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To think in terms of "alternative modernities" is to admit that modernity is inescapable and to desist from speculations about modernity's end. Modernity today is global and multiple and no longer has a Western "governing center" to accompany it. The essays in this collection, therefore, approach the dilemmas of modernity from transnational and transcultural perspectives.

The idea of "alternative modernities" holds that modernity always unfolds within specific cultures or civilizations and that different starting points of the transition to modernity lead to different outcomes. Without abandoning the Western discourse on the subject, the contributors to this volume write from the standpoint that modernity is in truth a richly multiplicitous concept. Believing that the language and lessons of Western modernity must be submitted to comparative study of its global receptions, they focus on such sites as China, Russia, India, Trinidad, and Mexico. Other essays treat more theoretical aspects of modernity, such as its self-understanding and the potential reconcilability of cosmopolitanism and diversity.

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