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Winter November 18, 2015

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INVERTED REALITY: HOW CRITICAL
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EACH OTHER**

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/asafa_jalata/86/

THEORIZING MODERN SOCIETY AS AN INVERTED REALITY: HOW CRITICAL THEORY AND INDIGENOUS CRITIQUES OF GLOBALIZATION MUST LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

Asafa Jalata and Harry F. Dahms

ABSTRACT

Purpose – To examine whether indigenous critiques of globalization and critical theories of modernity are compatible, and how they can complement each other so as to engender more realistic theories of modern society as inherently constructive and destructive, along with practical strategies to strengthen modernity as a culturally transformative project, as opposed to the formal modernization processes that rely on and reinforce modern societies as structures of social inequality.

Methodology/approach – Comparison and assessment of the foundations, orientations, and implications of indigenous critiques of globalization and the Frankfurt School's critical theory of modern society, for

Globalization, Critique and Social Theory: Diagnoses and Challenges
Current Perspectives in Social Theory, Volume 33, 75–133
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ISSN: 0278-1204/doi:10.1108/S0278-120420150000033004

furthering our understanding of challenges facing human civilization in the twenty-first century, and for opportunities to promote social justice.

Findings – Modern societies maintain order by compelling individuals to subscribe to propositions about their own and their society’s purportedly “superior” nature, especially when compared to indigenous cultures, to override observations about the de facto logic of modern societies that are in conflict with their purported logic.

Research implications – Social theorists need to make consistent efforts to critically reflect on how their own society, in terms of socio-historical circumstances as well as various types of implied biases, translates into research agendas and propositions that are highly problematic when applied to those who belong to or come from different socio-historical contexts.

Originality/value – An effort to engender a process of reciprocal engagement between one of the early traditions of critiquing modern societies and a more recent development originating in populations and parts of the world that historically have been the subject of both constructive and destructive modernization processes.

Keywords: Mainstream social science; indigeneity; traditional Marxism; critique; modernization

SETTING THE STAGE: THE EXCEPTIONALISM OF COLD-WAR MODERNITY

It is becoming increasingly apparent that *both* the dominant models of modern political economy in industrialized societies that arose after the end of World War II, in the East as well as in the West, were more unusual, temporally delimited, similar, and less indicative of successful and lasting configurations of business, labor, and government, than many social scientists and social theorists had considered during the decades following the Second World War.¹ Neither the specific *capitalist*, nor the specific *communist* version of industrialized political economy could have taken shape, during the 1950 and 1960s, independently of the scale and scope of the destruction and horrors of the war.² To be sure, with regard to those configurations, the designation “capitalist” may be equally problematic as

“communist.” In the West, as Piketty (2014) and others have shown, the Fordist, post-World War II – or Cold War – era, with its strong emphasis on economic growth, social legislation, and public welfare, represented a major deviation from the historical trajectory of the development of capitalism as a socio-economic system, and is reliable only to a certain degree as evidence of the workings of capitalism, and even less so of the “logic of capital.”³ Similarly, describing the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence – China did not begin to industrialize until much later in the century – as “communist” conflates theoretical categories with the logic of authoritarian power and forms of totalitarian rule, with the former serving as a means to conceal or distract from attention to the latter.

The relatively short-lived and exceptional nature of the *communist* version of the post-World War II regime of industrialized political economy has been in plain view at least since the so-called end of the Cold War (see Dahms, 2009). However, since the rise of neoliberalism, it also has become undeniable that the success story of the welfare “capitalist” version of political economy, which coincided with the so-called “golden age of capitalism,” ended decades ago.⁴ More importantly, however, it has become apparent only since the early years of the *current* century – and more so, it would seem, as we have been moving further into the century – that the Western regime of political economy has begun to transition into a condition that is fraught with crises and characterized by an intensifying commitment to maintaining and securing the status quo, within the scaffolding of existing social structures.⁵ Concordantly, the formulation and implementation of public policies in an array of regards – economic and social, but also educational, technological, environmental, and especially in terms of international relations – appears to be driven by the imperative to maintain order and stability (in the sense of a specific order qua structure of social and economic inequality, in terms of a particular type of stability⁶), in the fact of accelerating economic change under conditions of “globalization”: an imperative that also provides political action and programs with direction and purpose. Yet the latter appear to be synchronous with a warping of the “arch of history” in ways that are difficult to discern or assess, and which may not be reconcilable with traditional progressive assumptions about crises preparing, or leading to, qualitative improvements.

In this context, diagnosing the state of modern society, and of the trajectory of globalization as the extension and amplification of modern society’s conflicting logics, is a challenge that calls for a new type of critical analysis intent on avoiding reliance on well-established, traditional patterns of critique

in social and political theory, and in the social sciences, since the inception of the latter in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Those patterns of critique emerged from within modern societies, from whose contexts the more recent process of globalization also arose, and whose societal patterns and perspectives on world history – including especially the place of modern societies in the latter – prevailing modes of critique are in danger of reflecting, to a greater or lesser extent. Yet, endeavors to conceive of critical perspectives on modern society that rigorously reflect upon the nature of the socio-historical contexts within which they were developed, and from which they emerged, are fraught with a key dilemma: how to theorize the problematic features of a societal framework that also presents the constitutive horizon within which to illuminate those problematic features?

In recent decades, a new type of critique of modern societies has developed, from the vantage point of indigenous populations whose experiences as the *objects* rather than the presumed *subjects* of modernization processes and the culture of modernity provide an interpretive and analytical frame that has been absent from modernist (or postmodernist, though in a different manner) critiques of modern societies. To date, however, constructive exchanges between both types of applying critical scrutiny and evaluation to modern societies and the multifarious processes that sustain them and contribute to their historical and geopolitical prominence have remained rudimentary.⁷

Our objective in this paper is to introduce indigenous critiques of modern Western societies as a resource for critical theory, and vice versa, to examine whether both types of critique might benefit from each other, and how constructive complementation might – or would have to – be conceived.⁸ We do not mean to suggest that indigenous groups and populations are homogenous entities with singular, common outlook, interests and goals. Rather, we treat indigeneity as an ideal-type of sorts, in the Weberian sense, in order to formulate a specific argument and to prepare a particular kind of analysis regarding the distinctiveness of modern societies and the challenge their illumination presents: that delineating modern society's underlying principles requires a particular stance and mode of examination which is neither intuitive nor compatible with the notion of scientific research at the core of mainstream approaches. Critical theories are central to such an undertaking as they *both* reflect and critically reflect on Western ideations, values, and modes of thought (see esp. [Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002 \[1944\]](#)). Critical theories have as their primary reference frame modern societies, and problems in and of the latter, in terms of contradictions, paradoxes, inconsistencies, and the challenge, in general, to delineate why conceiving of a theory of modern society is so difficult.

Our effort thus is directed at identifying the necessary perimeter for such complementary collaboration, between indigenous critiques, in general, and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, in particular. The latter is uniquely suitable for this purpose, given that it represents the tradition of critiquing modern societies that since the 1930s has made consistent efforts to illuminate the latter from within, by explicating the concept, thrust and normative foundations of its critique. In addition, this tradition has been willing to acknowledge clearly its underlying assumptions in terms of the philosophy of social science, and its self-understanding as a force inspired by the prospect of emancipation from visible and invisible systems and structures of power, especially in contradistinction to the corresponding claims of traditional, mainstream theory, and social science.⁹

We will proceed in five steps. After first situating this study in terms of the gravity concrete socio-historical contexts exert on all kinds of inquiry, including social inquiries, we will explicitly introduce key theoretical and methodological considerations necessary to effectively address and appreciate the contribution of indigenous perspectives on capitalism and modernity that add to and point beyond traditional mainstream discourses and approaches in social theory. Next, we briefly address how global capitalism and globalization have negatively affected indigenous peoples, and why the main social theories of liberalism and modernization, as well as traditional versions of oppositional Marxist theory, have failed to recognize the concerns of indigenous peoples. Fourth, we identify and present indigenous theories and forms of knowledge/knowing that challenge the theoretical assumptions of mainstream theories and scholarship, as the latter have been stagnating and have failed to address the political and economic challenges of the majority of humanity. Finally, we propose ways of combining, if not integrating indigenous critiques of globalization and critical theories of modern society, to facilitate the production of liberation knowledge as a necessary step toward establishing a substantially more egalitarian democratic system.

INDIGENOUS CRITIQUES AND CRITICAL THEORIES: THE INVISIBLE GRAVITY AND POWER OF SOCIETAL CONTEXTS

As counter-hegemonic interpretive and political frames, indigenous theories and forms of knowledge (rather, *modes of knowing*¹⁰) highlight the fallacies

of hegemonic theories and knowledge that naturalize, rationalize, justify, and promote modern social hierarchies in the name of scientific rigor, on the basis of such categories as race/ethno-nation, gender and class, as well as exploitation, within the capitalist world system. Mainstream theories and forms of knowledge that are prevalent in modern Western societies do have little room or incentive to address the fundamental problems of indigenous peoples and other subaltern groups, due to the self-contained nature and self-referential thrust of modern concerns (despite its claims to universality), as they implicitly or explicitly pertain to the particular formations of social life in formally democratic, industrialized, capitalist societies, and the problems they confront.¹¹ In addition, race-centric interests, geo-cultural foundations, and “modernist” perspectives constitute and legitimate the orientation and potential for professional success of scholars in, and especially beyond, the social sciences and humanities, thus sustaining a secondary incentive structure for neglecting features of modern societies deemed to be undesirable yet integral to their possibility and “constitutional logic.”¹² Despite their affinity – in principle – with indigenous perspectives on globalization as the current stage of modern capitalist development, critiques of mainstream suppositions and purposes and how they are permanently in danger of concealing and perpetuating many of the most problematic aspects of modern societies (especially in the tradition of Marx’s critique of political economy, as well as feminist, post-structural, and queer critical theories), to date have not fully acknowledged and articulated the inherent humanity and needs of indigenous peoples, or developed resulting implications for how to theorize at the level of global civilization.¹³

Europe- and North America-centric perspectives tend to be fraught, at their core, both in terms of “modernist” and postmodernist variants, with deficits of critical reflexivity regarding the specificity of their own socio-historical circumstances and constitution, especially as far as the underlying capital-labor relations and, more generally, unequal structuring principles in society are concerned.

Hence, we start out from the position that a more rigorously critical analysis of globalization and modern society is necessary to fully and thoroughly expose the fallacies of hegemonic theories and types of knowledge, and to make an initial effort to suggest ways of establishing an intellectual bridge between critical theories and indigenous critiques. Our goal is promote the objective of real human liberation, and the corresponding actualization of those norms and values that commonly serve to legitimate modern social and political structures, even though they allow for the actualization of human and social norms and values only in limited and

constraining ways. Indeed, they consistently, if not constitutionally, thwart the construction, or the emergence on its own terms, of a more just and egalitarian democratic order.

Inevitably, social theories have limitations, and their concerns and insights are impossible to apply equally to all societies, not least because of the specific geo-cultural origins and socio-historical contexts to which those who developed and pursued them were likely to be tied, and are likely to continue so today. As scientific knowledge – including *social*-scientific knowledge – is not value-neutral, but based on standards that are (or reflect) social constructions, they frequently enforce and perpetuate related perspectives that result from and inform the socio-historical context that generates and sustains those standards.¹⁴ According to **Third World Network** (1993, p. 485),

Scientists are strongly committed to beliefs and certain cultural ethos, which compel them to convert diversity and complexity into uniformity. In addition to this belief system and cultural ethos – which manifest themselves in the propositions that scientists embrace – science has its own power structure, reward systems and peer groups. All of these [factors] combine to ensure that science is closely correlated with the existing, dominant and unjust, political, economic and social order of the world.

Thus, it is not surprising that in the absence of explicit efforts to avoid the pitfalls of perpetuating their socio-historical contexts of emergence, mainstream as well as oppositional critical social theories embody Europe- and North America-centric perspectives and notions, which at the same time constitute their horizon of concern and inquiry.¹⁵ As **Harding** (1993, p. 2) characterizes Euro-centrism, it adheres to “the assumption that Europe functions autonomously from other parts of the world; that Europe is its own origin, final end, and agent; and that Europe and people of European descent in the Americas and elsewhere owe nothing to the rest of the world.” Consequently, in the name of modernity, progress, civilization, and cultural universalism, Euro-American-centric mainstream theories and scholarship *de facto* have suppressed, or at least implicitly and/or explicitly distorted, both the cultures, traditions, and knowledge of indigenous peoples (**McGregor**, 2004), as well as representations of the latter in historical accounts, the social sciences, and the humanities.

Explaining the significance of the social locations of theorists, **Connell** (2007, p. 368) also notes: “Most theoretical texts are written in the global North, and most proceed on the assumption that where they are written does not matter at all With few exceptions, [however,] social theory sees and speaks from the global North.” Astonishingly, mainstream theories

have presented the destructive capacities of more than 500 years of global capitalism as beneficial to indigenous peoples. As [McGovern \(1999, p. 27\)](#) observes, indigenous “knowledge systems have been represented by adjectives such as ‘primitive’, ‘unscientific’, and ‘backwards’, while the ‘western system is assumed to be uniquely “scientific” and universal’ and superior to local forms of knowledge The modern knowledge system ‘is merely the globalized version of a very local and parochial tradition’ arising with ‘commercial capitalism’ and ‘a set of values based on power.’”¹⁶ After nation-states emerged with capitalism in the West and expanded “to the Rest” – to employ the somewhat clumsy distinction development economist [Easterly \(2006\)](#) and neo-conservative [Ferguson \(2011\)](#), among others, have made between Western and non-Western societies – most Euro-American scholars, and those who have been educated and influenced by them elsewhere, were not in the position to adequately consider the problems of stateless indigenous peoples. Euro-American hegemonic theories, scholarship and the ruling ideas have ignored that the colonized indigenous peoples have been “a data mine for social theory” ([Connell, 2007, p. 369](#)) and the source of objective knowledge production. The hegemonic knowledge of the West limits our understanding of humanity as a whole, by ignoring the geo-cultures of indigenous and other subaltern groups (see [Chakrabarty, 2002](#)).

Of course, there have been critical and leftist scholars who have labored to expose the exploitative and oppressive aspects of global capitalism by focusing on hierarchies based on gender, class, and race/ethno-nation. However, due to the confining horizon of Eurocentric thinking, their limited knowledge of indigenous societies, and proclivity toward versions of evolutionary and modernist thinking, most critical scholars have focused on capital-labor relations and, more or less, glossed over the problem of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, with the exception of a few instances, their works on indigenous peoples have been contradictory, incomplete, or distorted. Because of the rejection – or neglect – of multicultural knowledge and wisdoms, and the tradition of abyssal thinking ([de Sousa Santos, 2007](#)), Euro-American theoretical and intellectual knowledge from right and left was prone to disregarding the humanity of indigenous peoples. To a greater or lesser extent, intellectual traditions have tended to see indigenous peoples as organized socially in forms that could not withstand the onslaught of the processes either of so-called modernity, or of modernization, or both. In order to critically and thoroughly understand the problems of indigenous peoples in the West “and the Rest,” we need to stretch our intellectual horizons beyond the limitations of such theories, scholarship and

ruling ideas of the dominant system, especially in light of the fact that modernity at an accelerating rate is generating unprecedented challenges it is in no position to successfully grasp or to confront effectively. Therefore, we contend that social theories that do not have the capacity and horizon to address the bulk of related issues inevitably are not just incomplete and contradictory, but in all likelihood erroneous even in the treatment of the specific dimension of social life they endeavor to illuminate.¹⁷ Before engaging in the discussion of the central issues of this paper, it is necessary to clarify key aspects of our theoretical and methodological approach.

THE PROBLEMATIC NATURE OF MAINSTREAM APPROACHES: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to an absence of critical reflexivity with regard to the specificity of their own socio-historical context and conditions of emergence (e.g., the society in which a particular social-research tradition, or strain of social science, evolved) and how the latter are likely to reflect and reaffirm the former, mainstream theories inevitably are in danger of disregarding features of their own society that traditional representations of social reality neglected or ignored. This neglect applies especially with regard to segments of the population that either did not use to be part of the society at issue, or whose presence was not acknowledged as of integral importance to the society's identity, character, and interest, in its official political, cultural, and historical narratives. Consequently, to the extent that the presence and importance especially of indigenous peoples was denied or downplayed in the history of a particular society, mainstream political and social theories and approaches to social research de facto were likely to support or promote colonial and neo-colonial agendas, explicitly or implicitly, or neglected to engage in the requisite critical reflexivity, thus promulgating suppositions about indigenous people(s) that originated in ideological definitions of societal reality. "If the success of these sciences required the military and political defeat of non-Western peoples," *Harding (1993, p. 8)* writes, "we are entitled to skepticism about claims that the history of these sciences is unmitigated the history of *human* progress; progress for some has been at the expense of disempowerment, impoverishment, and sometimes genocide for many others."

The stance that informs the kind of research agenda we are trying to delineate, theoretically and methodologically, is contingent on the

application of critical scrutiny to approaches that to a large extent subscribe to and replicate officially condoned and enforced representations of the kind of social, political, cultural, and economic life that is purported to prevail in a given society, under the aegis of science, especially if the latter has relied on such means as state terrorism and racist, colonial and imperialist projects and policies. Evidently, it is not sufficient to focus on the latter in the effort to draw a sociologically accurate picture of modern society. Rather, the systemic simultaneity of positive and negative forces and features in all modern societies, even and especially when and where positives appear to outweigh negatives in many or most regards (and may in fact do so), demands the development, refinement, and deployment of theoretical frameworks that force social scientists to acknowledge and navigate the terrain of more or less irreconcilable tensions of the modern social world.

We recommend that readers keep in mind that both authors are approaching this endeavor as sociologists, but in some regards, as it were, from opposite sides. Both have spent the bulk of their careers working in the United States. The primary reference frame of Jalata's research agenda has been the study of issues of indigenous peoples, especially as they pertain to the historically suppressed Oromo majority population of Ethiopia. Dahms has been addressing, examining, and working to explicate the critical theory of the Frankfurt School as a German-American "co-production" of sorts whose concerns reflect features that are specific to either Germany or the United States, or common to both, yet not sufficiently reflected upon in either, and usually conveniently gleaned over.¹⁸ This is their first effort at constructive collaboration, in the interest of furthering cross-national and cross-cultural understanding, as it is indispensable for the advancement of our social-theoretical understanding of the condition of human civilization in the twenty-first century. The following two subsections, on social sciences and constructionism, and on critical theory and mainstream approaches, were authored separately, by Jalata and Dahms respectively.

Social Science as Social Construction (Jalata)

My comparative and critical ethnographic research experiences, political economic knowledge of the world system for almost three decades, and familiarity with mainstream and oppositional theories have equipped me to thoroughly examine the limits of both types of theories theoretically and

methodologically. My research began with an interest in the indigenous Oromo people who had practiced an egalitarian and participatory democracy known as the *gadaa/siqqee* system¹⁹ (Jalata & Schaffer, 2013), before their colonization by the combined forces of European imperialism and Ethiopian colonialism during the last decades of the nineteenth century (Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990; Jalata, 1993, 2010). The historical legacy of Oromo political leadership is the sovereignty the Oromo people experienced under the *siqqee/gadaa* government and its egalitarian framework. I also have been studying the relationship between various indigenous peoples and the capitalist world system (Jalata, 2013a).

Because of my varied research experiences, I have come to understand and appreciate the importance of developing multicultural-centric and critical interdisciplinary scholarship, and submitting my methods to critical scrutiny as necessary steps for developing a human-centric emancipatory social theory. As Edward Said (2001 [1978], p. 327) put, “What one finds in [the works of critical and human-centric scholars] is always, first of all, a direct sensitivity to the material before them, and then a continual self-examination of their methodology and practice, a constant attempt to keep their work responsive to the material and not to a doctrinal preconception.”²⁰ Furthermore, I employ a social-constructionist model of making societies (Roy, 2001), and critical comparative political economic and sociocultural approaches to demonstrating the deficiencies of dominant social theories and systems of knowledge production. Social theories, as all forms of knowledge, have been socially constructed. Hence, I reject the essentialist theoretical perspective that asserts that “things are the way they are by nature” (Roy, 2001, p. 8):

A constructionist perspective ... reveals how social reality – the concepts that people take for granted when they make sense of social life – has been constructed by living people at some particular time and space People invented, reified, and institutionalized [social hierarchies of race, gender and class]. Subsequent generations learned to take them for granted as “real” and organized social life around them, very concretely affecting their lives and those they interacted with. (*ibid.*, p. 29)

Since the beginning of the modern age, the emerging capitalist class and its intellectual supporters and advocates utilized liberal Enlightenment’s claim to universality as the ideology promoting human equality, to overthrow the feudal order; yet, later on, liberal Enlightenment philosophers – the *ideologues* – de facto “naturalized” the capitalist order, thus impeding, if not undercutting entirely, the project of emancipating ordinary people, in order to defend positions of power and influence through the creation and

perpetuation of private property via dispossession and exploitation. According to Malik (1996, pp. 69–70),

In destroying the old divisions of feudal society, capitalism ... created divisions anew. And these new divisions seemed to be as permanent as the old ones of feudalism. Increasingly, many began to regard social hierarchy as naturally given, the result of biological differences within humankind But this perception of social differences as natural, and indeed as “racial,” increasingly became an accepted outlook of Victorian writers ... “the poor are born to serve the rich” and the rich are born “to be served by the poor.”

Mainstream Euro-American scholars constructed theories, concepts, and ideologies of race and racism, and further consolidated gender and class hierarchies, to facilitate and intensify the ongoing accumulation of capital and wealth (Jalata, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). For instance, “[t]he idea of ‘race’ developed as a way of explaining the persistence of social divisions in a society that proclaimed its belief in equality. Racial theories accounted for social inequalities by ascribing them to nature ... racial theories made ‘nature herself an accomplice in the crime of political inequality’” (Malik, 1996, p. 70).

There is evidence of an extensive period in human history when racial and class categories and gender hierarchies did not exist, and when all human groups were nonhierarchical and nonexploitative (Trigger, 2006, pp. 21–28). Elites started to construct and maintain social hierarchies of gender, class, and race through the invention and establishment of institutions: “What becomes socially constructed is disproportionately the result of dominant institutions in society. *Institutions* are groups of organizations, categories, and ways of doing things that do something important in society” (Roy, 2001, p. 22). Hence, it ought to be the purpose of our analytical tools, concepts, and categories in the social sciences and humanities to enable us to demystify ideological constructions of social, political, cultural, and economic forms that naturalize inequalities in society, as well as all those theoretical paradigms and methodologies that, either by default or intent, legitimate and perpetuate forms of injustice and exploitation that benefit the rich, powerful racial/ethno-national groups, patriarchy, and dominant classes, and to focus on the development of an emancipatory project for humanity as a whole. My research and methodological stance confirms the need for scientific methods to be enlarged toward such demystification, in order to overcome the pitfalls of traditional research methods. In fact, in my scholarship, I have found that we cannot critically and thoroughly understand the essence of the capitalist world system without recognizing how it has perpetrated terrorism and inflicted genocides on

indigenous peoples of the world (see, e.g., Jalata, 2013a). As the National Academy of Sciences (1989, pp. 5–6) noted, “[t]he term ‘methods’ can be interpreted more broadly. Methods include the judgment scientists make about interpretation or reliability of data. They also include an investigation. Methods involve the way scientists work with each other and exchange information.”

In conclusion, theorizing accurately the underlying dynamic of the capitalist world system demands explicit acknowledgment of the violence it has inflicted on indigenous peoples. As will become apparent, once this link is being recognized as such rather than rationalized as a “necessary” evil of progress, opportunities open up to visualize an insidious logic that cannot be named directly, as it produced and continues to sustain perceptions of “society,” including especially “modern society,” that *inversely* relate the mode of causality upon which it rests: the logic of capital (Dahms, 2015a, 2015b). This logic compels individuals and decision-makers in society to assign causal force to aspects of social, political, cultural and economic life – powerful individuals, institutions, organizations, government, “the economy” – whose positions and formations ought to be understood as the consequences of processes which are so basic, so fundamental to existence in modern societies, that they remain hidden from view. In light of the logic of capital, preferred methodologies, judgments of scientists, and interpretations of data are expressions of, and reflect, concrete socio-historical circumstances that must be illuminated and scrutinized rigorously.

Critical Theory versus Mainstream Social Science (Dahms)

The first rigorous critic of what we have been referring to as mainstream social science and theory, well before such notions came into common use, was Karl Marx. In fact, the reason that there was a need for the kind of critique he developed, especially in the form of his critique of political economy, was that the idea of science that inspired *political economy* in the sense of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, in particular, was categorically incapable of assessing, explaining, and evaluating the social and historical significance of the process they claimed to illuminate: the modern capitalist market economy (Marx, 1978 [1844]). As the first true theorist of the tension between the civilizational condition of *modernity* (centered on such values as those relating to freedom, equality, solidarity, and justice, to be applied to all humans rather than merely to members of a particular society’s elite) and formal *modernization* processes (centered on the logic of

capital accumulation), Marx remains a central figure for circumscribing the contradictory nature of the modern world *as* capitalism. By implication, Marx's work also ought to be an excellent starting point for examining the relationship between modern societies and those populations, internally and externally, whose labor contributed to the historical and geographic success of modern societies, though those populations did not share in its benefits, regardless of whether they agreed that those benefits were desirable or not. While industrial workers had first-hand experiences with the inner workings of modern societies as modern capitalism (which did not prevent them from being drawn in), indigenous populations were ill-equipped to understand the juggernaut appearing on the horizon. Marx *ought* to have been an excellent starting point not only for addressing related issues, but for making the latter central to any theory of modern society. Yet, as a growing number of Marx interpreters and theorists (who remain inspired by his project as an indispensable social-analytical reference frame) have pointed out in recent decades, the dominant mode of interpreting Marx, starting as soon as during the years after his passing, in the late nineteenth century, applied a traditional mindset to the application and further development of his insights and tools. Thus, much of the existing literature on Marx and his writings constitutes a catalogue of problematic interpretations that were compounded over the course of the twentieth century. Kevin Anderson (2010, p. 6) recently pointed to Marx as a theorist with interests beyond the confines of modern capitalist societies; rather than viewing him as a political economist, as opposed to a *critic* of political economy, "and a champion of the industrial worker," he instead should be seen "as a critic of capitalist modernity as a whole, as a dialectical and humanist philosopher, as a sociologist of alienation, and as a cultural critic." Indeed, as Anderson contends, it is necessary to

move toward a twenty-first century notion of Marx as a global theorist whose social critique included notions of capital and class that were open and broad enough to encompass the particularities of nationalism, race, and ethnicity, as well as the varieties of human social and historical development, from Europe to Asia and from the Americas to Africa. Thus, ... Marx [should be understood] as a much more multilinear theorist of history and society than is generally supposed, as someone immersed [in] the study of the concrete social reality of Asian societies as well as Western capitalist ones, and as a theorist who took account of nationalism and ethnicity as well as class. Further ... Marx was a theorist whose concept of capitalism as a social system was not an abstract universal, but instead was imbued with a rich and concrete social vision in which universality and particularity interacted within a dialectical totality. (*ibid.*, pp. 6-7)

In the twentieth century, critical theory made the most consistent effort to push the limits of prevailing Marx interpretations, to transpose his theory and its undeniable contributions to scrutinizing modern society *qua* capitalism, to societal conditions which in some regards were profoundly different from those Marx addressed, and in other regards, hardly different at all.

Max Horkheimer coined the concept of critical theory in 1937 (1972 [1937]). Starting out from the observation that our understanding of society is itself shaped and influenced by the specific features that are prevalent in society, he proclaimed the need for a kind of theory cognizant of the danger that it is likely to reproduce precisely those patterns of the social formation it is intended to illuminate. To circumnavigate, or at least to mitigate, this danger, critical theorists first had to attain a more rigorous and more critical understanding of advanced capitalism, so as to not preclude and indeed promote future possibilities for qualitative social transformation. Critical theory's research agenda was oriented toward a reconception of Marx's critique of political economy, in order to more effectively discern societal conditions that had taken hold by the 1930s, to reflect that the state-economy relationship had undergone profound changes since the nineteenth century, that tools employed in the process of social research had become more sophisticated with the development of new social-science disciplines, especially sociology, and that both kinds of changes demanded that assessments of and perspectives on the prospects of modern societies be reexamined. In addition to Marx, the writings of Hegel, Freud, and Max Weber also were important resources, as well as those of the young Lukács, and other social theorists and critics of modernization processes in conflict with the more radical aspirations of cultural, or civilizational, modernity as it was oriented toward a social world guided by a non-compromising take on the ideals of the French Revolution – liberty, equality, and fraternity (i.e., solidarity beyond well-established social divisions) (see Benhabib, 1986; Jay, 1973; Wiggershaus, 1995 [1986]).

Horkheimer's vision for reorganizing the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, which had been founded in the early 1920s, and whose new director he became in 1931, was to integrate all the human sciences – both the humanities and the social sciences – within the frame of a division of labor designed to tackle the contradictory totality of modern capitalist society in the twentieth century (Horkheimer, 1993 [1931]). For Marx, whose work was critical theory's primary inspiration and reference frame, the critique of political economy had been an integrated endeavor, with

any one element being relevant in relation to all the other elements, in order to confront the totality of modern society (see Jay, 1984), so as to transcend its mode of imposing itself on individuals' identities, limiting their ability to think freely and to imagine alternative forms of social life. Diagnosis and critique, and theory and practice were intended to be complementary dimensions of efforts to illuminate the logic of the process of capital accumulation, and the costs it imposes on politics, culture, and society in the age of modernity. In Horkheimer's vision of work to be done at the Institute in terms of critical theory, the analysis of different dimensions of modern capitalist society was to be assigned to individual researchers, with the development of the most sophisticated critique of advanced capitalism as the collective responsibility of the Institute's entire staff.

The early critical theorists of what later came to be known as the Frankfurt School, including also Marcuse and Adorno, engaged in the critique of capitalism to revitalize Marx's critique of political economy to apply to the level of capitalist development reached during the early decades of the twentieth century. Critical approaches to social research posit that implicit assumptions about the nature of modern societies are most in need of rigorous scrutiny. Critical theories are calibrated to examine those dimensions of modern societal life whose systematic analysis is a necessary precondition for the development of strategies for solving social problems that relate to structural inequalities. Traditional, noncritical theories – not including the classics of social theory, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, who each was more critical than dominant interpretations during the twentieth century would have conceded (see Dahms, *under contract*) – either ignore these dimensions altogether or regard and define them as aspects of the “natural” constitution of society. Disinterest in any of these dimensions, however, undermines consideration of the necessary preconditions of meaningful social change that is compatible with, and practically advances the espoused values of, Western democratic societies.

Since Horkheimer envisioned the core of critical theory as an explicit and systematic engagement with the gravity concrete socio-historical conditions exert on the process of social research and the development of the theory of society, including especially critical theory itself, the determination of how exactly concrete conditions facilitate and impede social research and theory and impede their pursuit is required. In the absence of such explicit engagement, a process of normalizing that which is specific, unusual, and especially problematic in modern society ensues, perpetuating and solidifying the defining features of particular societal circumstances in time and space.²¹ How precisely societies are modern and capitalist must be

scrutinized, in order to reduce as much as possible the danger that research questions and agendas reflect and are expressions of both general and specific existing societal conditions, especially if and when those convincingly can be identified as problematic in discernible regards. If modern capitalism is fraught with competition and the Protestant work-ethic, for instance, as undoubtedly is the case, it is inevitable that research and theory replicate, perpetuate, and amplify competition and work-ethic, paradoxically, in the attempt to illuminate how competition and work-ethic are integral to modern society.

Critical theory emerged as the endeavor to follow and identify the permutations of social life that resulted from the ongoing dynamics of capitalist market economies especially as they were (and continue to be) problematic, and frequently computed in everyday life in terms of individual rather than collective pathologies and related diagnoses.²² Nevertheless, the everyday world (including the lifeworld, in Habermas's terms) was and remains saturated by the particular energy radiating off from corporate capitalism – without individuals being fully cognizant of this fact, in the absence of the requisite categories and tools to illuminate this condition, thus interpreting the latter as a “natural” and purportedly inevitable characteristic of life in mass societies.

Therefore, the logic of the social sciences in capitalism is bound to be entwined with, and even itself an expression of, the workings of capitalism: theories of capitalism tend to be epiphenomena of capitalism, theories in, rather than of, capitalism – reflections of, rather than critical reflections on, capitalism, unless they make determined efforts to avoid this circumstance. The traditional, mainstream theories of capitalism from Smith to twentieth-century neo-classical economics are not also critiques of capitalism; capitalism shapes the way we think to such a degree that we cannot help but reproduce the defining features and core patterns of its form of organization and logic of processes, especially and paradoxically in our theories of *social* life in the modern age.

As arguably the most sophisticated version of Weberian Marxism (Dahms, 2011, pp. 45–91), critical theory is the project of analyzing the logic of capitalist production and development that leads from liberal capitalism to various forms of postliberal capitalism, including especially the age of empire and the shift from manifest to latent colonialism (see Hobsbawm, 1989): bureaucratic capitalism, managerial capitalism, finance capitalism, and beyond – to a “totally administered world.” In the process, the contingencies of an increasingly complex socio-historical reality are reduced to means-ends relations. The agenda of the early Frankfurt School

translated into the interpretation and experience of a socially constructed world – really, a world *constructed by capital* that is being experienced and interpreted as social and *socially constructed* – as if it were possible to presume the existence of life in modern society once and for all. Critical theory is a radical form of epistemology: patterns of social life exist as expressions of the transmutations of the logic of capital, as the transposition of capital forms to the level of social, political, and cultural forms. Mainstream approaches, then, need to be conceived of negatively, in terms of an *absence*, rather than positively, in terms of a clearly discernible feature that would warrant critical scrutiny, as they *neglect to recognize explicitly how precisely they are situated in time and space, and how they reflect concrete socio-historical configurations*, on the assumption that it is possible, as it were, to step outside of modern society. In light of the concept of critical theory, however, doing so would be impossible (Dahms, 2008).

Postone's *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* (1993) is one of the most comprehensive and refined efforts in the English language to date to reinterpret Marx's social theory as the inception point of the tradition of critical theory, well before the concept was coined. His work is also one of the most prominent contributions to bringing Marx constructively into the late twentieth and early twenty-first century that shares motifs with the so-called "new Marx reading" that began during the 1960s in Germany and has continued to evolve especially since the 1980s (see, e.g., Backhaus, 2011, esp. pp. 9–40; Bonefeld, 2014; Elbe, 2010; Larsen, Nilges, Robinson, & Brown, 2014; Reichelt, 2013). While Postone's version of critical theory, as it is explicitly inspired by Marx, is an independent project from that of those who have been pursuing the new Marx reading, there are shared starting assumptions and interpretative commonalities.²³

Both Postone and such scholars as Backhaus and Reichelt are critical of the strain of theorizing that Postone refers to, explicitly, as "traditional Marxism"; they all favor a more rigorously critical version of Marxist (or, perhaps more accurately, Marxian) theory.²⁴ These theorists also are critical of traditional conceptions of social science, as they conceal and legitimate approaches to studying the social world that refrain from systematic critique (esp. Reichelt, 2013). And finally, in one way or another, they share a sense that modern society is an *inversion* (*Verkehrung*; esp. Kirchhoff, Meyer, Pahl, Heckel, & Engemann, 2004). In fact, if there is one common, *sociologically relevant* theme in the recent, "new" interpretations of Marx, it is that what mainstream sociologists study as expressions of human sociality, in its modern form, in fact, is the result of *compounded mediations* that have accompanied the history of modern society, which have been captured by critics of

modern society in terms of alienation, commodity fetishism, reification, and more recent concepts, and which add up to a trajectory that appears in the public mind, in political discourse, as well as in everyday life to be progressive, but which turns out to be highly retrogressive. What seems to be indicative of the social world is, in fact, the logic of economic processes, taking the form of capital imposing itself on, and reappearing as, the social: inversion as “a change in the position, order, or relationship of things so that they are the opposite of what they had been” (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

What the recent interpretations of Marx as the first critical theorist of modern society and indigenous critiques of globalization have in common, is that both – modern society and globalization – appear as *monstrosities* of sorts (see McNally, 2012; Bonefeld, 2014, pp. 6–10) that are perceived to be benign entities largely because the tools and concepts promulgated in the mainstream social sciences and social theories, along with mainstream political discourse and mainstream education, explain these phenomena in ways that replicate the underlying pattern of seeing modernization processes as mostly beneficial to modern society and human civilization. The benefits purportedly outweigh by far the costs that accompany the pursuit of the wealth of nations, of prosperity at the level of nation-states, in the areas of politics, culture, and society, and purportedly continue to do so today, despite the evidence that is accumulating to the effect that in all likelihood, the costs began to outweigh the benefits at some point in the past, probably earlier than we would like to think.

GLOBAL CAPITALISM AND MAINSTREAM POLITICAL AND SOCIAL THEORY

As the culmination of the conflicting forces that have been shaping the modern age (see Dahms, 2002), globalization is a highly contradictory process that it is not possible to describe, illuminate, or explain according to one principle alone, or even on the basis of a set of principles. Modern society is a type of social system, a form of social organization, that maintains stability and order by navigating the contingency of its own impossibility. It is not a kind of society that, as it were, is at rest with itself. Rather, it is constantly in motion and engaged in the process of maintaining a highly volatile field of tensions. For this reason, it is not surprising that Western political thought and social theory, especially in their liberal and conservative variants, have been emphasizing the importance in and to

modern society, of “universal human rights,” “equality before the law,” and individual and collective “freedom,” while at the same time, as Marx observed, also denying those rights and freedoms to segments of its own population. Whereas Marx focused on the plight of workers, this denial of rights and freedoms also applied, at greater intensity and higher pitch, and for even longer, to indigenous peoples. In light of the experiences of the plight of indigenous populations, Western political and social theories have played a role in legitimizing colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism, the destruction of indigenous social structures and the perpetual domination of the surviving indigenous peoples in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand (Aotearoa), South Africa, and other places (see Ivison, Patton, & Sanders, 2000, p. 2; Jalata, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). To be sure, by definition, Western political thought and social theory were not designed to apply universal human rights to indigenous peoples. Rather, theorists for the most part started out from the implicit assumption that indigenous people were inferior to Whites in decisive regards, and that not least because of this inferiority, and at least in part due to the corresponding lack of adaptability to the kind and speed of change typical of the modern world, indigenous people would be “dying out” or ultimately disappear through intermarriage and cultural assimilation.

Explicitly liberal theories have also assumed that because of the “primitiveness” of indigenous peoples, their rights to territories and self-government were spurious, and politically negligible. According to Tully (2000, pp. 40–41), there have been three enduring strategies for extinguishing the rights of indigenous people:

The first is either to presume that indigenous peoples do not have the rights of self-governing peoples, which pre-exist and continue through colonization, or to try to demonstrate, once and for all, that they do not have such rights. The presumption of [state] sovereignty, *terra nullius*, the discovery doctrine, and the primitive or less developed theses are examples of discursive techniques employed. The second strategy is to extinguish indigenous rights either unilaterally (through conquest, the assertion of sovereignty and the doctrine of discontinuity, suppression or the unilateral effect of lawmaking) or voluntarily (through treaties and cession). The third and familiar strategy and set of distinctive techniques is to transform indigenous peoples into members of the dominant society through reeducation, incentives and socialization so that they lose their attachment to their identity by outlawing indigenous political and social practices and establishing band councils in their place, residential schools, adoption, exchanging native status for voting rights, programs of de-indigenization and westernization, and fostering a co-opted native colonial elite to administer the system.

The fallacy and absurdity of Western principles of universal human rights and equality before the law in liberal thought and theory are

manifested in such strategies and practices. Western liberal thought and theory have been fraught with double standards: one standard is for Europeans and peoples of European origin, and the other is for the colonized peoples and other subordinated groups. All colonized peoples, in general, and indigenous peoples, in particular, have been denied the rights of territorial sovereignty, self-government and autonomous sociocultural and economic development, in the name of liberalism, universalism, the rule of law and democracy. The colonial ruling classes in different parts of the world have established the liberal political system for White societies, “to ensure that the territory on which the settler societies is built is effectively and legitimately under their exclusive jurisdiction and open to settlement and capitalist development. The means to this end are twofold: the ongoing usurpation, dispossession, incorporation and infringement of the rights of indigenous peoples coupled with various long-term strategies of extinguishment and accommodation that would eventually capture their rights, dissolve the contradiction and legitimize the settlement” (Tully, 2000, p. 41).

Elites of Euro-American origins also formulated the theory of *White Man’s Burden*, to justify capitalist colonialism and its associated terrorism, genocide, and dispossession of lands and other resources of the indigenous peoples in the Americas, Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and Asia between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁵ According to Easterly (2006, p. 23),

The White Man’s Burden emerged from the West’s self-pleasing fantasy that “we” were the chosen ones to save the Rest. The White Man offered himself the starring role in an ancient régime version of Harry Potter The Enlightenment saw the Rest as a blank slate – without any meaningful history or institutions of its own – upon which the West could inscribe its superior ideals ... “It is through the European that civilization arrives ... precisely because of their superiority, the civilized peoples are responsible for an evolving world.” ... “These vast lands ... need only assistance from us to become civilized.”

For instance, European colonizers expressed their objectives of partitioning and colonizing of Africa in the following altruistic language at the Berlin Conference of 1885; they claimed to “aim at instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilization” (Ferguson, 2003, p. 236).

After World War I, even the covenant of the League of Nations promised that the so-called civilized nations would lead backward peoples to civilization; after World War II, “Verbiage about racial superiority, the tutelage of backward people, and people not ready to rule themselves went

into the wastebasket. Self-rule and decolonization became universal principles. The West exchanged the old racist coinage for a new currency. 'Uncivilized' became 'underdeveloped.' 'Savage peoples became the 'third world'" (Easterly, 2006, p. 24). However, the principles of self-rule and decolonization did not apply to most of the indigenous peoples that survived colonial terrorism and genocide in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, and Asia. More or less, the theory and ideology of the White Man's Burden were replaced by modernization theory and other similar theories after the mid-twentieth century. Emerging from evolutionary and functionalist theories, modernization theory has promoted the capitalist world system and its political stability (So, 1990, p. 36). However, this theory has failed to explain the relationship between global capitalism and terrorism, political repression, exploitation and the massive violations of human and civil rights.

Modernization theory claims that all societies develop from primitive, simple, and undifferentiated to advanced, complex, and differentiated societies; it considers these social changes as unidirectional, progressive, gradual, and irreversible. But this theory glosses over the condition of Western Europe prior to the development of capitalism, and implicitly glorifies the West for establishing its superior civilization and modernity because of its racial superiority and intelligence. Above all, dominant classes and racial/ethno-national groups and their institutions have used modernization theory to explain and justify their social, economic, and political practices and to protect their privileges. This theory justifies hierarchical organizations of peoples and nations by implicitly claiming the superiority of Western nations that are considered modern and civilized. Consequently, the West is justified to lead the so-called backward or traditional societies by imposing Western theoretical and development models on the Global South in general and indigenous peoples in particular. Therefore, this and other associated theories implicitly or explicitly consider colonial terrorism, racial slavery, genocide, and expropriation of lands and other valuable resources by Euro-Americans and other colonialists as a progressive and civilizing mission.

The social construction of modernity and civilization has been naturalized and eternalized in the concepts and practices of race, gender, and class hierarchies on the base of intelligence in the capitalist world system. For instance, as H. H. Goddard put: "How can there be such a thing as social equality with this wide range of mental capacity? ... Democracy means that the people rule by selecting the wisest, most intelligent and most human to tell them what to do to be happy" (quoted in Gould, 1981, p. 221). The

nation-states have “standardized time and space and codified race, gender, and class into law” (Roy, 2001, p. xvii). Mainstream Euro-American elites and their collaborators in the Rest have constructed various social theories to naturalize and justify the socially constructed reality of race, gender, and class hierarchies. “Subordinate groups, especially subordinate races, are often seen as ‘primitive’ or ‘backward’ – belonging to the past. If they work hard and play by the (white) rules, they can eventually ‘catch up.’ Similarly, the upper classes are seen as ‘head’ of the poor. They use the newest technology, wear the newest fashions, and understand the latest trends” (Roy, 2001, p. 27).

Racist and some modernist theorists have denied that the concepts and practices of race, gender, and class have been socially constructed by elites as well as by dominant institutions (see Harrison, 1998; Jalata, 2001). By denying that somebody’s knowledge and skills depend on accessibility to resources and education, they assert that people who belong to subaltern social categories are intellectually deficient because of their lack of intelligence. For them, consequently, social hierarchies are natural and investable. These theorists have established intelligence tests based on their cultural experiences that cannot measure “a person’s general ability to interact in the real world Psychologists have ... challenged the notion of intelligence implicit in intelligence testing by questioning whether there is a single quality that people have or whether there are multiple intelligences” (Roy, 2001, p. 2). Racists and some modernists have also denied the existence of multicultural knowledge and wisdoms and promoted the notion of the intellectual superiority of Euro-Americans; they have also denied the diversity of intelligences. According to Gardner (1983), there are seven forms of intelligence, namely linguistic (i.e., writing, reading, telling stories), logical-mathematical (math problems, strategic games, and experiments), bodily-kinesthetic (athletics, dancing, crafts, sewing, wood-working), spatial (solving jigsaw puzzles, drawing, and daydreaming), musical (singing and making music), interpersonal (leadership skills, communication, and understanding of others’ feelings), and intrapersonal (self-motivation).

Both racists and certain types of modernists (proponents of modernization as a process of formal rationalization, rather than those who endeavor to advance modernity as a cultural horizon to which to aspire to) have used the doctrine of “survival of the fittest” to justify colonial terrorism and genocide that were practiced on indigenous peoples. Regarding the poor, in nineteenth-century England, one of the founders of sociology, Herbert Spencer, contended that “the whole effort of nature is to get rid of

such, to clear the world of them, and make room for better” (Andersen, 1994, p. 121). For almost five centuries, globalization has victimized the poor and indigenous peoples in the world. Recently in order to overcome its structural crises, global capitalism has crushed the reformist policies of social welfare and socialism by restructuring itself thorough the policies of neoliberalism. Trigger (2006, p. 26) notes that:

Twentieth-century efforts to build socialism foundered to no small degree as a result of the uncontrolled greed, corruption, and self-interest of those in authority. It is no accident that some of the bureaucrats of the former Soviet Union [and China] are among the most successful capitalists ... At the same time, the welfare bureaucrats of Western societies were widely discredited because neoconservative propagandists so easily persuaded the public that these services had become arrogant and were benefiting those who managed them more than they did intended beneficiaries. The assumption that, because human beings are essentially good, as capitalist society withered a more egalitarian way of life would replace it has not been confirmed. Socialism failed politically because it failed to create for large-scale, industrial societies mechanisms to control domination and rapacity that were equivalent to those of the hunter-gatherer anti-state.

Neoliberalism was designed by conservative theoreticians to solve the crisis of global capitalism in the 1970s; the United States and Britain – though during the Cold War committed to the expansion of social legislation and social policies – played a leading role in developing and implementing neoliberal policies (Harvey, 2006, p. 15). The decades of the 1950s and 1960s were periods of high economic growth in global capitalism and the heyday of US hegemony (*ibid.*, p. 14). The welfare or social democratic states in the core implemented redistributive policies during these decades. But at the end of the 1960s, these conditions started to change, and the rate of capital accumulation began to decline; stagflation (inflation, unemployment, stagnation of demand) for goods increased. Neoliberalism emerged to solve these structural crises that decreased the rate of capital accumulation for the wealthiest segment of the population (*ibid.*). The Keynesian compromise (with the government taking on the role of an active player in the economy, especially regarding the intensity of business cycles) was challenged, and the left unsuccessfully attempted to deepen state control and regulation of economy.

Neoliberalism as a political and economic paradigm of globalization has allowed a handful of elites – the “transnational capitalist class” (Sklair, 2000) – to increase its control of society to maximize profits; it has also facilitated the deregulation of global capitalism, limiting governments’ ability to exert control on the economic process, lowering taxes on the wealthy, relaxing environmental regulations, weakening labor unions, and privatizing

public services such as education, social welfare programs, and health care systems (Chomsky, 1999). The neoliberal agendas demonstrated the restoration of class power to the richest strata by enriching the top 0.1 percent whose share of the U.S. national income increased from 2 percent in 1978 to over 6 percent in 1999 (Harvey, 2006, p. 13). Neoliberalism has also allowed the intensification of accumulation by dispossession, which involved the commodification and privatization of lands and forceful expulsion of indigenous peoples (*ibid.*, pp. 41–53). The proponents of neoliberalism claimed that the policy is the only option for prosperity and progress, by promoting a free market, encouraging private business and consumer choice, rewarding personal responsibility and business initiative, and by challenging the imperfect bureaucrats and governments (Chomsky, 1999; Harvey, 2006).

Neoliberals have asserted that they are doing good things for the poor, the environment, and everybody else, because the free market is the only rational, fair, and democratic allocator of goods and services. What is the gap between the doctrine and the practices of neoliberalism? The latter has contributed to massively widening socio-economic inequality, by increasing the deprivation of the poorest nations, particularly indigenous peoples, by creating disastrous global environment and unstable global economy, by increasing wealth for the few, and by intensifying conflict, war, and terrorism in the capitalist world system. Liberalism and neoliberalism, based on the principles of neoclassical economic theory, have been the ideologies of global capitalism that have imposed a regime of cognitive dissonance on people by using the discourses of democracy, justice, free market, and equality. In practice, however, racial slavery, terrorism, genocide, and political repression have been exacerbated in the capitalist system (Jalata, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). Relatively speaking, peoples of Europe and of Euro-origin have benefited from these ideologies while indigenous peoples have paid a high price for sustaining the lifestyles of the West, along with segments of the population within the West and other parts of humanity, animals, and plants.²⁶

GLOBALIZATION AND GLOBAL CIVILIZATION FROM AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

Western political thought and social theory have been constructed on a self-serving ideology and knowledge of the colonialists that have denied the

existence of political and social thought of indigenous peoples.²⁷ However, indigenous peoples have their own “political theories and a complex and contested shared indigenous language of political thought” that have confronted and challenged Western theories and political thought (Tully, 2000, pp. 36–37). “*The practical problem is the relation between the establishment,*” Tully (2000, p. 37; italics in original) notes, “*and continuing resistance of indigenous societies on the same territory.*” By developing various mechanisms and strategies, indigenous peoples have been resisting all forms of colonialism in their homelands:

Over the centuries, indigenous people have developed a vast repertoire of intra-political resistance to survive and revitalize their cultures, nations and federations, to keep indigenous ways of being in the world alive and well for the next generations, to adapt these ways and stories to the present strategic situation, to comply with and participate in the dominant institutions while refusing to surrender, to regain degrees of self-rule and control over their territories when possible, and so to seek to transform ... colonization obliquely from within. (*ibid.*, p. 42)

The politics of indigeneity as discourse and collective transformation aims at restructuring indigenous peoples and colonial state relations by focusing on sovereignty, self-determination, and life projects, from the perspective of indigenous peoples. It involves the following preconditions for atonement and reconciliation (Maaka & Fleras, 2000, p. 91):

- A special relationship (“nation to nation”) with the state;
- Repossession of land and resources unless explicitly ceded ...
- Acknowledgment that legitimacy rests with the consent of the people rather than state authority;
- Moves to restore autonomy and cultural integrity at the level of governance;
- Espousal of new patterns of belonging in which sovereignty is shared with society at large ...

Maaka and Fleras (2000, p. 91) also assert that “[i]ndigeneity as discourse and transformation can be defined as the politicized awareness of original occupancy as the grounds for reward and relationships. As discourse, indigeneity refers to indigenous peoples as ‘first nations’, whose customary rights to self-determination over jurisdictions pertaining to land, identity, and political voice have never been extinguished but remain undisturbed for purposes of identity, belonging and relations. “Colonialists and their descendants do not recognize the indigenous “conceptions of right and the pursuit of their life project” claiming that their societies and cultures are backward or primitive (Blaser, Feit, & McRae, 2004, p. 3).

Tully (2000, p. 44) contends that “the reigning ideology of the superiority of European-derived societies and the inferiority of indigenous societies served as the taken-for-granted justification for the removal of indigenous populations, who were seen as obstacles to the progressive exploitation of their lands.” The colonialists have imposed their cultures and colonial relations by dispossessing their lands of indigenous peoples and other resources “under the ‘custody’ of the nation-states” in the name of the advancement of civilization and progress. Recognizing the fallacies of the claims of the colonialists, currently indigenous peoples are building “grassroots transnationalism” by forming alliances across social movements to promote “their life projects by engaging themselves with and against governments and corporate interests while connecting themselves into networks of exchange and solidarity with other groups and communities in their region, country or across the globe” (Blaser et al., 2004, p. 17).

For indigenous peoples, capitalism and development mean terror, dispossession, destruction, and impoverishment. According to Blaser (2004a, p. 26), indigenous peoples “do not just resist development, do not just react to state and market, they also sustain ‘life projects.’ Life projects are embedded in local histories; they encompass visions of the world and the future, that are distinct from those embodied by projects promoted by state and markets. Life projects diverge from development in their attention to the uniqueness of people’s experiences of place and self and their rejection of visions that claim to be universal.” Barras (2004, p. 47), a leader of the Yshiro-Ebitoso people of Paraguay, explains that the so-called discoverers had

justified their deeds by saying that they came to civilize us. I wonder, what did they mean by “civilization”? In our standing and experience, civilization means the dispossession of our lands, the demise of our culture and the attempt to make White people out of us. We had our stories, our knowledge, our ways of organizing As you can see, from the beginning our relations with the Whites have been based on mistaken ideas and lack of knowledge of Indigenous peoples’ realities.

I wonder, what does “development” mean? For us, it is the same as what we have seen in the Americas for the last 511 years. We do not see any significant change in the forms in which the offspring of the colonizers relate to us. After 511 years of “civilization,” in Paraguay there is no one university-educated Indigenous individual. After 511 years of “civilization,” we are still not allowed to speak for ourselves.

Recognizing the devastating consequences of colonialism and capitalist development, indigenous peoples are struggling to achieve self-determination and self-sufficiency through the praxis of life projects, which “are to a large extent aimed at transforming the structures power that constrain Indigenous

peoples” (Blaser, 2004b, p. 54). “While Indigenous life projects certainly have roots reaching into the (hi)stories that precede conquest and colonization,” Blaser (2004b, p. 68) writes, “they are also thoroughly historical, attentive to immediate political conditions and always in the making.” Indigenous peoples actively resist colonial domination and exploitation through reclaiming their histories, cultures, and traditions and at the same time engage in ecological friendly sustainable development. They “view the people, the knowledge and the land *as a single, integrated whole*. They are regarded as inseparable” (McGregor, 2004, p. 79).

Modern, capitalist commodification of people, land, and nature is not part of the original, unadulterated life projects and values of indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge recognizes the positive relationship between society, nature, and spirituality, and it “is a complex knowledge system with its own concepts of epistemology, philosophy, and scientific and logical validity ... [which] can only be fully learned and understood by means of pedagogy traditionally employed by these people themselves” (cited in Martin-Hill, 2004, p. 314). The imperialist culture, theory, and dominant knowledge, however, devalue the importance of indigenous knowledge and attempt to erase it (McGovern, 1999; Said, 1994; Shiva, 1993). Explaining the significance of indigenous knowledge in relation to the dominant knowledge, McGovern (1999, p. 146) says that “as modern science was generated from within a particular society, the production of indigenous American knowledge about reality has been developed over many generations in relation to specific cultures and has allowed peoples to sustain themselves as communities within diverse ecological settings.”

The indigenous Americans have never passively accepted all the crimes committed against them. Although not effective, they have been struggling against the violent occupation of their homelands and continents. Several indigenous national movements have emerged and developed since the 1950s to change resistance struggles to protest and revolutionary movements in order to restore their humanity, collective land rights, to have access to bilingual and intercultural education, to introduce constitutional reforms, and to promote multicultural democracy by emphasizing economic and social equality and justice (Fischer, 2009; Hall & Fenelon, 2009; Langer & Muñoz, 2003; Postero & Zamosc, 2006; Van Cott, 2007, 2009; Warren & Jackson, 2002). According to Hall and Fenelon (2009, p. 91), “[o]ver the last fifty years or so, American Indians have become emblematic of movements to reestablish their legitimate status as sovereignty.” Native Americans in the United States and “First Nations” of Canada have struggled for their self-determination and self-sufficiency.

Other indigenous organizations, such as the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, the Interethnic Association of the Development of Peruvian Rainforest, the United Multiethnic People of Amazonas, and others have participated in liberation struggles in Latin American countries to introduce some changes on individual and collective rights and in the areas of engaging citizens in public policy decision making and in holding leaders accountable. Van Cott (2007, pp. 9–10) notes that Latin America’s indigenous “social movement and parties offer unique perspective for addressing democratic deficiencies, as well as the capacity to mobilize social capital for democratic ends and to forge consensus on common political projects. They are expanding public expectations of democracy by insisting on greater participation, the reduction of inequality, and the protection of collective rights.” In the Horn of Africa, indigenous peoples such as the Oromo, Sidama, Ogaden-Somalia, Afar, and Annuak are intensifying their struggle for national self-determination against the Ethiopian colonial state (Jalata, 1993, 2010).

Furthermore, indigenous peoples of the world and their activists have intensified their struggle for self-determination, multinational democracy, the rule of law, and legal protection; consequently, to limited degree they have influenced the international community through the United Nations (Wilmer, 1993). Their struggle to change the international law from below continues. More or less, in Latin America, several changes have been taking place since the 1970s among some religious and political institutions by understanding the contributions of indigenous movements for expansion of democracy and protection of human rights. Other oppressed communities and progressive forces have started to form political alliances with indigenous movements to fight against reactionary regimes and the policy of neoliberalism (Fischer, 2009). Similarly, some progressive religious leaders and figures in the Roman Catholic Church and missionaries in Latin America have changed their religious and political positions toward indigenous peoples, and have begun to support their movements for social, political, economic, and human rights (Domínguez, 1994). In the mid-twentieth century, the Catholic “church began to develop its own social change while remaining at arm’s length from the political process. Some priests, however, embraced radical political movements and revolutionary struggle. The period also saw the beginning of a way of doing theology, which became known as liberation theology” (Schwaller, 2011, pp. 11–12).

On the global level, although they cannot effectively implement their policies, international and regional human rights organizations and some NGOS have attempted to support indigenous movements and to protect

and promote their human rights. However, there are still minority ethno-national groups that face the danger of state terrorism, genocide, and massive human rights violations in the modern world system. The Oromo are one of these groups. Although not exhaustive, Gurr (2000) identifies about 90 minority groups at significant risk in the twenty-first century; these groups are facing the possibility of extermination from peripheral states and their global supporters who are promoting neoliberalism for trying to defend their rights and to protect their economic resources, particularly their homelands. To intensify the challenge of allied forces of neoliberal states, multinational corporations and their collaborators intellectually, ideologically, theoretically, and politically in the capitalist world system, there is an urgent need to integrate all forms counter-hegemonic theories and knowledge to facilitate human liberation.

COMBINING CRITICAL AND INDIGENOUS THEORIES AND FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

As demonstrated above, critical theories (and corresponding modes of knowing) and the theories and wisdoms of indigenous peoples expose the deficiencies of mainstream theories and the ruling ideas of those who dominate, lead, and disproportionately benefit from, the capitalist world system. At the same time, both indigenous critiques of globalization and critical theories themselves also are in danger to remain confined by and attached to their geo-cultural origins, conditions of emergence, and reference frames, and their visions likely are tied to, and even a function of, acknowledged and unacknowledged patterns ranging from traditional social structures to nation-states that codify social hierarchies in specific ways in order to legitimate their survival and mode of control. Yet there are qualitative differences that require focused attention and consideration.

By orienting its critique toward universalistic standards and claims, social and political theorists impose on themselves a burden of proof that indigenous thinkers may or may not conceive of as either possible or desirable, aside from the fact that the latter explicitly situate themselves in space, if not also in time. By implicitly accepting or explicitly subscribing to ideologies constructed around such modern ideas and ideals as democracy, justice, and national security, which per se frequently are agreeable and desirable, social theorists (including critical theorists; see, for instance, the affinity between Habermas's and Honneth's versions of critical theory

and the normative frame that provided post-World War II Western societies with their basic of legitimacy) run the risk of participating in practical and political strategies that undermine or invert (see Wolin, 2010) some principles related to those and other ideas and ideals all of the time, and of all principles central to cultural and critically self-reflexive modernity (as opposed to formal modernization processes) some of the time, depending on the circumstances in time and space. Ideology fulfills an array of functions in any society, and it may well be its most essential function to define and promote the political, material, and cultural interests of a particular group, social class, nation, state, or other entity. In addition, ideology “offers an explanation and an evaluation of political, economic, and social condition; provides its holders a compass that helps orient them and develop a sense of identity; and tenders a prescription for political, economic, or social action” (Hybel, 2010, p. 1). In the present context, moreover, to fully appreciate the continuing influence of ideology, it ought to be conceived of less as a means to compel its “targets” to think in a particular way, or to adhere to certain notions, but to impair, if not undercut, their ability to conceive of the possibility to think constructively beyond the perimeter of ideology, beyond the rendering of reality it promotes and is designed to impose.²⁸

Under the aegis of universalism, progress, democracy, development, civilization, and humanity, mainstream theories and modes of knowledge have contributed to hiding massive violations of the human and civil rights of indigenous peoples and other subaltern groups, and to the perpetuation of underdevelopment, poverty, and suffering (see, e.g., Achebe, 2000; Jalata, 2001, 2015; McGovern, 1999; McGregor, 2004). Recognizing that these problems cannot be solved in the capitalist world system, a slowly growing number of leftist and activist scholars have started to imagine an alternative, more truly egalitarian world order in which exploitation and oppression will not be allowed (see Robinson, 1996, 2008). Though progressive social theorists and social scientists from Hegel to Durkheim and beyond have noted that *absolute* equality, and the complete elimination of exploitation and oppression, may be impossible to attain practically, as well as undesirable from a range of perspectives, given the application of force and expenditure resources that would be required to establish and maintain a social order characterized along such lines (see, e.g., Hegel, 1967 [1821], p. 44; Jencks, 1971), the above-mentioned scholars have begun to theorize the foundations and outlines of an emancipatory political project for the future, and the possibility of recreating community-based societies, by learning from periods during the history of human civilization when

egalitarianism and participatory democracy in fact were practiced successfully.²⁹

Based on more than four decades of ethnological research by anthropologist Richard Lee (e.g., Lee, 2012), Bruce G. Trigger (2006, p. 25) notes, “social and political equality in hunter-gatherer societies was not a direct expression of human nature. His evidence indicates that hierarchical behavior was actively suppressed in hunter-gatherer societies, where economic and political egalitarianism had great adaptive advantages, as well as in some of the more mobile middle-range societies. Contrariwise, in more complex societies competitive behavior was supported and reinforced by the state.” In his research on Oromo society, anthropologist Legessee (1973, 2006) also discovered the egalitarian character of Oromo democracy known as the *gadaa* system that existed before the emergence of contemporary democracy in the West. Discussing the philosophy of Oromo democracy, Legessee (1973, p. 2) observed: “What is astonishing about this cultural tradition is how far Oromo have gone to ensure that power does not fall in the hand of war chiefs and despots. They achieve this goal by creating a system of checks and balances that is at least as complex as the systems we find in Western democracies.”

When *gadaa* was an all-encompassing institution of politics, military, defense, economy, religion, ethics, culture, and tradition, *siqqee* was used by women as a check and balance system to counter male-dominated roles in the *gadaa* system. The *siqqee* institution gave a political and social platform for Oromo women to effectively voice their concern and address their social justice issues. The *gadaa* system excluded women from its politico-military administrative structures, and they were only married to men in a *gadaa* grade (Kelly, 1992, p. 125; Kumsa, 1997). However, the *gadaa/siqqee* prevented the transformation of gender-role-separation into gender inequality, and women and men “had a functional interdependence and one was not valued any less than the other” in the system (Kumsa, 1997, p. 119). The processes and practices of *gaadaa/siqqee* and social development have been interconnected. The Oromo have a theoretical concept of social development known as *finna*, which explained phases and features of development in Oromo society, and embodied the cumulative historical and recent changes that had taken place to produce a new social order.

Finna “represents the legacy of the past which each generation inherits from its forefathers [and foremothers] and which it transforms; it is the fertile patrimony held in trust by the present generation which it will enrich and bequeath to future generations ... it describes a movement emanating from the inside, a developing of the inner potential of society based on the

cultural roots it has already laid down” (Kassam, in press). It has seven interconnected cumulative development phases, namely *guddina* (growth), *gabbina* (enrichment), *ballina* (broadening), *badhadha* (abundance), *hoor-maataa*, *dagaaga*, and *daga-hoora*. *Guddina* is a concept that explains how Oromo society improves itself by creating new experiences and adding them to its existing cultural life. *Gabbina* is the next concept that explains the enrichment of cultural experiences by integrating the cumulative past experiences with the contemporary ones through broadening and deepening the system of knowledge and worldview. According to Kassam (in press),

This can only be achieved through the full knowledge, consent and active participation of all members of the community. This implies the existence of a political organization, the forum for debate and the democratic means of reaching consensus on all decisions affecting the common good. This should be obtained without force and coercion, without excluding the interests of any group, within the Oromo society and outside it, in the broader context of the national or international arena. To this end, the Oromo evolved a political process of power sharing reputed for its highly egalitarian nature: *Gada*.

Without Oromo democracy, there was no sociocultural development. *Ballina* refers to the expansion of enriched cultural experiences from one society to another through the reciprocity of cultural borrowing, based on the principles of social equality, fairness, and social justice. The cumulative experiences of *guddina*, *gabbina*, and *ballina* lead to the stage of *badhadha* (richness). This phase is the stage of wholeness and peace. According the Oromo tradition, this stage indicates the maintenance of peace among *Waaqa* (God), nature, and society; theoretically speaking, there is no conflict, poverty, disease, or natural calamity because of the balance between *Waaqa*, nature, and society is maintained. The development of *badhadha* leads to the stage of *hoormata*. In this stage, people, animal, and other living things reproduce and multiply because of the availability of conditions such as availability of rain, resources, and peace. The next stage is *dagaaga*, which is the phase of development cycle that is integrated to maintain an even and sustainable development of society. The final phase is *daga-hoora* in which full development takes place in the Oromo society and expands to neighboring societies through reciprocity and cultural borrowing.³⁰

Our knowledge of Oromo democracy and its phases of development are incomplete; but these characteristics are not marks of backward thinking as mainstream theories and knowledge have tried to label them. Some Oromo activists attempt to restore their egalitarian cultural traditions and democratic political system that the Ethiopian colonial state and its international supporters oppose and repress. Similarly “the visions embodied by Indigenous life projects entail a relationship between equals and an end to

the subordination of Indigenous peoples” (Blaser et al., 2004, p. 4). What we learn from the experiences of indigenous peoples is that social hierarchies and exploitation in societies are not naturally given and are, instead, culturally and socially constructed. So the serious challenges that are phasing those social forces and progressive intellectuals that are struggling to establish an egalitarian democratic order are demystifying the theories and ideologies of domination and developing the knowledge for liberation that can facilitate alliances among all peoples to build grassroots transnationalism to challenge and defeat bourgeois internationalism and unjust globalization. As there are no blueprints for taking these steps, Trigger (2006, p. 27) provides a helpful indication of how to proceed: “The challenge of the present is for progressive anthropologists to draw on their knowledge of social behavior to try to design societies of a sort that have never existed before in human history: ones that are large-scale, technologically advanced, internally culturally diverse, economically as well as politically egalitarian, and in which everyone will assume a fair share of the burden as well as of the rewards of living on a small, rich, but fragile planet.”

Trigger suggests the necessity of learning from the past to construct a better and just society where exploitation of subaltern groups and ecology will be avoided and where knowledge and technology can be harnessed to overcome the victimization by unjust globalization. Our suggestion for progressive intellectuals and activists in the West is to go beyond their left liberal and traditionally Marxist modes of thinking that limit their visions to the experiences of the West and study and learn more about the indigenous peoples in their own countries and the Rest, and find ways of collaborating to advance the struggle for human liberation.³¹ The transnational capitalist class and their international corporations and other organizations have defeated the democratic praxis and the elite socialist project of the twentieth century and intensified their globalization projects via neoliberalism.

FROM UNJUST GLOBALIZATION TO A JUST AND EGALITARIAN WORLD ORDER

The theories of capitalist development, liberal democracy, and human freedoms and rights have tried to hide the crimes committed against humanity in different corners of the world by states and transnational corporations. In the capitalist civilization, certain ethno-nations, classes, corporations, institutions, and powerful individuals who have controlled state power for

more than 500 years have created and maintained two sides of the same world: one version of this world is “heavenly” or paradise, while the other one is “hellish” or torturous. The process in the capitalist world system that has created and maintained the wealthier and healthier societies, as metaphorically called above “heavenly,” has also produced the impoverished and suffering societies, “hellish,” both in the West and the Rest through various forms of violence and continued subjugation. The conditions of indigenous Americans, Australians, Oromos, Palestinians, and others demonstrate this reality.³²

In the capitalist world system, the processes of societal destruction and construction have occurred simultaneously, and have been maintained through various forms of violence and other mechanisms. In other words, the ways of the colonial state formations and the destruction of indigenous peoples have simultaneously occurred. Despite the fact that those who have created and maintained this kind of unjust world have claimed to promote justice, democracy, security, fairness, the rule of law, equality, fraternity, and human rights, the processes that we have mentioned above have continued. Most people still cling to these failed ideologies and theories because “every individual is ... in a two-fold sense predetermined by the fact of growing up in a society: on the one hand he [or she] finds a ready-made situation and on the other he [or she] in that situation performed patterns of thought and of conduct” (Mannheim, 1936 [1929], p. 3). While reliance on the ideologies and theories of the oppressors is detrimental to the efforts of social groups to promote human emancipation, it is also increasingly difficult, given the convergence and mutual reinforcement of the modern world system and the logic of capital, to discern their influence on individual and collective identities, and to resist the force of the modern world system and the logic of capital on all efforts to practically construct or reconstruct forms of social life, in the name of social justice and solidarity.

What is disappointing, even distressing about humanity is the extent to which so-called revolutionaries and progressive forces that engaged in promoting the ideology of revolution as an emancipatory project, once they had captured state power in the former Soviet Union, China, and other so-called socialist countries, changed their minds and outlook, and set out to develop state capitalism to accumulate more capital/wealth at any cost. These countries implemented their ideological and economic policies by means of all forms of violence, including terror, torture, and genocide, just like imperialist countries. Similar to the system of the West, the so-called socialist system has combined dictatorship, forms of violence and

repression, and gross human rights violations, and drastically failed to implement what it promised. Contrary to their pronouncements, these countries produced historical tragedies³³ that undermined humanity's hope for a qualitatively better future. As powerful capitalist countries and their collaborators practically have prevented liberal democracy in poor countries, the so-called socialist countries undercut democracy, equality, and social justice.

Without egalitarian democracy and popular participation of ordinary people, it is not possible for any society to set out to work toward a better version of itself. As Mannheim (1936 [1929], p. 108) asserted, “[c]rises are not overcome by a few hasty and nervous attempts at suppressing the newly arising and troublesome problems, nor by flight into the security of a dead past. The way out is to be found only through the gradual extension and deepening of a newly won insights and through careful advances in the direction of control.” The engineers of the capitalist world system have used modernization theory, Christian absolutism, and the claim of Euro-American racial or cultural superiority to explain and justify the capitalist civilization that they have constructed and maintained on the destruction of the world's indigenous peoples. The liberation and development of indigenous peoples are impossible under these conditions because freedom or “development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance of or over activity of repressive states. Despite unprecedented increases in overall opulence, the contemporary world denies elementary freedom to vast numbers – perhaps even the majority – of people” (Sen, 2000, pp. 3–4).

The indigenous peoples who enjoyed less hierarchical and exploitative systems prior to their colonization have been denied all forms of freedom by the nation-states and the capitalist world system, just as segments of the population in core countries, have not been (and, in all likelihood, will not be) allowed to pursue and establish modes of social co-existence and forms of sociality that deviate from the socio-economic mainstream. In the early twenty-first century, the modern capitalist system is changing at tremendous speed and with drastic consequences; despite its structural crises, existing national and international institutions, such as states, international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, along with transnational corporations, are incapable of adequately dealing with the emerging cultural, political, ecological, economic, and technological challenges. Those who are benefiting disproportionately from the current system are working together to maintain the status quo by

employing theories and ideologies that are consonant with and promote neoliberal ideology, as well as forms of violence (including state terrorism), while those who are determined to qualitative reforms and social change are engaging in a broad range of forms of resistance and social movements to deal with issues of ethno-national/racial problems, class/gender-based exploitation, as well as environmental and human rights issues (see, e.g., Parr, 2013).

A range of theories, and especially ideologies, conceal such problems in the name of progress and development. “Antiquated and inapplicable norms, modes of thought, and theories,” Mannheim (1936 [1929], p. 95) wrote, “are likely to degenerate into ideologies whose function it is to conceal the actual meaning of conduct rather than to reveal it.” Despite the fact that capitalist ideologies attempt to conceal the existing contradictions, the current world is entering into monumental challenges. The fast changes that are taking place currently include developments in communications and information technologies that collapse space and time, changes in military technology and the nature of warfare, changes in political and economic structures, processes of environmental degradation and the possible depletion of natural resources, unbalanced imperial interstate relations, and the declining of the legitimacy of national and supranational governance, the widening gap between the few rich and the majority of the population, the emergence of national and global forces as anti-systemic movements, and the failure or inadequacy of some peripheral states because of their lack of domestic legitimacy and external interventions. What kind of states and a political system we need to overcome the problems of globalization and its political and economic crises?

Cairns and Sears (2012) explain how mainstream politicians (both conservatives and liberals) mainly promote policies that encourage investment and profitability at the cost of the public interest, and how elections are taking place just for formality without discussing substantive issues of full employment, health care, education, environment, and social justice. Consequently, less and less people are participating in voting, considering politics as meaningless and absurd. The endless crisis of global capitalism and the widening gap between the few rich and the majority are causing people to be dissatisfied in the present democracy. Cairns and Sears (2012, p. 3) see democracy as “one of those words that gets used so heavily that we do not often pause to think about what it means” and define it as “an open question.” They suggest that people should engage in the process of “democratic imagination” to expand their knowledge of democracy by including the concepts of popular power and self-government to satisfy

their needs. Seeing democracy as an open question demonstrates that there are competing definitions of democracy. For those who control the major political and economic institutions, democracy does not involve collective struggle for popular power and self-government.

For Cairns and Sears, democracy emerges from everyday life and collective action to make institutions responsive to the needs of the people; they use the concept of “democratic imagination” to criticize the existing democracy that they call “official democracy,” and envision popular democracy or democracy from below. Cairns and Sears suggest that this imagination must combine deliberate collective action “to improve the ways that human beings live together.” They also assert that democracy from below aspires to empower people to achieve collective self-government, attempts to fundamentally change society, and to promote the principle that real power emerges from genuine equity while official democracy is limited to elections, the rule of law, and certain freedoms, and does not extend to workplaces, schools, families, organized sports, or personal relationships. According to Cairns and Sears (2012, p. 4),

The idea that human beings deserve freedom, meaning that they ought to govern their own lives and communities, has indeed emerged from the resistance, in the form of *collective action*, and not simply the power of idea, that has led to the development of different forms of democracy at key moments in history. Regardless of the particular ways in which democracy is imagined, it is fundamentally about the daily practice of living together as humans. Safeguarding or improving democracy, therefore, involves action in the real world.

One of the deficits of official democracy is that it provides citizenship rights to people without providing equitable living standards and substantive democracy. Currently official democracy implements the policies of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has started to roll back social citizenship rights that subaltern groups achieved by their collective struggles; neoliberal policies have installed lean governments by cutting public pensions and unemployment insurance programs, attacked collective bargaining rights of workers, and increased user fees in the areas of education and transportation (Cairns & Sears, 2012, pp. 67–69). Neo-liberalists have blamed the welfare state for global economic crises and the declining rate of profits for corporations and for rigidly regulating labor market and increasing social benefits through social programs. While claiming to become lean, neoliberal states have become more interventionist and pumped trillions of public dollars into failing private banks and corporations, and engaged in massive spending on policing, prison industrial-complexes, and the military (Cairns & Sears, 2012, p. 68).

Most peoples in the Rest in general and indigenous peoples in particular are even not allowed to have the official democracy of the West. For indigenous peoples in the West, official democracies are illegitimate because they do not implement the rule of law to protect their interests, nor are they initiated in manner that would enable them to represent and promote their interests. Generally speaking, many people believe that democracy is in trouble, and the problem is amplified further with the crises of the capitalist world system; if democracy is to benefit all members of society, it must be reinvented to address the problems of the all people, rather than serving as a tool for further capital accumulation for the rich and powerful groups.

CONCLUSION

As the critical scholars and indigenous thinkers and framers introduced in this paper have been illustrating, globalization mainly benefits the few by exploiting indigenous peoples, oppressed classes, and a range of other subaltern groups. Global capitalism has also been abusing nature by aggravating the depletion of valuable resources and the destruction of ecosystems, in the interest of increasing (or, as appears to more accurate, of maintaining) rates of profit. Mainstream theories and ideologies cannot deny these realities. Above all, indigenous peoples have been facing state terrorism, genocide, systematic repression, and continued dispossession of their lands and other resources for more than five centuries. Mainstream scholars and politicians have harnessed a variety of rationalizations and discourses to justify such actions as “fulfillment of a sacred duty to spread their form of civilization to the world” (Bodley, 1982, p. 12). According to Galeano (1997, p. 41), “ideological justifications were never in short supply. The bleedings of the ... World became an act of charity, an argument for the faith. With the guilt, a whole system of rationalizations for guilty consciences was devised.”

The discourses of Christianity, commerce or free market, civilization, progress, race or culture, liberalism, and neoliberalism have been commonly used in rationalizing and justifying colonial terrorism, expropriation of lands and other resources, and the enslavement and victimization of indigenous peoples. The concept of Christianity combined the heavenly power of God with the earthly power of state of and the unbounded love for money, to become a lethal combination for the destruction of

indigenous peoples. Following this pattern, the colonizers, their descendants, and collaborators have created and maintained a “heavenly world” for themselves and “hell” for the native peoples and other subaltern groups, as well as within the societies that benefit most. As Bourdieu (2003 [2001], p. 28) put, “because the dominant in this game are dominated by the rules of the game they dominate (the rule of profit), this field functions as a kind of infernal machine without subject, which imposes its will on both states and firms” and, by implication, due to the radiation it emanates to everything in between and beyond as well, to a greater or lesser extent, including especially indigenous peoples. It may be apropos that at one of the central places of this theoretical magnum opus, Habermas (1987 [1981], p. 355) more than 30 years ago introduced a concept and an image that both take on even greater gravity in the present context (both this paper, and this current historical juncture):

Everyday consciousness sees itself thrown back on traditions whose claims to validity have already been suspended; where it does escape the spell of traditionalism, it is hopelessly splintered. In place of “false consciousness” we today have a “fragmented consciousness” that blocks enlightenment by the mechanism of reification. It is only with this that the conditions for a *colonization of the lifeworld* are met. When stripped of their ideological veils, the imperatives of autonomous subsystems make their way into the lifeworld from the outside – *like colonial masters coming into a tribal society* – and force a process of assimilation upon it. The diffused perspectives of their local culture cannot be sufficiently coordinated to permit the play of the metropolis and the world market to be grasped from the periphery. (Habermas, 1987 [1981], p. 355; second emphasis added)

However, this process even then should have been recognized as of a far more insidious sort than Habermas’s theoretically oriented application of the term *colonization* suggested. As the main representative of the second generation of Frankfurt School critical theorists, and his emphasis on communicative action as a positive force in human affairs, his approach must be understood as symptomatic of the “mainstreaming” of critical theory that has been underway among the official representatives of critical theory since the 1970s, if not earlier (see Dahms, 2008, pp. 41–45; Thompson, 2015). In fact, contrary to both the early critical theorists, Postone, and the more recent proponents of the new Marx reading, whose interest was and has continued to be directed at the development and refinement of a critical theory of modern society as a perpetually transforming social system resisting scrutiny, Habermas’s theoretical endeavor has been focused on the construction of a theory of modern society *within* the latter, in a manner that is consonant with the humanist and justice-oriented values that modern

societies are purported to foster (see Ingram, 2010; this applies to an even greater extent to Honneth's recognition paradigm; see Petherbridge, 2013). In terms of the analysis presented in this essay, however, such a theory of modern society inevitably replicates features of this form of social organization and process in general, and more importantly, features that are highly problematic and likely to drop out of sight, especially if and to the degree that they suggest that the link between modern society and humanist and justice-oriented values is more disconcerting than commonly recognized, in a very specific manner that is neither immediately apparent, nor readily discernible.

Still, in two regards, the above-quoted passage from *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas, 1984 [1981], 1987 [1981]) is astonishingly pertinent, though not in the manner intended. Habermas accurately anticipated the *logic* of the process of globalization, more than a decade before most social scientists began to embrace and focus on this concept. However, he did not do so in a manner that would have enabled others to appreciate the significance of the changes that began during the 1980s (see Harvey, 2005) and the intensity with which they would reconfigure the social world around the globe, at an accelerating rate. Fifteen years after the publication of Habermas' work, and well before the rise of China to an economic powerhouse, William Greider anticipated renewed interest in what Schumpeter (1942, pp. 81–86) referred to as “the process of the creative destruction,” and proposed the following:

Imagine a wondrous new machine, strong and supple, a machine that reaps as it destroys. It is huge and mobile, something like the machines of modern agriculture but vastly more complicated and powerful. Think of this awesome machine running over open terrain and ignoring familiar boundaries. It plows across fields and fencerows with a fierce momentum that is exhilarating to behold and also frightening. As it goes, the machine throws off enormous mows of wealth and bounty while it leaves behind great furrows of wreckage.

Now imagine that there are skillful hands on board, but no one is at the wheel. In fact, this machine has no wheel nor any internal governor to control the speed and direction. It is sustained by its own forward motion, guided mainly by its own appetites. And it is accelerating.

The machine is ... modern capitalism driven by the imperatives of global industrial revolution. The metaphor is imperfect, but it offers a simplified way to visualize what is dauntingly complex and abstract and impossibly diffuse – the drama of a free running economic system that is reordering the world. (Greider, 1997, p. 11)

Rather than confronting the “complex and abstract” economic force to which Greider alludes, which has been transforming the world, and which

both the early Frankfurt School theorists did – and the “new Marx readers” do – try to illuminate, Habermas abandoned any related effort, and reconceived critical theory in terms of the paradigm of communicative action, short-changing the contribution of Marx to the critical theory of modern society in the process. Yet, as Postone (1993, p. 386) put,

[O]n the basis of the twofold character of the commodity form of social mediation, Marx reconstruct[ed] the fundamental features of capitalist society. His categorical analysis characterizes modern social life in terms of several salient features, which it tries to interrelate and ground socially. These features include the quasi-objective, “necessary” character of social domination – that is, the impersonal, abstract, and pervasive nature of a form of power with no real personal or concrete institutional locus – the ongoing directional dynamic of modern society, and its labor mediated form of interdependence and of individual social reproduction. At the same time, Marx’s categorical analysis seeks to explain some of the apparent anomalies of modern social life as intrinsic aspects of its structuring social forms: the continued production of poverty in the midst of plenty, the apparently paradoxical effects of labor-saving and time-saving technology on the organization of social labor and social time, and the degree to which social life is controlled by abstract and impersonal forces despite the growing potential ability of people to control their social and natural environment.

In this context, an array of established concepts and notion employed by individuals to make sense of their social world, such as communication, institutional, decision making, along with democracy, freedom, justice, etc., take on an entirely different quality that largely remains hidden from sight. It does, not, however, translate into such concepts and notions losing their meaning entirely, but instead the imminent need to ascertain their validity in terms of lived social life.

In fact, communication may be much more important today than in the past, to meet the challenge of grasping the vicissitudes of change in the twenty-first century. Such communication, however, must no longer occur exclusively within the confines of the modern world, but transgress concretely the traditional boundaries of the modern or traditionally understood. To achieve this feat, the subaltern must be empowered to speak, not exclusively on its own terms, for example, to express experiences of victimization, but rather as part of a new kind of conversation, beyond practices of perceiving, conceiving, constructing, and maintaining existing borders and boundaries (see Langman, 2005; Scatamburlo-D’Annibale & Langman, 2003; Smith, 2001; Thompson, 2003). Habermas’ ideas relating to communicative action may well have been so much ahead of their time that even he did not fully grasp their import: to facilitate cross-cultural exchange directed at thematizing how processes that shaped and emanated from the

European and American contexts were problematic not merely within and for the later, but for human civilization and the planetary bio-sphere as a whole. Thus, the point and purpose of communication would not be to develop and perpetuate conceptions of the modern within its own horizon, but to illuminate this horizon, in order to reach beyond. Indigenous populations as the primary target of both the logic of capital and of globalization have the capacity to speak of their experiences – as opposed to nature, which cannot speak (see [Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002 \[1944\]](#)), or to workers located within modern societies, who have been socialized and subsequently co-opted to “buy into the system,” and who as a result for the most part cannot communicate beyond the world of capital, to name it on its own terms instead of in terms of its socially, culturally, and politically detrimental consequences for those who are economically deprived (see [Postone, 1993](#); for a slightly different take, see [Bonefeld, 2014](#)).

Critical theorists in the Frankfurt School tradition as well as other, related traditions, such as feminist, postmodernist, or postcolonial theories (see [Calhoun, 1995](#)) who over the course of decades have made consistent and collaborative efforts to illuminate the logic underlying the dynamics of the conflicted relationship between modernity and modernization from within, as opposed to animals, plants, and the planet itself, have the manifest opportunity to consult those who have experienced the consequences of the logic of capitalism and of globalization first-hand, from the perspective of systems of norms and values that are not the mediated and endlessly compounded consequence of centuries of rationalization in the name and interest of capital accumulation.

Neoliberal policies – as the current pattern of globalization (see [El-Ojeili & Hayden, 2006](#); [Medieta, 2007](#)) – are broadening and deepening the dispossession of economic and natural resources from powerless groups and classes. Not surprisingly in light of the above, people who could bring reform or fundamental social change in the West and the Rest have failed to critically understand the crimes that have been committed in the name of civilization, progress, development, and democracy around the world, at least in part due to refusal by decision-makers in positions of power to consider the actual as opposed to the imagined consequences of their actions and policies.³⁴

Mainstream scholars and institutions have subscribed to, supported, reinforced, or generated theories and ideologies based on notions and pre-suppositions that are integral to the functioning of modern societies as specific structures of social inequality and systems of power (see [Dahms, 2015b](#)). Far-reaching consequences have resulted for how individuals exist

in and process everyday life in the context of the increasingly contradictory and destructive system of global capitalism; in this sense, mainstream theories bear responsibility inasmuch as they have been colluding in the enactment of semantic warfare against the powerless peoples in the West and the Rest. Semantic warfare is “a deliberate and unremitting phenomenon usually under-girded by fully elaborate systems of concepts, beliefs, and myths,” and groups “who control language control thought and eventually semantic corruption leads to the adulteration of thought itself” (Brennan, 1995, pp. 8, 12). With time, these “fully elaborate systems of concepts, beliefs, and myths” have become the ideological foundation of society and started to corrupt the minds of the public. According to Solzhenitsyn (1973, p. 174), “Ideology – that is what gives evildoing its long-sought justification and gives the evildoer the necessary steadfastness and determination. That is the social theory, which helps [...] acts seem good instead of bad in [one’s] own and others’ eyes, so that [one] won’t hear reproaches and curses but will receive praise and honors.”³⁵ The ideologies of racism, Christian fundamentalism, modernization, Euro-American centrism, American exceptionalism, liberalism, and neoliberalism thus deny the public the opportunity to learn about the humanity, cultures, and histories of indigenous peoples and other subaltern groups.

Today, elites who run and maintain institutions such as governments, schools, colleges, churches, and publishing houses, as well as reporters, broadcasters, columnists, editors, bureau chiefs, executives, writers, artists, producers, and actors serving as “gatekeepers of information who determine what ideas, perceptions, attitudes, and values are allowed into the public domain” have continued to objectify indigenous peoples and other subaltern groups (Brennan, 1995, p. 17). In history books, films, and other forms of media, indigenous peoples have been wrongly portrayed “as wild savages who wantonly slaughtered innocent white settlers and displayed their scalps as an exhibitions of hunting acumen” (Brennan, 1995, pp. 58–59). The legitimate struggles of indigenous peoples for resistance, survival, and national liberation also have been distorted and criminalized while the criminal acts of the states, settlers, and their descendants have been rationalized and glorified. “Scientific” claims have been made to promote personal and group interests at the cost of humanity. The ideology of racism has portrayed indigenous peoples as savage and barbaric in order to rationalize the crimes against humanity and exonerate the executioners.

Euro-American civilization has been superior above all in its ability to unleash forces of destruction in the name of production, and in the

prevalence of what amounts to greed-inspired cruelty, externally as well internally, which it transposed onto social history and structures within and without. According to Brennan (1995, p. 57), “[t]he wholesale departure of Native Americans from the landscape of North America was not the inevitable result of a primitive, inferior race naturally wilting before the march of progress and modern civilization. It was due, instead, to a deliberate and pervasive policy of [...] extermination.” The same could be said about other indigenous peoples in the world. The serious challenge that faces progressive intellectuals, activists, and social movements aspiring to bring fundamental social change in the world through alliances and liberation knowledge is to expose the fallacies of mainstream theories, ideologies and forms of reified knowledge, so that all groups of people acquire the critical capacity to learn about how all of humanity must engage in constructive exchange directed at the pursuit of radical reform, to create an alternative, qualitatively superior egalitarian democratic world where injustice and exploitation successfully are being contained, if not prevented, by collective efforts that demand that in a world which is changing around us at an ever more rapid pace, we, too, must change. The choice is whether we change exclusively in a reactive mode, or whether we are willing to meet the challenge of insuring that circumstances will arise that not only enable us to change in terms of the shared values we claim inspire and motivate our actions, but circumstances that demand that we do so.

NOTES

1. See especially Abbott and Sparrow (2007) and Steinmetz (2007). Regarding the crisis of Soviet industrial statism, see Castells (1998), also Derluguian (2013), regarding the similarities between twentieth century industrial capitalism and communism, see Buck-Morss (2000); regarding the role of the state during the transition from industrial to postindustrial capitalism, see Esping-Andersen (1990). See also Dahms (2006b), esp. Antonio and Bonanno (2006).

2. For example, Arrighi (2010), Engerman (2010), and especially Loth (2010), also Westad (2005) and Saull (2007). These changes were also the foil for the debate in sociology during the 1960s over whether continued reliance on “capitalism” (especially in its “late-capitalist” version) or its replacement by “industrial society” was more conducive to grasping and scrutinizing newly emerging constellations of business, labor, and government during the Cold War era. See, for instance, Aron (1967) [1966], Adorno (2003 [1968]), and Bell (1973).

3. See Dahms (2015a, 2015b), Lotz (2015).

4. See Webber and Rigby (1996), Harvey (2005).

5. See the papers by Postone (2015) and Smith (2015) in this volume.

6. See especially Scott McNall's (2015) forthcoming work on the problem of social inequality.

7. For an important step in the direction of such a constructive exchange, in theory, see Jung (2008), on the tensions between modernity and modernization, see Luke (1990, pp. 211–240), Chakrabarty (2002, 2007 [2000]), and Kumar (2004).

8. There are numerous definitions of indigeneity in the related literature, as well debates over the desirability of such definitions. For present purposes, a factsheet issued by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2009) may serve as a suitable reference point, especially the following passages:

It is estimated that there are more than 370 million indigenous people spread across 70 countries worldwide. Practicing unique traditions, they retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Spread across the world from the Arctic to the South Pacific, they are the descendants – according to a common definition – of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.

Among the indigenous peoples are those of the Americas (for example, the Lakota in the USA, the Mayas in Guatemala or the Aymaras in Bolivia), the Inuit and Aleutians of the circumpolar region, the Saami of northern Europe, the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of Australia and the Maori of New Zealand. These and most other indigenous peoples have retained distinct characteristics which are clearly different from those of other segments of the national populations.

...

According to the UN the most fruitful approach is to identify, rather than define indigenous peoples. This is based on the fundamental criterion of self-identification as underlined in a number of human rights documents.

9. On critical theory as a critique, specifically, of mainstream approaches in the social sciences, see Horkheimer (1972 [1937]) and Dahms (2011, chapter 6).

10. Problems of science and social science begin on as basic a level as differences in concepts of knowledge that differ not just between western and non-western cultures, but within those cultures as well, and may be conceived of more accurately with regard to the influence and degree of prevalence of the English language, in a particular society. For instance, in societal contexts that are based upon, rely heavily on, share affinities with, and employ the English language, the purpose of (social) science is commonly taken to be the production of *knowledge*, usually understood as a rather *static* body of thought – centered on the development and deployment of a range of categories. By contrast, such Continental European languages as French and German refer to “knowledge” as a verb turned into a noun, that is, *savoir* (in French), and *Wissen* (in German), literally translated as “to know” or “knowing”, to be understood as *modes of knowing*. From the perspective of the latter, then, “knowledge” would be a more or less reified form of *knowing*, which in turn must be grasped as foundationally *dynamic* in nature. Without addressing such linguistic distinctions explicitly, one of Latour's (2013 [2012]) recent

works should be understood as an attempt at developing related implications for an “anthropology of the Moderns,” as an indispensable precondition for designing and devising public policy, and for mediating between theory and practice, from here on out. It may be productive to read Habermas’s (1984 [1981], pp. 53–66) discussion of Evans-Pritchard and Peter Winch on the African tribe of the Azande from a vantage point informed by (though not necessarily anticipating to) Latour’s perspective. See also Pleasants (2000). For a much more in-depth discussion of related matters, see Hazelrigg (1989).

11. An issue that has burdened efforts to facilitate such exchanges is related to who speaks for whom, and how. This issue is especially volatile when it comes to westerners, especially if by birth and/or in terms of primary and secondary socialization and education. That is, people from “Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) societies” (see Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010, p. 61) claiming to speak for and represent accurately and adequately the interests and concerns of indigenous populations, partly because they are likely to do so without the necessary critical reflexivity with regard to their own socially constituted nature and mode of thinking and acting, but may rather employ “traditional” modes of reflection, filled with non-traditional content (see Horkheimer, 1972 [1937]), and partly because doing so indeed may be based on assumptions relating to indigenous groups as homogenous groups with shared goals and aspirations, which is neither necessarily correct, nor incorrect, depending on the specific circumstances. An additional issue, to be addressed at a later point, is how the need for reflexivity with regard to the gravity of socio-historical circumstances advocated here applies to indigenous peoples, and resulting implications for perspectives on globalization and modern society grounded in the experiences of the latter.

12. Regarding the concept of “constitutional logic,” see Dahms (unpublished manuscript). The basic proposition is that the gulf between prevailing assumptions about the forces that shape the nature and direction of social change in modern societies, and the dynamics that must be grasped in order to understand and appreciate the latter, runs so deep as to generate a prevalence of categorical mistakes in the social sciences that practically and theoretically undercut the development of theories which would be required to increase modern society’s ability to tackle an array of social, political, and economic problems. In the absence of such understanding, efforts to tackle those problems solidify the contradictions and paradoxes inherent to modern societies, thus adding to the phenomenon of *inversion* of cause and effect.

13. Ben Agger’s (1992, 1993, 2002) version of critical theory kept moving in the direction of greater and greater inclusivity, over the years. Regarding theories of global civilization, see the *Theory for a Global Age* series, published by Bloomsbury, and edited by Gurminder Bhambra, especially Bhambra (2014), Hansen and Jonsson (2014), Narayan (2015), and Shilliam (2015). See also Bhambra (2007), and the web site <http://globalsocialtheory.org>

14. What Collins (1998) has done for philosophy, also needs to be done for social theory, although in a much more systematically critical fashion.

15. “American” in the sense of dominant populations of at least partially European origin in North and South America, as opposed to indigenous populations, experiences, and perspectives that became marginalized on both continents

since the arrival of Europeans. On conflicting narratives, interpretations and experiences relating to the “opening up of history” during the Italian Renaissance, and the simultaneity between the latter and the age of imperial European conquest, see Mignolo (2003, 2011). In this sense, as well as from the perspective of world-systems analysis, global capitalism is not a recent phenomenon, but the pattern of the proliferation and expansion of markets since the fifteenth century. For an examination of the socio-historical context in which the critical theory of the Frankfurt School came to be reconfigured after World War II, see Müller (2003).

16. McGovern is citing Shiva (1993, pp. 9–10). See also the section, “The Purported Superiority of the Western Model,” in Dahms (2008, pp. 7–10, 2011, pp. 253–255).

17. This is especially true with regard to what distinguished sociological theory from social and critical theory; while the latter are cognizant of the need for historical reflexivity, the former is not.

18. This applies especially to the fact that the concept of critical theory was developed, by Horkheimer (1972 [1937]) and Marcuse (2009 [1937]), in New York. See also Claussen, Negt, and Werz (1999).

19. Long before the ideas and practice of democracy and social equality were the norm in Europe and North America, the design of *Siqqee/Gadaa* as a social and political institution worked to prevent exploitation and political domination in the Oromo society. Consequently, under the *Siqqee/Gadaa* system, the Oromo society enjoyed relative peace, stability, sustainable prosperity, and political sovereignty. Before their colonization by the alliance of European imperialism and Ethiopian colonialism (Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990; Jalata, 1993), the Oromo people were independent and organized both culturally and politically using the *Gadaa/Siqqee* system to promote their wellbeing and to maintain their security and sovereignty.

20. See also Hussein (2002).

21. For an example with empirical import, see the Frankfurt School’s interest in the link between antisemitism and capitalism, and how the former served to conceal the operations of the latter, such as the antisemitism project and the Studies in Prejudice (see Wiggershaus, 1995 [1986], pp. 350–430); also Postone (1986).

22. Half a century ago, the writings of Joseph Gabel also illustrate such an approach to diagnosis the warped nature of modern society, as it plays out in the lives of individuals as well as collective actors, such as social movement; more recently, Alain Ehrenberg exemplifies a contemporary treatment of this nexus of problems. See Gabel (1975 [1962], 1997), Sica (1995), and Ehrenberg (2010).

23. More recent instances of critical theory have in common a more distanced attitude toward Marx’s writings; I have referred to those incarnations of critical theory in terms of “critical liberalism” (Dahms, 2008, pp. 43–45, 2011, pp. 289–291) see also Dahms (under contract). See Jung (2008, pp. 233–293, esp. pp. 260–263) for a broader employment of the development and deployment of the concept, as well as Flikschuh (2000, pp. 25–29).

24. See the first paper in this volume; also Postone (1993, p. 7): “the term ‘traditional Marxism’ refers not to a specific historical tendency in Marxism but generally to all theoretical approaches that analyze capitalism from the standpoint of labor and characterize that society essentially in terms of class relations, structured by private ownership of the means of production and a market-regulated economy.” For a more elaborate discussion, see pp. 6–21 and 43–83.

25. For a current example of such practices, see Guyol-Meinrath (2015).

26. “Growing worldwide industrialization and the ceaseless search for short-term profits pose major threats to global ecology ... Poor societies are being exploited and destabilized as never before, and the poorest members of developed societies are increasingly malnourished and diseased. A pervasive and growing psychological malaise blights the lives of ever larger numbers of people who participate in the so-called new economy ... How much longer can such societies and a world economic system be kept operating by a monopolistic information system that propagates the view that no viable alternatives exist, or can even be imagined, to the way things are currently being done?” (Trigger, 2006, p. 26). See also the World Wildlife Fund’s recent report that over the course of the last forty years, 50 percent of the Earth’s animal life has disappeared: WWF (2014). According to Christian (2015), the concurrent advent of neoliberalism and end of colonialism did not eliminate the racist foundations of colonialism, capital accumulation, and modernity. Rather, racist practices have tended to become less visible, in economic as well as institutional contexts, but continue to perpetuate racial logics and assumptions through a purportedly colorblind lens, with an array of consequences in different parts of the Third World.

27. See also the far-reaching neglect of the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804 in historiography, in general, and in assessments of the “age of revolution,” which usually focused exclusively on the American and French Revolutions, even though the Haitian Revolution was the only slave revolt that concluded with the abolition of slavery and the establishment of an independent state (e.g., Buck-Morss, 2009).

28. See Dahms (2006a, unpublished manuscript) develops the concept of the “constitutional logic of modern societies,” in order to highlight how this particular type of society maintains itself by imposing on its members a regime of cognitive dissonance which to recognize, and from which to escape, requires greater and greater mental and emotional efforts. It is the paradoxical nature of modern society’s constitutional logic that facilitated and necessitated the formation of what commonly is being referred to as “immanent critique” (Stahl, 2013).

29. In recent decades, for instance, critical anthropologists have started to envision the possibility of building an egalitarian society by learning from the experiences of earlier societies (Solway, 2006).

30. We must keep in mind, to be sure, the danger or retroactive romanticization of practices that reflect conditions of oppression, as in this case in the context of Ethiopia. An issue that inevitably burdens attempts to compare conditions of indigeneity and of modernity/modernization, respectively, is the tension between ideas and facts in each contexts. This discrepancy warrants close examination, which we will need to undertake at a later point.

31. Nassehi (2015) recently has made a similar argument, not with regard to social practice, but in terms of social theory and sociology having to overcome reliance on categories that applied to and derive from the nineteenth and twentieth century. Approaching the issue of outdated categories and distinctions from a non-dogmatically systems-theoretical perspective, he suggests that society denotes a reality that exists according to its own logic and rules, not in terms of what individuals hope and wish for, and imagine society to be. Translated, the title of his work (which so far is available only in German, and may remain so) runs as follows: “The Last Hour of Truth: Why right and left no longer are alternatives, and why society must be described completely differently.”

32. Jalata (2013a, 2013b, 2013c). Out of about 7 billion world population, more than “three billion people live on less than two dollars a day Eight hundred and forty million people in the world don’t have enough to eat. Ten million children die every year from easily preventable diseases. AIDS is killing three million people a year and is still spreading. One billion people in the world lack access to clean water; two billion lack access to sanitation. One billion adults are illiterate. About a quarter of the children in the poor countries do not finish primary school” (Easterly, 2006, p. 8). Most of these impoverished and suffering peoples are the descendants of colonial subjects. Those rich and powerful classes and well-to-do ethno-nations ignore the devastating consequences of absolute poverty and associated violence on the indigenous and stateless peoples in the world.

33. These tragedies include about 20 million deaths in the former USSR, 65 million in China, 1 million in Vietnam, 2 million in North Korea, 2 million in Cambodia, 1 million in Eastern Europe, 150,000 in Latin America, 1.7 million in Africa, 1.5 million in Afghanistan, and 10,000 deaths in other places – totally about 100 million deaths (Courtois et al., 1999, p. 4). China is currently engaging in imperialism and the exploitation of many poor countries as Western countries, by extending its domestic policies beyond its borders, for now employing what has been referred to as “soft power.” See, for example, Li (2011) and Kurlantzick (2008).

34. Despite inevitable misgivings about his approach in detail, Latour (2013 [2012]) is instructive inasmuch as his entire effort – in this particular work (if not much of his *œuvre*) and the web site set up in connection to it, designed to enable readers to participate in addressing issues he raised, including the question of suitable practice to implement conclusions reached, even if only preliminarily – is intended to enable decision-makers in the EU to attain a better understanding how it is both enabling and disabling, at the same time, to be “modern”: “If there is something that defines, ethnographically, the fact of being Western, European, Modern, if there is at least one history that belongs to us, it is that we are the descendants of those who overturned the idols ...” (p. 165); he continues, “[a]t this stage in our progression, what counts is to realize in what aporia those who bring the charge of falsity against idols are going to be plunged. Or rather, since among the Moderns everything always happens ‘doubled,’ we are going to find ourselves confronting two multiplied aporias: one bearing of the quality of the beings that we claim to reveal by destroying idols; the other on the meaning that we should have given the idols, had we not taken it upon ourselves to destroy them” (p. 166).

35. Just prior to this passage, Solzhenitsyn referred to Macbeth, and this passage expands on that earlier reference; for present purposes, we did consider it justifiable and more applicable to a broader range of instances of ideology, to degenderize and generalize Solzhenitsyn’s point.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Michelle Christian, Lawrence Hazelrigg, and Daniel Krier for helpful comments on various versions of this paper,

Rhiannon Leebrick for excellent formal and substantive suggestions on how to clarify the overall argument of the paper, Lain Myers-Brown for a very close reading of the final version that improved the grammar and style, and Enkeshi Thom for pointing out two major deficits in the frame of the overall argument.

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