democratic values.

The rationalization functions in two ways to enhance the configuration of society: through industrialization and democratization. Mathematical reasoning led to formation of complex mechanical structures that supported industrial scale of production, preparing the ground for pre-industrial nations for their economic prosperity. It was a novel opportunity for Europe to create national wealth in the eighteenth century. The industrialists could now move away from their dependence on muscles and labor force of the pre-industrial order. European Romanticism "assumes that the scientific-industrial order," as Tiryakian (1992) observes, "can be transformed, perhaps by bringing together past and the future so as to produce a new present" (p. 85). Hence, the idea of progress itself is an eighteenth-century invention. Industrialization, for one thing, provided people with multiple opportunities. The division of labor emerged as another rational conclusion in Adam Smith. Such specialization, as Proudhon observes, has "a destructive effect upon the individual" (Proudhon, 1888, as cited in Bendix, 1967, p. 300). On top of it, the political character of industrialization comes into focus when the government and its policies are shaped by it. Hence, it was a political imperative for the governments of Europe (Landes, 1965, as cited in Bendix, 1967, p. 332). With the shift in the mode of production, people's consciousness also transforms, and new attitudes and perspectives manifest in society.

Like industrialization, democratization is another phenomenon of rationalization, with logical reasoning as the sole tool for reaching any conclusion. People begin to treat everyone on equal terms. Industrialization helps transform the mode of economic organization of society, whereas democratization renovates the political configuration of social structures, resulting in the all-around rationalization of society. The marginal voice in the pre-modern social structure also gets due space. Besides, civil society emerges with modernity. Foucault sees social networks generating power. Hence, every component in the network is important. Flyvbjerg's (1998) analysis of Foucauldian argument explores that "Foucault's emphasis on marginality makes his thinking sensitive to difference, diversity and politics of identity, something which today is crucial for understanding civil society and for acting in it" (p. 224). The formation of civil society becomes possible when people begin to understand each other on equal terms.

Besides civil society, the social structuring of various subsystems also emerges as another act of democratization. For Marx, the result of such structuring is that the

mode of production is a universally constant factor (Marx, as cited in Bendix, 1967, p. 308). However, people's will in various contexts produces different modifications in the forms of such configurations. However, rationalization requires pragmatic observation, as misuse of power emerges in democratization because people hold in them the possibility of applying critical faculty of reasoning and understanding their position in the complex power setup of society and posit themselves in the structure of power. As Flyvbjerg (1998) concludes, "Habermas's approach is oriented toward universals, context-independence and control via constitution-writing and institutional development. Foucault focuses context-dependent and toward the analysis of strategies and tactics as the basis for power struggle" (p. 227). Thus, Foucault and Habermas emphasize the creation of systems that function more democratically.

Rationalization, as an integral phenomenon of modernity, operates at both the individual and the social levels. Individual rationalization was first advocated and defined in the Kantian discourse of the Enlightenment, with its total emphasis on the subjective mode of reasoning. Later, Foucault and Habermas critique the subjective method of liberation and introduce the notion of the network structure of power and intersubjective reasoning and communicative rationality, respectively. On the other hand, rationalization at the social level leads to industrialization and democratization, thereby materializing economic and political transformations. Industrialization, for one thing, paves the way for science and technology; for the other, it expands markets. Similarly, democratization of society is founded on the assumption that the intersubjective network of society produces power. On the whole, social relationships act as the building blocks of modern society because rationalization transforms them at their core.

Modernity results in the transformation of social relationships that are practiced and maintained in a society for a long time. Modernized society displays a unique feature in that it possesses distance and integrity among its individuals at the same time. In premodern society, the kinship and authority of a single head are strongly evident, as society is structured around direct relationships. Modernity is perceived as a process that transforms social relationships, in which an indirect form of individual linkage emerges, producing a network in society. Similarly, these chains lead to the emergence of corporate structures, assisted by the market economy. The most significant paradox in the process is that distanced closeness functions as an effective force to guide the mindset forward. The transformation of kinship and authority under a single head appears to be the most significant aspect of modernity. In the modernization of Europe, direct relationships have given way to indirect ones due to industrialization and democratization. For instance, Calhoun

(1992) argues that indirect social relationships form “one of the constitutive features of modern age” (p. 207) because various types of social organizations, as a result of market expansion and growth of civil society, emerge to address the diverse needs of people. Unlike the premodern societies, the actors in modern societies “anticipate personal and social progress through an increased sense of their own subjectivity, but this subjectivity is threatened because culture is currently being industrially produced and distributed (Haferkamp & Smelser, p. 16). Besides, the culture seeks within itself a mediator between itself and subjectivity, whereby a cultural network serves as the source of both meaning and an aid in establishing relationships with others. In the meantime, the shared belief system is born as the collective conscience.

Shared values, beliefs, socio-cultural practices, and rituals form the nexus of collective conscience in any society. In premodern society, communal living and social structures helped people bind together. By contrast, modernity, with industrialization and the rise of civil society, views the propagation of collective conscience differently, in that cultural production and distribution are organizationally mediated. In addition, direct social control in traditional society is lost through organizational mediation. Durkheim claims that collective conscience undergoes substantial change as “societies advance from segmented (traditional) to organized (modern) social types” (Alexander, 1983, as cited in Seidman 1985, p. 112). This change can also be termed social change or the transformation of people's conscience. Due to industrialization and urbanization, metropolitan areas emerge during modernization. In such locations, people fail to celebrate the collective conscience. So too, Simmel (1950) finds the lack of communal celebration and the sentimental touch of rural life. Hence, he says that modern life in a metropolis “underlies a heightened awareness and a predominance of intelligence in metropolitan man” (p. 410)—a mental state resulting from the high degree of rationalization and the transformation of direct social relationships into indirect ones.

With the capitalist structure at the heart of modernization, the quest for social integrity leads to a corporate structure. The traditional way of communal life is abolished as it is replaced by urbanization and market expansion – two offspring of industrialization. Various corporations come into being in this process. So, Calhoun (1992) concludes that “corporations are a kind of social automation ... made possible by indirect relationships” (p. 223). Modern societies allow people to make use of information to mediate with other people. The social networks are constructed with the flow of information from one end to the other and put at the service of people. The human actors now turn themselves into mediators in the

formation and employment of such networks at present. In addition, the broad manifestation of this idea is evident in world culture, where "almost every aspect of social life is discussed, rationalized, and organized" (Meyer et al., 1997, p. 162). Thus, direct relationships lose their sway over society with modernity.

Besides the corporate structure, the intellectualization of society also occurs during modernization. Rationality in its economic form forces industrialization, which, in turn, drives market expansion and, in turn, urbanization. Moreover, Simmel (1950) agrees that the metropolis becomes a locale where consciousness gets transformed to enhance indirect social relationships and begins to function in an intellectualized way. Hence, he says that objectivity prevails in metropolitan life as he views the reduced value of human beings into "a mere cog in an enormous organization of things and powers which tear from his hands all progress, spirituality, and value in order to transform them from their subjective form into the form of a purely objective life" (p. 422). When life is objectified, and rules begin to govern, social life is expected to emerge in an organized form. Simply put, metropolitan life bestows luxuries; yet the intellectualization, used to rationally structure social norms and practices, is seen as a by-product of modernity that ignores the emotional links among people. Thus, social relationships appear in different shapes and sizes.

In the context of indirect social relationships, modernity brings crises of meaning. Meaning is, for one thing, a social construct that people produce to suit their interests; for the other, it is also a window through which to examine the psyche of the people. Eder (1992) points out that "the evolution of modern society becomes dependent on the communication that is the subject of communicative relationships" (p. 326). In other words, even after the evolution of indirect relationships in society, people begin to feel the need for communication and consensus-building, for the civil society that Habermas expects to function smoothly fails to posit itself in the absence of communication. Hence, modernization employs information technology to the fullest degree possible. Moreover, Seidman (1985) analyzes the crises of meaning as one of the basic factors in this process; therefore, he notes that "modernists maintained that since history marches forward, traditions and faiths no longer respond to present realities" (p. 111). The break from traditional meaning to the present reality creates such a vast chasm to fill. On top of that, society moves so fast, driven by the spirit of modernization, that the production of meaning cannot keep pace with the changing ethos of time.

The quest for meaning in the transitional stage of modernity also serves as a

platform for conflict. To bridge the old and the new with meaning as the basic unit, struggles are manifest in society. Eder (1992) gives an example of eighteenth-century England when he depicts the conflict between the gentry and the owner of polite culture, and the plebs as the bearers of the mass mentality (p. 329). By contrast, Durkheim argues that modernity as a rationalization project fails to generate meaning, and hence people must learn to explore the contents of their affective life if meaning is to be formed (Durkheim, 1915, as cited in Seidman, 1984, p. 118). The rationalization of society leads to the loss of shared ritual spaces and collective belief systems, which are sources of meaning. Therefore, the quest for meaning arises when people feel the loss of rituals and shared domains of collective belief systems during social change.

Social change causes individuals to lose meaning by detaching them from their roots. When the collective domains of shared understanding no longer exist in society, the adverse effect of modernization is seen in individuals. Eyerman (1992) points out that modernity, in the form of social change, detaches society from its own past individual practices. As he states, "The social changes associated with modernity, industrialization, and especially urbanization were neither chosen nor directed by the individuals involved in these demographic changes. They were its victims, not its instigators. Once in motion, however, these shifts opened new possibilities" (p. 38). Denying the role of human agency, he depicts a dismal portrait of the individual in the changed situation, yet with some possibilities for creating meaning. The new ways of creating meaning are explored in response to social change.

Social change works as a dynamic force in modern society. Society cannot remain stagnant forever, as social changes keep emerging as a challenge of time. Every change that modernity introduces makes human beings and social institutions more autonomous, since relationships become more indirect. Melucci argues that "the (post-)modern world brings new form of social control, conformity pressures, and information processing to which new social movements respond" (Melucci, as cited in Buechler, 1984, p. 446). Despite Kant's focus on subjective reasoning as the fundamental tool of social control, modernity develops a different kind of mediation that transforms the structure of social hierarchy in traditional society. On the whole, social practices and institutions undergo transformations in social relationships resulting from modernity.

Modernity displays various dimensions and possesses various dynamics. Moreover, approaching it from a one-dimensional perspective leads to a misunderstanding. Also, analyzing history, politics, and literature can lead to an examination of

modern consciousness. The Western debate over modernity and postmodernity seeks to confine both to the Western phenomenon. However, Lyotard (1987) refuses to accept them as two distinct periods. He argues that "postmodernity is a promise with which modernity is pregnant, definitely and endlessly" (p. 4). The modernity-postmodernity debate, though endless in the West, is an academic issue in that postmodernity serves as a method of critique of the Western intellectual tradition. On the other hand, modernity is a social phenomenon with three major aspects: the homogenization of the heterogeneous, rationality, and social relationships.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Modernity puts constraints on reason, relationship, and realms in social setup of distribution of power. Against its claim of achieving and sustaining social welfare, the whole quest of modernity appears like the iron bars allowing certain degree of freedom to pass through the structure. As the major thinker of the Enlightenment, Kant envisions that the modernity project aims to emancipate human beings who apply critical reasoning to understand themselves and their position in society. Kant believes in historical immaturity of Europe in the eighteenth century and devises them a way to overcome the state of innocence. For Foucault, modernity refers to the attitude of people to relate themselves to the prevailing spirit of contemporaneity. Unlike Kant, Foucault analyzes the nature of the contemporary reality and explores the historical tenets lying therein to uncover the meaning of modernity. The fundamental shift that Foucault has devised at present refers to relating to the ethos of the present and preparing a vantage point to view both the present and the future. From this standpoint, the homogenizing project of modernity, with its powerful tool of rationality, can be better understood as bringing about asymmetrical structures in social development. Besides, the transformation of social relationships is another major factor that leads to the mediated situation in modern society. Moreover, the indirect social relationships in metropolitan space become a source of the inward journey of the human being, as they suffer isolation. Moreover, the loss of communal life and the collective conscience makes the modern subjects alienated from their own roots.

Modernity can be approached from the common ground of history, politics, and literature to examine how a society has both brought about and suffered the homogenizing mission of modernity. Also, the rationalization as a fundamental aspect of modernity helps establish democratic practices and market expansion. Moreover, the humanistic values also emerge in society when it becomes more rational. In the like manner, indirect social relationships emerge as a result of

modernity. Modern society has led to emergence of various institutions and organizations that mediate relationships among individuals. Western critical debate focuses on modernity that results in mediated relationships in society, weakening direct control and enhancing its democratization.

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