

The Asymmetries of Globalization or the Tyranny of Reification

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Ibn Khaldun's account on history has stimulated the epistemological orientation of many Muslim as well as Western scholars. In particular, we can argue that his pioneer critical study of history of the pre-Modern world (14th century) created remarkable impulses in Hegel's and, later, Marx's thought. Indeed, both of them have worked out a theory to explain historical development as a dynamic process. Significantly, Ibn Khaldun's work laid down the foundations of several fields of knowledge, including sociology and economics. Despite the fact that the Islamic philosopher has not become a dominant figure inside modern academic circles, his analytical study is considered as a lucid and accurate exposition of factors contributing to the development of civilization and the causes of decline. According to Zahoor (1996), four essential points in the study and analysis of history occurred in Ibn Khaldun's critical insights:

- relating events to each other through cause and effect,
 - drawing analogy between past and present,
 - taking into consideration the effect of the environment,
 - taking into consideration the effect of inherited and economic conditions
- In fact, Ibn Khaldun's conception can be pressed further as his four points present and schematize with precision the trends of modern globalization. It is possible, then, to discern a certain progression in our understanding of the relations, for instance, between economic conditions and the effect of the environment. Following Ibn Khaldun's theoretical framework, it

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would presumably be possible to argue that for many scholars (Abu-Lughod 1989, Frank 1993) the term of globalization refers to the patterns of economic division of labor that emerged after the 15th or 16th century. It is of utmost importance to recognize that global structures have been organized in those centuries by the colonial powers to primarily correspond to specific modes of material/land exploitation via an apparatus of historically specific displacements. Ultimately, therefore, the three continents (Africa, Asia, and America) have experienced a massive European colonization as well as new patterns of imperial domination (hegemony).

Taking into consideration that Ibn Khaldun has helped to illustrate the issue of history as a continuing struggle for hegemony, we can assert that the European colonization gave rise to a despotic pattern of political domination and, therefore, to an analogous system of government. The fact that the globalization apparatus has exercised absolute domination in those years is very much related with the economic division of labor among world centers, peripheries, and semi-peripheries (Wallerstein 1974, 1979).

As Marx (1976, 283) noted, 'labor is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process, by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature'. 'Through this movement', Marx postulated, 'he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature'.

The recomposition of Capitalism's hegemony

The pattern of economic development - that emerged after the 16th century – presents the universality of reification as a process affecting all strata of society. Up to date, globalization is characterized by interdependence and asymmetric interaction in the production and exchange process; such asymmetries applied to technology, movement of capital and the organization of labor, leading to increasing particularization of the productive activity. One result of the omnipotence of the asymmetric interaction of globalism is the rationalization of social, cultural and economic disparities and the tendency to reduce citizens to consumer units and groups. In view of this, the capitalist-oriented philosophy of globalization endorses the tyranny of reification as it extols 'free market' as the most workable model of social relations. This model lends itself to the polysemy of practices as well as to dominant, residual and emergent formations. Sensitive to the politically indeterminate aspects of

these formations, Raymond Williams (1983) and Amartya Sen (2002) noted that hegemonic dominance - the recomposition of Capitalism's hegemony - was becoming intensively multinational, advanced by the globalization of Capitalism and the culture of a renewed Cold War. Habermas (1976) also attempted to assess the concept of Capitalism as a system of suppression, and to determine the characteristics that maintain the continuity of dominance. For him, the period of increasing corporate development is legitimized through the exercise of precisely the kind of 'normative power' (hegemonic dominance), and that it is expressed - in the name of the corporate state - through instrumental formulations and conditions. In this context, Gouldner (1976) argues that as far as such capitalist actions can be connected to Habermas's model of the suppression of the subordinated classes' interests, they must imply the capture of the state.

Consequently, in the capitalist mode of production, the economic level is both dominant and determinant (Althusser and Balibar 1970). This evidently does not mean that they are so independent of one another. Instead, Althusser's construction of the concept of the mode of production provides a determinate mode of articulation, both within and between the levels.

Moreover, as contemporary societies experience an intense shift from entrepreneurialism to cartelization, a spatial characterization of the mode of production occurs in the global system.

Following M. Castells' argumentation (1977, pp. 129-130), there are three levels pertinent to the mode of production in the global system: the economic, the political and the ideological. Based on this categorization, Castells outlines the main trajectories at the economic level:

1. Production: 'the ensemble of spatial realizations derived from the social process of reproducing the means of production and the objects of labor' (p. 129);
2. Consumption: 'the ensemble of spatial realizations derived from the social process of reproducing labor power' (p. 130);
3. Exchange: '...can be understood not in itself but in terms of the elements it connects' (p. 130).

As far as for the political level, Castells has shown that 'the state apparatus not only exercises class domination but also strives, as far as possible, to regulate the crises of the system in order to preserve it' (1977, 208).

The crucial analytical task of ideology is connected to the symbolic

organization of space, which Castells determines as 'a network of signs, whose signifiers are made up of spatial forms and whose signifieds are ideological contents, the efficacy of which must be construed from their effects on the social structure as a whole' (1977, 127).

From an ideological point of view, many scholars argue that neoliberalism - as a phase of capitalist globalization - has recently been exposed to a crisis stage. For Massiah (2007) "crisis is closely interrelated to the growing importance taken by alter-globalism, which has reinforced the system's internal contradictions. This refusal to accept things as they are, expressed by the slogan "Another world is possible" also goes against the ideological offensives that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989: "the End of History" and the "War of Civilizations". Nevertheless, the crisis of neoliberalism can also be identified within the nomological practices of globalized institutional structures of certain supra- or hyper-national organizations (i. e. NAFTA, G8, NATO, Davos Forum, W. T. O, etc). Such institutional practices involve more than the divorce of 'means' from 'ends', however, more than a distinction between 'policy-relevant' and 'policy-forming' contributions of the postmodern state. What this suggests, then, is that in the context of contemporary globalism, the asymmetric relations or/and functions exist in a far more determining way than is acknowledging the past.

Similarly, aware of the cultural information asymmetries, Gouliamos (1997) has emphasized the issue of the diminution of the nation-state due to neoliberal global policies particularly those referring to information (new media technologies) capital. His perspective is predicated on the ways in which the fetishistic capital narratives have constructed their own allotted locus (place). This includes every stage in the process of production - from commodities to identities, 'styles' and meanings - which underlines the perpetuation of hegemonic dominance of the hyper-national elites. As an advanced representation system of this dominance, the new communication technologies - for instance, information highway - pose also questions of the ways of seeing (voyeuristic phantasy) and acting (conspicuous consumption) in the microcosm of 'global village'. Such a spectrum seems always to reside in the reception of distorted forms of time and space within a much larger network of representation that threatens to burst the limits of cultural identities. Moreover, we can assume that the apparatus of injustice and exploitation and the apparent violent clash of sensibilities or a structure of feelings of cultural identities in the post-Modern 'global village' has (re)produced a "neo-racism" phenomenon, one that-according to Balibar

(1991)- preoccupies itself with cultural rather than biological forms.

In many ways forms and practices of fetishization, processed of identification (in the form of immigration) or visual pleasure mask the globalization's patriarchic constructs. These constructs stand between the strongly social emphasis of topological/local culture(s) and the strongly emphasis of the 'free market' mythology; a constellation of images and imaginary symbols of interaction or integration (cosmopolitanism) which aim at the affirmation of the hyper-nation elite's apparatus.

Overall, by globalism "we mean the norms, institutions, and laws that support global capital accumulation along neo-liberal principles. Globalism challenges democratic assumptions about the sovereignty of states and national citizenry. Under globalism, states are:

- Oriented less to internal demands.
- Focused on maximizing exports, freeing the flow of capital and enshrining transnational corporate rights as 'national treatment'.
- Locked into neo-liberal principles by structural adjustment programs in the South, and by international agreements (i. e. NAFTA), and international institutions" (Laxer, 1995).

Turning from an exclusive concern with cultural production, exchange and consumption, Amartya Sen (2002) reminds us that globalization is often seen as global Westernization.

Furthermore, starting from S. Amin's (2000) expatriation on the thesis that the dichotomies (market/democracy and globalization/universalism) are more contradictory than complementary, we provide - via this special issue - a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and up-to-date baseline of theories as well as intersected concepts about the increasingly differentiated nature of a particular civil society (Cyprus and Greece) in a global world.

The scope of the special issue is not to imprint a series of endless, tedious synoptic reviews of theories but to pursue a critical engagement with other work for purposes of establishing the central accounts or/and elements towards a novel perspective.

The papers demonstrate the current socio-cultural problems (such as poverty, inequality, labor, news values, corporatism, public empowerment, cultural interaction, information asymmetry etc.) by incorporating and/or synthesizing the new roles for the media and the state apparatuses in constructing the reality of modern order.

The authors of this special issue pay particular emphasis in analyzing how global practices exploited the social democracy and mobilized policy support for harsh economic and disciplinary measures in ways that ran deeper than political election techniques, concentrating particularly on the ideological struggle to transform ‘common sense’ or/and social practices from collectivist dependency to the virtues of ‘possessive individualism’ and ‘free market’ competition.

Overall, we consider the issue as a contribution to this process, and we hope that as well as providing a general background to the study of the social relations of globalized phenomena, it will encourage scholars to pursue more deeply specialized topics to particular interest to them.

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