

## **Asian Humanity and the Power Relation: On the Question of *Identification* and *Recognition***

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What can an Asian theory be? Is the question a blatant oxymoron, or some intellectual anomaly? What is at stake in this inquiry is not the character of Asia at all. On the contrary, what makes the pairing of Asia and theory somewhat strange is our presumption that theory is something we normally expect of Europe or the West. (Europe and the West must be differentiated historically and geopolitically, but due to the lack of space the two designations are treated almost interchangeably in this article.)

Just like any civilization, Europe produces knowledge, but it is distinguished from other civilizations by its unique mode of operation in knowledge production. Until recently, Europe was proud of itself in its commitment to theory - or philosophy at large - in the sense that it is determined and determining itself in terms of the secondary or derivative mode of its other: it is constantly reflecting upon, criticizing and transforming its own manner of knowledge production. Europeans regarded themselves as an exceptional kind of humanity capable of theory and called themselves *humanitas* in contrast to other types of humanity, *anthropos*: those who produce knowledge but are incapable of reflecting upon and criticizing their *modus operandi* in knowledge production.

Etymologically and genealogically Asia is a derivative of Europe. And I would like to examine what the Asian identity entails and what power relation the identification with Asia performs and institutes in view of the dichotomy of *humanitas* and *anthropos* which still shapes the disciplinary configuration of human sciences. At the same time, in this examination of Asian theory it is rather important to take into account what has been generally referred to as the crisis of European humanity. It is increasingly difficult to sustain this exceptionalist notion of the West or European humanity. Through the examination of the crisis of European humanity, this article discusses what the status of theory can potentially mean in relation to Asian humanity today.