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by

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Abstract

This paper asks the following questions: What is social theory? Why has a discussion on social theory become significant today? What is social theory's relationship to the contemporary globalising world?

Since the late 1970s, sociologists across the global North have recognised that the discipline's practices of scholarship need rethinking, given that both its theoretical and methodological foundations have faced fundamental challenges due to the sweep of the globalising processes being organised through the new Information and Communication Technologies on the one hand and the questionings of reason and its universals by the postmodernists on the other (Steinmetz & Chae, 2002). While sociologists have rejected the postmodernist positions, they do accept a need for the discipline to think anew its positivist philosophical assumptions and have embarked on a journey of reassessing its epistemological and methodological principles while simultaneously exploring the relationship between globalisation and modernity. These ruminations have led some of them to critically evaluate its 19th-century scientific moorings and its theories of social change (Lemert, 1995). Others have queried the 'convergence' theories related to modernisation that argued that the global spread of industrialisation and urbanisation are necessary tangents of modernity (Eisenstadt, 2000), and still others, while questioning the universals of social sciences, have engaged with metatheoretical and metamethodological approaches, creating a new field of social theory (Joas & Knöbl, 2009).

Social theorists argue that sociologists by necessity need to ask two sets of queries when they debate the theories of globalisation and modernity and design their empirical work. The first set of questions relate to protocols of science and probe the following: What is the best way to study humans? What counts as evidence? Is evidence from all aspects of society necessary to understand social life? Are social science arguments of the same weight and validity as that of natural sciences? How does one, methodologically, marry the particular with the universal? What is the nature of explanation within social sciences? What is the relationship of science with normative and moral queries? The second set of questions are concerned with praxiological issues and asks: How does social science help to transform society and provide a good life? What is good life, and what values can be considered good? What is the relationship between theory, politics, and ethics? How can theory be connected to practice? Are theories merely partial assessments, and is modernity a partial realisation of human emancipation?

Given that there is no consensus on these queries, the field of social theory is perceived to be a field postulating plural and eclectic positions. Today, social theorists assess how and what modernity is, trace its contentious relationship with reason, analyse its origin and its impact on the world, and simultaneously debate the 'philosophical and logical questions' of the practice of theory and how these relate to the 'betterment of humankind' (Delanty, 1999).

Two critical interventions in this regard (among others) were made by Giddens (1990) and Beck et al. (2003). Both asserted that modernity does not necessarily imply progress; rather it articulates risks, both at macro level (for example, environmental risks) and at individual level (for example, trust-building between strangers). Both distinguished between two phases of modernity, the first phase being in the 19th century, a period wherein the nation state achieved pre-eminence, when there was commitment to industrial economy and to science and technology, and when there was a belief in class as a collective political agent fighting for civil and political rights. Both these theorists contended that the late-20th-century map of modernity was and is completely different. It is dominated by reflexivity, a context wherein increasing information determines action or, as suggested

by Beck, wherein the growth of knowledge has everywhere created 'manufactured uncertainty'. Giddens avers similarly that modernity is associated with discontinuities, these being organised through scope of change, pace of change, and by modern institutions And to comprehend these interconnections and these interdependencies, Beck presented a theory of reflexive modernisation, of a new stage of modernity, a social change driven by judgments and actions which are supposedly scientific or rational, but in practice comprises reflexes, and therefore destined to engender a risk-ridden state of affairs in society. This modernity is about deconstruction and reconstruction.

These positions have been questioned by the decolonial perspective, which argues that the late-20th-century perspective on modernity is a continuation of the 19th-century European epistemic positions, and that coloniality (rather than reflexivity) is a leitmotif of globalisation. In the following three sections, I discuss the different ways in which scholars have elaborated decolonial theory.

Eurocentrism, Geopolitics, and Modernity

In 1988, Samir Amin published a small book titled *Eurocentrism*. The ideas formulated in this text became foundational in subsequent discussions on this theme. *Eurocentrism* presented a historical argument on the relationship of colonialism and capitalism and the growth of the Eurocentric episteme in the 18th century. It asserted that Eurocentrism is entwined in the twin processes of crystallisation of European society and Europe's conquest of the world. Eurocentrism, Amin argued, clothed these twin processes by emphasising the first and disregarding the significance of the latter in the formation of the first. Amin's argument was presented at three levels: First, he contended that Europe had been the periphery of the Mediterranean tributary states whose centre was at its eastern edge, the Levant. Scholastic and metaphysical cultures of these tributary systems created four systems of scholastic metaphysics: Hellenistic, Eastern Christian, Islamic, and Western Christian. While all of these contributed to the formation of culture and consciousness of Europe, it was the contribution of Egypt and later of medieval Islamic

scholastics, which was decisive in changing Europe's culture from being metaphysical to scientific (Amin, 2008, p. 38).

Second, he showed how since the period of European Renaissance, this history of Europe has been distilled and diluted to be replaced with another history that narrated its growth as being the sole consequence of its birth within the Hellenic–Roman civilisation. Third, through the means of what the Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel (2000, p. 465) has called 'semantic slippages', Amin argued that the European narrative made Europe the centre of the world and of modern 'civilisation', the distinctive characteristic of which was science and 'universal reason'. The rest of the world was constructed to be its peripheries, which, it was contended, could not or did not have the means to become modern. This historical argument regarding Eurocentrism was extended by Wallerstein (2006) when he suggested that Eurocentrism is also an episteme of social science. As latter, it is able to 'naturalise' the distinctions between 'scientific universalism against essential particulars' as it developed its discourse in the 19th century. These trends, Wallerstein asserted, crystallised an 'original epistemology' (Wallerstein, 2006, p. 48). As a consequence, this epistemology became 'a key element' in managing the reproduction of modernity. Wallerstein's position has got further fillip in the works of philosopher Enrique Dussel and sociologist Anibal Quijano, who with others are now known as decolonial theorists.

Decolonial theory (or perspective), also called the colonialism/ modernity research programme (Escobar, 2007), is an intellectual movement originating in Latin America and which combines and subsumes many other trends, the most important being world systems analysis. It draws its direct legacy from Latin American dependency theories (Quijano being a member of both groups), liberation theology of the 1960s and 1970s, ideas popularised by Latin American philosophers (the most important being of Enrique Dussel), issues germane to contemporary Latin American social movements, together with intellectual trends in other regions, such as Indian subaltern theories and the critique of modernity and postmodernity emanating from the North. Its reformulation of these inheritances heralded, in Escobar's words, 'its own inquiry in the very borders of systems of thought' and made possible 'non-Eurocentric modes of thinking' (Escobar, 2007, p. 180).

From the start, it negated its genealogy in western thought and in the Enlightenment and presented itself as the authentic voice of, and for, an alternative decolonial position.[1]

The decolonial scholarship organises its research programme around a number of key concepts that I explore in detail: coloniality of power (the invisible and constitutive side of 'modernity') (Quijano, 2000), exteriority/interiority and transmodernity (Dussel, 1993, 2000), colonial difference,[2] border episteme, and pluriversality.[3] These are stringed together to develop a critique of mainstream sociological globalisation theories that argue that the radicalisation of contemporary modernity has made it universal. The goals of the coloniality/modernity programme are: first, to critique contemporary sociological language on modernity and simultaneously to highlight some limitations in the world systems analysis; second, to constitute an alternate episteme to frame a new social science language; and third, to assemble concepts

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1. This idea was first presented by Walter D. Mignolo at the panel discussion on *Alternatives to Eurocentrism and Colonialism in Latin American Social Thought* at the Montreal World Congress of Sociology in 1998. See Mignolo (2014).

2. Partha Chatterjee too uses the concept of 'colonial difference', but his comprehension of this concept has different moorings. Chatterjee's (1986) use of this concept relates to the discussion on the nature of Indian nationalism which was led by the native elites. According to Chatterjee, colonialism has played contradictory roles in defining nationalist ideology in India. On the one hand, it presented to its subjects a claim that it is a modern regime, and that Indians can improve and develop in order to embrace (European) rationality. At the same time, because colonialism needed to distinguish between the dominated colonised and those who did the domination, it had to create rules for creating differences between the 'we' and the 'they'. Chatterjee's use of this concept is related to the way that nationalism manifested itself in non-settled colonialism such that it could dominate 'natives' in the name of the colonial powers, and is related to his concepts of civil and political society. In contrast, Mignolo, whose work is based on the Latin American experience of settled colonialism, uses it to analyse the imperial episteme.

3. See Mignolo (2013) for the genealogy of the term.

and theories to understand contemporary global modernity by reconstructing historical, social, cultural, and philosophical positions in social science. The goal here is ambitious: it is to reframe global sociological theory by reconstituting the developments within Marxist post-dependency theory and thereby to include the voices of the marginalised and subaltern populations in order to create conditions for their emancipation and liberation.

The decolonial theorists posit that, rather than modernity being the focus of analysis (as is the case with theorists such as Giddens), coloniality should be the centre of attention, for there is no modernity without colonialism. They also argue that analyses developed through the world systems approach, which concentrated on the material relationship of exploitation inherent in the international division of labour, was limiting. For them, the concept of coloniality is both incisive and empirically productive because it heralds a sociology that constitutes, mutually, the global international division of labour together with racial/ ethnic hierarchies that were conceived within hegemonic Eurocentric ideologies and imaginaries. Quijano argues that coloniality organises power through the imposition of institutions, practices, and knowledge across most of contemporary Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean, given that a significant proportion of peoples and their territories were colonised. No wonder Quijano's (2000) concept and theory of 'coloniality of power' has become a leitmotif for decolonial scholars, who consider it the most appropriate analytical frame.

Quijano (2007) distinguishes between direct colonial rule and coloniality, and suggests that coloniality is the imaginary of the capitalist world system and that it continues even after the demise of colonialism. The colonial matrix of power, according to Quijano, has been inscribed in four interrelated domains: control of economy (land appropriation, exploitation of labour, control of natural resources); control of authority (institutions such as the army); control of gender and sexuality (through family and formal and informal socialisation systems); and control of subjectivity and knowledge (epistemology, education, and formation of subjectivity), the last being the most important in framing the social sciences.

Coloniality is built on two myths: evolutionism and dualism, both being embedded in Eurocentrism. Although projected as a theory of history, wherein scientific knowledge and technological development progress are in an upward linear direction toward higher levels of knowledge and a greater ability to usefully transform the environment, coloniality is an episteme—a theory of power/knowledge. If this episteme theorised the 'I', it also theorised the 'other' as the 'periphery'.

Second, this episteme, now termed 'categorical imperative' (following Kant), simultaneously creates the knowledge of the 'I' (Europe, the moderns, the West) against that of the 'other' (as the peripheral, non-modern, and the East). European regional or local history is understood as universal history. Europe serves as the model or reference for every other history, representing the apex of humanity's progress from the 'primitive' to the 'modern' (Dussel, 2000; Quijano, 2000). Third, differences from others are converted into value differences (Mignolo, 1995) and hierarchies that define all non-European humans as inferior ('savage', 'primitive', 'backward', 'underdeveloped'). Eurocentric knowledge is based on the construction of multiple and repeated divisions or oppositions. The most characteristic and significant of these include the basic and hierarchical dualisms of reason and body, subject and object, culture and nature, and masculine and feminine. Fourth, these differences or hierarchies scale, from superior to inferior, the different peoples of the world in terms of principles of race and gender (Quijano, 2000).

Coloniality of power together with colonial difference (the division of modernity from coloniality and its use to create further divisions and differences in knowledge) are epistemic tools privileging the intellectual and political space that the Europeans provided themselves to objectify the colonial world, leading to the latter's invisibility and the subordination of their imaginaries and their knowledge. This imaginary has permeated the social sciences of the whole world, making a great part of the social knowledge of the peripheral world equally Eurocentric. In those disciplines, the experience of European societies is naturalised: its economic organisation is the capitalist market, and its political organisation, the European nation state, is the 'natural' form of political existence. The different peoples of the planet are organised according to

a notion of progress—on the one hand, the more advanced, superior, modern societies, and on the other, backward, traditional, non-modern societies.

Decolonial theory is not only a critique of contemporary social sciences, its modernisation theories, and its recent reconstitution as modernity theories; it is also a reconstruction of it in terms of a new historical sociology. Its research programme has argued that the origin of modernity should be located at the conquest of the Americas and the control of the Atlantic after 1492 and not the Enlightenment or the end of the 18th century. As a consequence, the focus of the analysis of the capitalist system shifts to its colonial moorings and to the colony's economic exploitation, leading to the use of the world systems approach rather than an analysis of individual nation states. Thus, the world is interconnected in the same circle of colonial/capitalist modernity except that the imaginary of modernity does not recognise the subalternisation of colonial knowledge. Eurocentrism is the knowledge form of modernity/coloniality, a hegemonic representation and mode of knowing that claims universality for itself, and that relies on 'a confusion between abstract universality and the concrete world hegemony derived from Europe's position as center' (Dussel, 2000, p. 471).

Enrique Dussel affirmed this point of view when he suggested that the first step in building an alternate modern knowledge (transmodernity) is to affirm the alterity of the 'other' denied within Eurocentrism and give voice to the others' meanings. For social science to rediscover its true mantle, it has to discover the other, to delineate the ways and manners that the 'other' remained part of the negative and dark side of modernity, and then to correct the original knowledge by acknowledging this injustice. Secondly, Dussel argued that given the contemporary limited nature of the European conception of emancipatory reason, it is imperative that social science scholars broaden its use by associating it with liberating reason and by unmasking its hegemonic 'developmentalist fallacy'. This can be done in and through the methodology of exteriority—to study Europe and its projects from the outside.[4] Dussel asserted that what is at stake here is not a retrieval of premodern assessments that would

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4. See the recent work by Boatca (2018) on seeing Europe through Caribbean 'eyes'.

consist of a folkloric affirmation of the past, nor an antimodern project of the kind put forward by conservative, right-wing, populist or fascist groups, nor a postmodern project that would deny modernity and would critique all reason. Rather, Dussel suggests a need to constitute a new social science that critiques northern social science through the articulation of the voice of the other and the reconstitution of the project for emancipation and liberation for all humanity. If decolonial thinking's first part is an analytic intervention, the second part is a programme of creating a new and delinked border episteme[5] that formulates new tools of thinking that can displace capitalism and its Eurocentric episteme.

It is in this context that Mignolo (2007) and Grosfoguel (2007) made a clear distinction between decolonial theorists and postcolonial studies, even though a few decolonial theorists, such as Dussel, use decolonial and postcolonial interchangeably in some of their essays.[6] Mignolo (2007) argued that the decolonial perspective gives voice to silenced histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternised knowledges,

5. According to Mignolo and Tlostanova,
    Border thinking brings to the foreground different kinds of theoretical actors and principles of knowledge that displace European modernity (which articulated the very concept of theory in the social sciences and the humanities) and empowers those who have been epistemically disempowered by the theo- and ego-politics of knowledge. (2006, pp. 206–207)

6. It is difficult to characterise postcolonialism, as it has a large canvas and brings together many strands of thought, including sometimes Indian subaltern studies and even decolonial perspective. Postcolonialism started as an intellectual movement within the humanities in order to assess the lasting impact of colonisation in western/northern literature, architecture, films, and more generally the arts. Postcolonial studies have a geographical location in the northern countries, and the term has been rarely used in many South countries except when addressing northern academics. Thus, it is important for analysts to make clear the distinctions between these intellectual interventions, and Grosfoguel's comment should be seen in this light; scholars in the humanities rarely engaged with Marxism and the political economy approach. Additionally, both Mignolo (2005) and Grosfoguel (2007), argued that Indian subaltern studies and decolonial perspective have distinct genealogies and should not be confused with each other.

and languages of the people of ex-colonised regions. Thus, decolonial analysis moves away or 'de-links' itself from a postcolonial critique located in academia that uses poststructuralism and deconstruction to interrogate western social sciences. These methodologies merely critique modernity and remain internal to Eurocentrism. These do not have the language to critique the coloniser from the episteme of the colonised, from the exteriority, in terms of changing the terms of discussion. These cannot delink from Eurocentrism because it has no way to find a new epistemic voice that can formulate new universals which are not totalitarian in its orientation. In addition, Grosfoguel argued that the postcolonial makes a cultural argument[7] and ignores the materiality that produces exploitation between those who are colonised and those who are colonising.

Mignolo (2007) observed that a project of decolonisation must operate in full awareness of its location within the complex relations structured by imperial and colonial differences. It is for this reason that he promotes critical border thinking as a method to enact the decolonial shift. Thus, critical border thinking is the method that connects pluriversality (different colonial histories entangled with imperial modernity) into a universal project of delinking from modern rationality and building other possible worlds. For Mignolo, the universality of the project must be based on the assumption that the project cannot be designed and implemented 'by one ethnic group', but has to be 'inter-epistemic and dialogical and pluri-versal' (Mignolo, 2007, p. 498). Thus, border thinking becomes the necessary critical method for the political and ethical project of filling in the gaps and revealing imperial complicity between the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality.

On the contribution of decolonial theory, Escobar (2007) suggested that decolonial theory is about redrawing existing notions regarding many contemporary philosophical, social, and historical assumptions of social science positions and presenting alternate ones. These are: decentring modernity from its alleged European origins; debunking the linear sequence linking Greece, Rome, Christianity, and modern

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7. Also see Dirlik (2007) wherein he elaborates similar ideas on postcolonialism.

Europe; constituting a new spatial and temporal conception of modernity; understanding the first phase of modernity in terms of the conquest of the Americas by Spain and Portugal and the second by northern Europe with the industrial revolution and the Enlightenment, with the second modernity overlapping with the first; the making of the periphery through the two phases; and lastly, a re-reading of the 'myth of modernity'. The goal here is ambitious: it is to reorganise the episteme of the social sciences as it was constituted in the 18th century and to constitute new research agendas to redraw the themes, specialisations, and research questions in the social sciences.

Colonialism, Extroversion/Academic Dependency

If the gaze of the decolonial theorists was on the constitution of the social sciences in Europe and its Eurocentric assumptions, with the aim of creating a new alternate episteme, the gaze of the next group of interlocutors has focused on analysing the received social science traditions within their respective regions and nation states. Their queries assess the content, practices, and institutional organisation of the social sciences in their own regions or nation states in order to examine how the global division of knowledge has affected the making and doing of social sciences. As mentioned, there are differences among these scholars in the ways they assess their dependent intellectual traditions. These differences are related to their contexts (the nature of colonialism—whether settled or non-settled), the time of the colonial encounter, and the way the nation state organised its scientific knowledge after the formal demise of colonialism. I present two kinds of discussions initiated by scholars of the South. The first set of deliberations analyse the processes, institutions, and practices that reproduce colonised and extroverted academic knowledge in the periphery, and the second attempts to formulate an alternative to such forms of extroversion/academic dependencies.

The Beninese philosopher Paulin Hountondji (1995, 1997, 2009) has commented on the ways in which knowledge systems on, and of, West

African colonies were constituted under French domination. In a series of articles, Hountondji suggested that scholars and scholarship of the ex-colonial regions, such as those in West Africa, have been caught in extroversion or the legitimising of externally oriented knowledge of the metropole/centre on the periphery. Hountondji's critique incorporates both the sciences and social sciences and identifies seven processes of extroversion. Hountondji argues that extroversion occurs because the production of means of scientific practices or equipment is created outside the region or nation state where knowledge is organised. This, he contends, allows the slippage of an intellectual chain, that of production and re-production of knowledge. Secondly, this slippage consequently leads to a dependence on accessing books, journals archives, and publishing houses from the mother-colonial countries. As a corollary, thirdly, a theoretical extroversion occurs—that is, the uncritical application of research specialisations, topics, and questions to one's own context. Fourthly, this kind of extroversion has other consequences: research is organised in particularistic/localised perspectives. Thereby there is an absence of the knowledge of larger philosophical and scientific understandings that are needed as background information for the reconstitution of knowledge. Fifthly, such localisation of research is related to the imposition of knowledge systems by colonial and western countries, and thus, sixthly, it promotes brain drain. Lastly, he argues that, concurrently, such forms of knowledge reproduce a knowledge tourist circuit between the core and the periphery.

This harsh critique finds resonance in the writings of Syed Hussein Alatas (1972, 2006), who speaks of the Singapore–Malaysian colonial experience under British rule. While Hountondji's gaze is on scholarship, that of Hussein Alatas is on scholars, and particularly on sociologists who, he says, believe that western knowledge is prestigious. Consequently, they argue for its utility and superiority and thereby promote frequency of contact between western social scientists and local ones, leading to a weakening of earlier habits of knowledge construction. Hussein Alatas suggests that such beliefs lead to defects and shortcomings in scholarship. The 'unreality' of the basic assumptions coupled with misplaced abstraction, ignorance, or misinterpretation of data, and an erroneous conception of problems and their signification

lead to superfluous knowledge systems. Hussein Alatas calls this the 'captive mind'.

For Hussein Alatas, the captive mind represents a scholarship which uncritically emulates western social science. The captive mind syndrome occurs when all major constituents of scientific thinking, such as problem setting, analysis, abstraction, generalisation, conceptualisation, description, explanation, and interpretation, have been affected by this process. (S. H. Alatas, 1972, pp. 10–12). Later, Syed Farid Alatas (2003, 2006) elaborated Hussein Alatas's ideas and proposed six attributes ('academic dependencies') of the captive mind. These are: dependence on ideas; dependence on the media of ideas; dependence on the technology of education; dependence on aid for research as well as teaching; dependence on investment in education; and dependence of Third World social scientists on demand in the West for their skills. Farid Alatas argued that academic dependencies are promoted by tutelage, conformity, the secondary role of dominated intellectuals and scholars, rationalisation of the civilising mission, and the inferior talent of scholars from the home country specialising in studies of the colony (S. F. Alatas, 2003).

Why does the captive mind become captive? Or how do academic dependencies flourish? Using the example of India, which experienced non-settled colonialism, I have argued (Patel, 2006, 2013, 2017) that such patterns are moored in the history of social sciences in India. The latter were constituted during the early colonial period, and it was anthropology which was first established as a subject. I contended that the production of systematic knowledge in India has been intimately connected to the way the colonial state intervened to create disciplines and used these as techniques to rule. Later, the nation state also made similar interventions to ensure that social sciences articulated the 'national' agenda. As a consequence, universities became sites to create expert citizens on behalf of the colonial state and, later, the nation state.

Drawing upon the argument presented earlier (in Wallerstein et al., 1996) that Eurocentric knowledge divided the disciplines studying the 'social' into two—that is, of sociology as a study of modern society and anthropology as a study of premodern society—I have elaborated

how an anthropologised[8] assessment of the 'social' was organised by the colonial state in India from the mid-19th century and institutionalised in the teaching of the subject of sociology/anthropology.

I submit that although colonialism intervened to organise capitalism and thus constituted India into a modern society, it ironically promoted the study of India in terms of its reconstructed past—as a study of Hinduism, of caste and kinship system, and of extended family systems. In contrast from the experience in Singapore–Malaysia (presented by Hussein Alatas and Farid Alatas), the colonial state in the case of India promoted an episteme of colonial modernity to examine and assess 'the social' in India.[9]

As a consequence, the episteme of colonial modernity[10] became part of the 'background understandings' and 'beliefs' of doing anthropology and, later, sociology in India. Specifically in the case of India, it affirmed (a) that anthropology and its methods should be used as part of the colonial politics of rule, (b) that it should be expressed and organised in terms of values that were in opposition to modernity, (c) that its disciplinary practices, such as Indology and ethnography, should be used to elaborate these positions, (d) that this knowledge and the discipline should draw its content from the native intelligentsia, especially the Brahmins (a group who produced and interpreted Hindu scriptures), (e) that it thus reflects the social order as represented by this group both in its expressed articulations (in anthropology and, later,

8. Levi-Strauss (1966) argued that, in this process, anthropology became a handmaiden of colonialism.
9. Colonial modernity represents 'ideas, ideologies and knowledge systems…. to refract and invisibilise the "modern" contours of everyday experience of the people who are colonised as that being non-modern' (Patel, 2017, p. 127).
10. I use the concept of colonial modernity to clearly distinguish the genealogy that organises my work from those Indians using postcolonial studies; this term is used mainly by those diasporic Indians located outside India and who are influenced by American studies which discuss postcolonialism. On the other hand, because I wish to draw from anticolonial scholarship of the early-20th century in India, I use the term 'colonial modernity'.

social anthropology) and in its silences, and lastly, (f) that it mitigated an examination of the way classification systems of the state organised new forms of inequalities in the colonial territory (Patel, 2017).

Simultaneously, the colonial state also encouraged the study of modern society as a model for emulation for Indians in and through the study of sociology. This binary—the study of India through an anthropological gaze and of its future through the European model embedded within classical and contemporary sociology—continues to organise the teaching and learning of sociology (and broadly the social sciences) within India. Using the concept and theory of 'colonial difference' (Chatterjee, 1993), I have argued (Patel, 2013) that nationalism imbibed these binaries/dualities and had a contradictory and differential impact on various social sciences. While sociology/ anthropology remained embedded within the episteme of colonial modernity and articulated itself in terms of binaries/dualities, other disciplines, such as economics, history, and political science, drew their inspiration from the modernist variant of nationalist thought and remained moored in equally dependent principles of European modernity.

In the early part of the 20th century, social sciences, including sociology/anthropology, attempted to rethink its epistemic foundations as it associated itself with nationalist movements that confronted colonialism. Of these, the most successful attempt was made in the discipline of history.[11] However, after Independence, all social sciences, including sociology/anthropology, slipped once again into the episteme of colonial modernity, as the nation state took over the institutions of the state from the colonial state, and scholars and scholarship in the guise of nationalist affiliations remained connected to the episteme of colonial modernity which was re-produced as methodological nationalism. Therefore, I contend that methodological nationalism (being the ways theories, methodologies, and methods have naturalised the nation and the nation state as the organising principle of assessing modernity) has played contrary roles during colonial and post-Independence India in the articulation of various social science disciplines (Patel, 2017).

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11. See Patel (2013) for the role played by D. D. Kosambi in reconstituting theories on ancient India.

What is the way out? In her book *Southern Theory,* Connell (2007) discussed the work of Akiwowo (1999), who had argued for the need for an indigenous sociology. While noting distinctly different attributes to this term, both Hussein Alatas and Farid Alatas have also argued for indigenousness in social sciences by affirming a need for autonomous and alternate social sciences. Later, Smith (1999) too used the term to promote a critical methodology of social sciences. Their choice of the use of the term 'indigenous', however, has not had many supporters. Hountondji (1997, 2000) has continuously argued against the use of indigenous as a concept and theory and proposed the concept of endogenous knowledge instead; I too have asserted this position, arguing for contextual diversity (Patel, 2010, 2014). These discussions raise the question regarding the use of science and its western genesis: To what extent has the Eurocentric episteme been embedded in the sciences as it evolved in the West, and how does one connote universals, which is one of the goals of science? This has also led to the debate whether there is one sociology or many. There is no consensus on these issues, and scholars continue to be in conflicting positions on this matter. I turn to discussing some of the issues germane to this debate.

Indigenous/Endogenous Social Sciences

Indigenous sociology or social sciences starts with the assumption that it is possible to constitute alternate sociologies from one's own 'indigenous' narratives/cultures. It believes that if the social sciences grew in the West through an engagement with its philosophical systems, it is also possible to do the same from other cultures and philosophical systems of the rest of the world. It wishes to give an epistemic voice to itself in order to displace the power of the West's epistemic voice. By displacing the colonial constitution of itself as 'traditional', indigenous sociology believes it can create principles and abstractions that are sensitive to its history and social life in order to formulate 'alternate' ways of doing sociology outside the language of 'universal sociology' as formulated by western/northern sociology.

Akiwowo (1986), a Nigerian sociologist, initiated this debate in Africa when he affirmed that sociology can be constituted from tales,

myths, and proverbs of the people, together with the laws of true African wisdom, such that it reflects the values of the region (p. 343). At the Department of Sociology of the University of Nigeria, he and his colleagues attempted to put together a sociological theory extracted from the poetry of the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria. Akiwowo, and later Makinde (1988), argued that an analysis of the Yoruba poems suggests that by using the concept of *asuwada* as a key philosophical principle, a theory of sociation can be organised. This concept posits that although the unit of all social life is individual, an individual as a 'corporeal self needs fellowship of other individuals' (Makinde, 1988, pp. 62–63). Thus, community life based on common good is sui generis to the existence of the individual.[12]

Akiwowo's and Makinde's elaboration of the *asuwada* concept to build an indigenous theory of sociology has led to many comments and has raised fundamental questions regarding the use of folk culture to construct sociological theory. At one level, the questions are methodological. What are the reasons for suggesting that the *asuwada* principle is the basis of sociation? Are their interpretations of these poems correct? Are there other interpretations of Yoruba poems? J. O. Adesina (2002) argued that there may be differences among social scientists in the interpretation of these poems, and thus they might articulate competing meanings of Yoruba poetry (p. 5). In this case, which interpretation does one accept? What principles will allow us to debate and resolve these scientific issues? In these circumstances, what legitimacy does Akiwowo's *asuwada* sociology have?

Second, commentators have raised an epistemic issue. Hountondji (1997) suggested that by and large 'traditional' knowledge has emerged to juxtapose western thinking and science, not in dialogue with it. In these circumstances, it has not developed its own culture of science, that of interrogating its assumptions and of creating an internal dialogue. Hountondji (1997, 2009) recognises the significance of local knowledge to understand economic and social development but questions the emphasis on oral sources without its interrogation from a scientific perspective. For, he argued, an excursion on ethno-philosophy would

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12. Their work has been elaborated by Connell (2007) and Patel (2014).

necessarily involve contradictory claims regarding the rigour and testable construction of arguments. Also, does basing oneself on 'culturist' essentials not reconstruct the coloniser's gaze that assumes that African cultures were always consensus driven?[13]

A similar argument is also presented by O. O. Adesina (2006) in his assessment of the 'Akiwowo project' of indigenous sociology. While agreeing that all sociologies base themselves on particularities (including European and North American ones), O. O. Adesina argues that the particularities of Akiwowo's indigenous sociology have to meet with traditions of sociology across the world in order to create a way to legitimise itself. Resonating Hountondji, he asks: Have we created methods to examine the truth of indigenous knowledge? Have we explored the reasons for its effectiveness? Why is it grounded in myths and magic? Can we dissociate it from these moorings and construct an endogenous science? To construct endogenous knowledge, it is important to move from 'translation' to 'formulation' (O. O. Adesina, 2006, p. 9). This implies not only an engagement with modern science but also an attempt to reorganise radically the production, distribution, and circulation of knowledge and free it from the imperatives of colonial modernity (Patel, 2014).

At this juncture, it is important to add to this debate and assess the interventions made by Farid Alatas (2006) who, as mentioned, has long been discussing the need to formulate alternative knowledge by removing all kinds of academic dependencies. Earlier, Hussein Alatas (2006), resonating Hountondji, had suggested that it is important not to be bogged down by what colonialists termed 'traditions'. Local/national sociologies, according to Hussein Alatas, should not be presented in the name of 'traditions', for then it reproduces disparate and non-comparative studies of local or regional areas by indigenous scholars. Rather, sociologists need to excavate those traditions—that is, those ideas, issues, and problems that have sustained over a long duration, sometimes decades or centuries—and attempt to understand why

13. In the late-19th and early-20th centuries, Indian scholars too put forward similar arguments. However, unlike African scholars, they used Hindu scriptures to constitute a new sociology. Thus it was called Hindu sociology. On this discussion, see Patel (2014).

these reflect the cumulative development of knowledge concerning particular ways to think. He asks whether we should not understand these 'traditions' rather than those termed as 'traditions' in the colonial encounter and thus dismissed as being its past. In this context, Hussein Alatas suggested that the work of Ibn Khaldun, the 14th-century scholar, is significant because his ideas have sustained over centuries.

Farid Alatas followed through this suggestion in his book *Applying Ibn Khaldun* (2014). Like Akiwowo, Farid Alatas wishes to enrich sociology by using indigenous theories to elaborate ways to comprehend forms of socialities and institutions organised by the people living in non-western regions of the world, particularly where Islam flourishes. In a search for new theories, he asks whether Ibn Khaldun's perspective helps us in understanding state formation historically and in present times. *Applying Ibn Khaldun* weaves together answers to the following questions: How does one rethink state formation in relation to the notion of solidarity (and loyalty) connoted by '*asabiyya*', the key term used by Ibn Khaldun? To the extent that it includes not just blood ties but also clientelism and alliances, how do various dynasties and ruling groups project authority and maintain power through their manipulation of *asabiyya* or conversely lose power through their failure to do so? This book argues that it is possible to use Ibn Khaldun's theory to understand the rise of the Ottoman Empire and to analyse the Safavid dynasty in Iran. Farid Alatas also suggests that Ibn Khaldun's theory of the state can also be applied to contemporary Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia and Syria. For Farid Alatas, Ibn Khaldun stands out for his rigorous pursuit and analysis and for his assessment of the messiness that characterises flux and change of dynastic, regional, and global history. Farid Alatas suggests that Ibn Khaldun can be applied because he uses logic that is systematic, empirical, materialist, and self-critical.

Both Hussein Alatas and Farid Alatas assert the need for indigenous sociology but simultaneously argue for an autonomous social science which can integrate western knowledge with that which is significant in 'native' societies. Hussein Alatas (2006) asserted that western knowledge is scientific and universally valid even though not all its knowledge is significant. He therefore argues that western knowledge that reflects on its own past and present can be used for comparison. Hussein Alatas

contended that scholars need to distinguish between particular and universal knowledge. Universal concepts of sociology are those that form the basic foundation of the discipline found in all human societies and are valid at all times, such as the concepts of sanction, class, social stratification, social mobility, group, culture, values, religion, and custom. These concepts are universally valid in the general and abstract sense, but their historical and concrete manifestations are conditioned by their temporal, spatial, and cultural frameworks.

The position taken by Farid Alatas is slightly different. While in his earlier articles Farid Alatas's interventions were against Eurocentric and colonised knowledge, his recent text *Applying Ibn Khaldun* allows him to reframe this issue by asking whether distinct cultures and their epistemologies can give new ways of doing critical scientific thought. He contends that such criticality is there in other thoughts/knowledge, and he asserts that these too can be used to constitute ways of doing sociology.[14] In his recent work, he has analysed what he calls the Islamisation of mind or the epistemology of Islam on knowledge. He poses the question: How does Islam provide the metaphysical and epistemological basis for the constitution of new knowledge without committing oneself to an Islamic sociology or an Islamic physics? Such an intervention would not mean abandoning science, especially its moorings in critical and investigative thinking. Given that Islamic thought has a *longue durée*, he argues that it is not only important to

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14. Quijano (2007) argued that all cultures represent themselves in 'total' ways when they produce knowledge. However, except in Eurocentrism, most cultures accept 'heterogeneity of all reality; of the irreducible contradictory character of the latter, of the legitimacy, i.e. the desirability, of the diverse character of components of all reality—and therefore of the social' (p. 177). This idea is also represented in some Hindu and Buddhist traditions in the concept of *vibhinnata*— diversities wherein the same can be presented in different ways and a belief that such representations are legitimate. *Vibhinnata* is differently conceptualised from *vividhata*—the latter means pluralism or unity of diversity, while *vibhinnata* asserts ontological difference in ways of thinking. I used the concept of diversity as *vibhinnata* (Patel, 2010), and this should not mean to imply fragmentation of positions.

engage with it but also to use it to constitute alternative ways to rethink knowledge. Can it help to displace the power built into the processes of organising western knowledge, he asks. Farid Alatas asserts that scholars can and should use Islamic ethos to reorganise social sciences.[15]

A similar approach was taken by Smith (1999), who presented a new way to redo methodology. She too asks that we pay critical attention to the process of doing social science and to the cultural values that inhabit the individuals, the community, and the people that are being investigated. She asks researchers to reflect on ways to de-stabilise the power of objectivist research processes and to integrate the voice of subaltern/indigenous peoples into the research process. Thus she argues that social science research needs to ask the following questions: Who defines the research problem? For whom is this study worthy and relevant? Who says so? What knowledge will the community gain from this study? What knowledge will the researcher gain from this study? What are some likely positive outcomes from this study? What are some possible negative outcomes? How can the negative outcomes be eliminated? To whom is the researcher accountable? What processes are in place to support the research, the researched, and the researcher?

In many ways Farid Alatas and Smith resonate Connell (2007, p. 224) when she argues that systems of knowledge should not remain closed and insular: rather these should be used to make such knowledge 'corrigible', that is, capable of being investigated and thus rectified, reorganised, redefined, and reformed. It also implies that this practice should involve formulating generalisations, which can in turn be applied in situations and contexts in worlds and knowledge of other kinds. Connell, and also Farid Alatas, would argue that although there is a link of corrigibility organising the discipline of sociology, and broadly social sciences, these sciences need to have many voices, and that these need to be articulated and circulated by displacing the hegemony of metropolitan and colonial knowledge.

As outlined, discussions have moved from changing the *content* of sociology into changing the *process* of doing sociology and social sciences and thereby including other/different critical philosophical

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15. Lately, Farid Alatas (2012) has used the term 'decolonisation' as a way to displace all forms of deconstruction of colonial ways to think.

traditions of doing sociology. Accepting that colonial power organises all aspects/practices of doing sociology, both Farid Alatas and Smith ask us to rethink how to relate culturally sensitive corrigible science to the community. Who we do science for and what kind of relationship it forges between research, researcher, and the researched, should be the focus of our examination. Both assert that they do not want to work within binaries of West and East, of science and religiosities, or of universities and participative research. Rather they want to destabilise the power that northern academia builds in order to relate and constitute knowledge that is sensitive to the everyday concerns of those who need it to transform and enrich their lives. Such formulations acknowledge that while globalisation has universalised capitalist modernities, the actual constitution of such modernities is historically and culturally varied, and thus sociology and social sciences have to take a cultural leap to comprehend these nuances. Only then is it possible to promote global social theory. Is northern theory ready for such a leap?

Towards a Conclusion

This paper presents an overview of the positions taken by this scholarship and highlights some of the important concepts and positions being used. Although all scholars affirm a need for the epistemic re-evaluation of the discipline and the necessity of its reorganisation, there are differences between them regarding their objectives and the focus of their deliberations. This paper highlights two fault lines running through this scholarship. The first fault line is between scholars who affirm a need for a radical reorganisation of the discipline by incorporating the voices of those who have been marginalised and through this process creating a new epistemic position for the discipline of sociology and more generally for the social sciences. The goal here is to create alternate universal theories, concepts, and practices moored in a non-Eurocentric episteme—a new sociology or social science that can be used across the world in aid of those who are oppressed and have been made into subalterns. Here the research programme merges with a political project of changing the world through many utopian visions, including that of

Marxist revolution. On the other hand, there are scholars who argue that their work is limited to a critique of northern sociology and/or social sciences and that they concentrate their deliberations on academic scholarship with the objective of making social science theories and practices relevant, inclusive, pluralistic, and diverse. Their goal is to change the discourse of academic thinking and its monopolistic universal Eurocentric episteme that has dominated sociology since the 19th century.

The second fault line lies within the second group of scholars who are focusing their gaze on the academic production of knowledge. On the one hand, one group of scholars in this cohort call themselves postcolonialists, and they orient their critique on the discipline as it is conceptualised in the northern academy. Here decolonial theory is used as a critique to deconstruct the universals of northern positions through poststructuralist and postcolonial readings of the discipline's texts. The gaze is on northern academic scholarship and its practices. On the other hand, is the scholarship which uses the southern critique of northern positions, to reorganise the concepts and theories of sociology as a global discipline and simultaneously to reformulate regional or nation-state sociologies within the South. The gaze here is not on northern scholarship but on southern scholarship formulated during colonialism, and the attempt here is to displace colonial sociologies to replace it with contextually relevant sociology. While the first group starts with the assumption that sociology is global and that the southern critique is necessary for an epistemic intervention into existing northern theories, with little engagement with them, the second one wants to make sociology global by reorganising their particularistic sociologies through a southern critique, thereby reformulating the discipline's concepts and theories.

However, at this juncture it is important to ask how will this help in building global social theory? Surely, to do global social theory there is a need to transcend the focus on northern theories, to assess the 'connectedness' in the constitutions of social science disciplines, and to bring forward the voice of other positions, as done by *Southern Theory*. If so, should there not be an effort to use concepts and theories from the South (if relevant) to assess both the North and the extensive regions

of the South? How does one initiate dialogue, debate, discussions, and deliberations across regions and continents to displace the colonial episteme and constitute a new connected comparative global sociology? Interventions of decolonial scholarship in the future will help to answer these questions.

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Our contemporary moment is a moment of crises of epistemology as part of the wider and deeper crises of modernity and the human condition. The crises reflect the limits of epistemology closed within the Euro–American universe of discourse. In this context, the essay discusses Boaventura de Sousa Santos' *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*.

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