

## **Beyond Knowledge Decolonization: Rethinking the Internalist Perspectives and ‘Progressive’ Scholarship in/on Southeast Asia**

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### **Abstract**

The long and, in many instances, deep colonial experience in Southeast Asia set the contexts for early and vigorous efforts to counter colonial discourses. Since at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, some intellectuals in the region have pursued nascent forms of knowledge decolonization. Efforts continue as evident in more recent and sophisticated works by Southeast Asian scholars to seek ‘alternative discourses’ or to apply ‘border thinking,’ and ‘diversify’ and ‘decentre’ Southeast Asian Studies. Notwithstanding the theoretical or conceptual erudition, however, it seems they share with the older approaches essentially the same logic and give rise to the same problem: they sought out a shift in standpoint, agents, objects, contexts, locus of power, concepts, and approaches, but the fundamental logic of power/knowledge remains unchanged. If efforts to decolonize knowledge is meant to pursue a truly progressive or pro-people agenda, I argue for the need to allot more efforts to go beyond a framework anchored on coloniality and decolonization simply because many of the problems faced on day-to-day basis by billions of contemporary subalterns appear to be more basic, and at the same time more complex, ambivalent, or contradictory. They are not reducible to colonial/decolonial frame without stretching beyond limits the analytic efficacy of the concept. In addition, it diverts attention away from other more immediate factors and distorts in the process the causal attribution in analysis. I argue, first, for acknowledging the impossibility of transcending power/knowledge notwithstanding scholarship’s high

level of sophistication and accuracy. Secondly, to map out fully and account for power relations that underpin knowledge production and consumption.

**Keywords:** decolonization, power/knowledge, progressive scholarship, postcolonialism, indigenization, Southeast Asia

## Introduction

The spate of conferences, summer schools, and research projects on decolonization or decoloniality indicates an enduring and increasing interest in the subject.<sup>1</sup> For so long, the anti-colonial nationalist historiography (both Marxist and liberal), indigenization movement and postcolonial theory (hereafter PC) have taken the cudgel for critiquing Eurocentrism and colonialism. Weighed down, so it seems, by its close association with poststructuralism, culturalism and the under-emphasis of materiality and political economy, PC appears to be on a defensive or a retreat. What seems rising over the past decades is the school of critical approach from Latin America and the US which may be called, for lack of more 'official' terminology, decoloniality movement (DM). It overlaps but is uneasy with, and has consciously dissociated itself from, the PC.<sup>2</sup> It is bannered by the likes of Enrique Dussel, Anibal Quijano, Maria Lugones, and Walter D. Mignolo.<sup>3</sup> With coloniality/modernity and decoloniality as pivotal concepts, the group highlights the ancestry and lingering impact of colonization that stretches back to the Americas of the 1500s. It emphasizes the supposed myth of post-coloniality while pursuing in earnest "the unfinished project of decolonization."<sup>4</sup>

In Southeast Asia, the varying character, depth and length of colonial experience set the multiple modalities and spatio-temporal contexts for efforts at decolonizing knowledge. In the Philippines, for instance, Rizal and fellow propagandists had as early as the 1880s launched a spirited, if ambivalent, counter-discourse against the primacy of colonial knowledge, which arguably culminated in the 1896 Revolution. In the case of the Dutch East Indies, Dutch scholars such as van Leur, Berg, and Resink had pioneered since the 1930s efforts to look at Indonesia from within rather than from the "deck of the ship, the ramparts of the fortress, the high gallery of the trading house."<sup>5</sup> It looms large in one's memory the debates on perspectives and "autonomous history" which engaged the likes of John Smail,<sup>6</sup> Harry Benda,<sup>7</sup> John Bastin,<sup>8</sup> and W. F. Wertheim.<sup>9</sup> Indonesian history writers such as A. Rachman Rangkuti,<sup>10</sup> Sutjipto Wirjosuparto,<sup>11</sup> and Muhammad Yamin<sup>12</sup> tried to employ Indo-centric perspectives in their writings, intently trying to neutralize colonial perspectives. From the explicitly ideological standpoint, D.N. Aidit<sup>13</sup> in

Indonesia and Jose Ma. Sison,<sup>14</sup> and Renato Constantino (1975; 1978) in the Philippines offered an anti-colonial, Marxist interpretations of history of their respective countries. Along with these, scholarly efforts by Syed Hussein Alatas (“captive mind”),<sup>15</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo (*Indonesiasentris*),<sup>16</sup> Zeus Salazar (*Pantayong Pananaw*),<sup>17</sup> and Virgilio Enriquez (*Sikolohiyang Pilipino* or Filipino Psychology)<sup>18</sup> are among the most serious attempts by “local” scholars to push the logic of knowledge decolonization.

Similar efforts continue to this day. We can see in the more recent works by Southeast Asian scholars to seek “alternative discourses”<sup>19</sup> or to apply “border thinking” and “diversify” and “decentre”<sup>20</sup> Southeast Asian Studies the more complex and theoretically sophisticated approach to the question. Another good example is groups from East Asia and elsewhere who found much inspiration from Kuan-Hsing’s celebrated book, *Asia as Method*.<sup>21</sup> Notwithstanding the intricacy and theoretical or conceptual erudition, however, it seems they share essentially the same logic and give rise to the same problem. That is, while they sought out a shift in standpoint, agents, objects, contexts, locus of power, concepts, or approaches, the fundamental logic of power/knowledge relations remains unchanged. In other words, regardless of perspective, methods, conceptual, or theoretical approach, any knowledge claim—true or not—is at the fundamental level suffused in power relations. As knowledge assumes life of it’s own while circulating in a social space, soon enough, the newly decentred or decolonized knowledge is “re-imperialized,” re-centred, and hijacked by yet another powers including unscrupulous local elites, religious authorities, NGOs, etc. If efforts to decolonize knowledge are meant to serve a progressive or pro-people agenda, troubling questions may be raised as to the extent to which it serves the purpose and who in fact are the beneficiaries. I argue for the need to go beyond a framework anchored on coloniality and decolonization simply because many of the problems faced on day-to-day basis by over a billion of contemporary subalterns appear to be more basic, and at the same time more complex, ambivalent, or contradictory. They may not be reducible to colonial/decolonial frame without stretching beyond limits the critical edge of this approach. Also, it possibly diverts attention away from other more immediate factors and distorts in the process

causal attribution in the analysis. The task, so I wish to argue, is firstly to acknowledge the impossibility of transcending power/knowledge notwithstanding scholarship's level of sophistication and accuracy. Secondly, to work around this matrix to map out fully and account for power relations that underpin knowledge production and consumption.

### **Persistence of Decolonization Discourse**

Despite being several decades old, decolonization remains a persistent theme pursued by many scholars, especially those from the former colonies. What is interesting in the recent development is the surge of interest in knowledge decolonization even among scholars from Europe and the Americas.<sup>22</sup> This situation is understandable given the persistence of the problems that were associated with formal colonialism—poverty, inequality, racism, exploitation, and epistemic imperialism among others. While the East-West divide has given way to the North-South split, these formulations overlap significantly, sharing as they do a similar logic that underpins the wide gap between the few nations that are haves and the rest of the world. The rise to economic prominence of some former colonies or semi-colonies notwithstanding, the political and military power in the global stage remained, until the rise of China, largely concentrated in the hands of the former colonizers. With the widespread distrust of capitalism, if not also Western influences, among intellectuals in the South, they strongly believe that the challenge for most of the countries in the world remains how to free themselves from the shackles of the West's exploitative clutches. They believe that the pervasiveness of the Western mentality is among the foundation of their persistent dominance. Decolonization remains unfinished and thus it is project that is well worth undertaking.<sup>23</sup>

Another factor was the post-Cold War upsurge in globalization discourses which stoke a fear among many countries in the South, including those in Southeast Asia. They saw the supposed rise of the West-dominated global village as a threat to their still fragile national identities and sovereignties. Rather than taking the situation as a *fait accompli* and regarding globalization as something inevitable, many

groups in the South reacted by fortifying against neocolonial efforts. The “memorialization” of the spirit of the 1955 Asia-Africa Bandung Conference,<sup>24</sup> the Asian Values debates<sup>25</sup> and the buzz generated by Postcolonial Theory in the 1990s as well as by Latin American decoloniality movement in the recent decades may be indications of this effort.

It also seems convenient for political elites in Southeast Asia to keep selected memories of colonialism, both dark and sanguine ones, for various political or ideological purposes. They often serve as a rallying point to mobilize support to strengthen one group against another in the often intense intra-elite, or cross-national rivalries. They could also act as a bogeyman to facilitate a nation- or regime-building project. A range of expedient excuses or cover-ups for contemporary problems that political elites should have addressed, but did not, may also be provided by reference to colonial experience. For instance, the supposedly colonial character of education in the Philippines is blamed for the supposedly weak nationalism that allegedly is among the reasons for brain drain and continuing economic underdevelopment in the country, among other malaise.<sup>26</sup> All these and more converged to create an impression that problems rest in the deep colonial past and the solution lies in correspondingly profound decolonization.

### **Epistemology as Pathology**

One of the outstanding features of the continuing knowledge decolonization project is the rendering of the Western knowledge as deeply pathological. This analytic trope sets the context for developing various alternatives including the simple inversion of perspective (from colonial to national or local), the more challenging indigenization movement, and the more sophisticated attack on the very foundation of Western rationality. Postcolonial theory incorporates within itself elements of poststructuralism that highlights skepticism about knowledge as a representation of reality. The presence of poststructuralist elements within postcolonial theory leads to a clash or contradictions with other elements that are grounded in realist epistemology, like

Marxism.<sup>27</sup> The Latin American decoloniality movement shared much ground with postcolonial theory, minus the latter's poststructuralism. It is no less virulent as critique of Eurocentrism, conflating, for example, modernity, coloniality, and rationality as quintessentially European<sup>28</sup> and even conjuring up the idea of the "coloniality of being"<sup>29</sup> which calls for "epistemic disobedience."<sup>30</sup> Rather than relying on poststructuralism that is undeniably European for its critique of knowledge, it tends to draw from indigenous cultures like those of the Amerindians as well as others from the South.<sup>31</sup> In Mignolo's words:

"(We) need to build knowledge and arguments that supersede the current hegemony of Western knowledge. It is the hegemony of Western knowledge that justifies the hegemony of capitalism and the State, for example, and that establishes development as a condition of freedom. "Development" is not its own justification! This is why the struggle for the control of knowledge is crucial: it is necessary to build convincing arguments for people to realize that "development" is an option, justified by actors, categories of thought, institutions, the media, etc. It is one option and not the only option..."<sup>32</sup>

The movement's privileging of the non-European origins of epistemic position is rooted in the essential importance they ascribe to the "locus of enunciation." This concept highlights the importance of geo- and body-political context of knowledge production, as manifest for example in the supposed North-South epistemic divide. Walter Mignolo highlights the need to "delink," or be free from the domineering grasp—in practically every aspect including epistemological—of Euro-America. Border thinking is viewed from this standpoint as an essential mechanism that renders delinking possible. Border thinking is, according to Mignolo, a kind of thinking that results from the ethical and epistemological imperative to reject Euro-American worldview—modernity, coloniality, and westernization—while recognizing at the same time the inescapability of the Euro-American mechanisms (institutional, epistemological, cultural, etc.) that enable such worldview to reign

supreme. By delinking, it seeks to subvert Euro-American hegemony from within and without by combining the elements drawn from indigenous traditions with the efficacy of the Euro-American scholarly and political practices: writing in European languages, using logic that is largely European, backed by the institutional influence of top universities in the US and Latin America, while championing Amerindian and other non-European cultures. The bodily/intellectual presence of scholars-activists in the materio-epistemic borderland between the North and South, the privileged and the subalterns, the “modern” and “traditional,” and the insider and outside is supposed to enhance the ethico-political efficacy of the kind of knowledge they produce, and thus help in decolonializing, empowering or emancipating the marginalized and colonized.<sup>33</sup>

The creeping influence of the Latin American decoloniality movement into Southeast Asian Studies is exemplified by Goh Beng Lan’s appropriation of Mignolo’s idea of border thinking as a justification for an internalist approach (regional-national-local) to Southeast Asian Studies. It also rationalizes efforts to integrate such internally produced knowledge into what she envisions to be “a new universalism of polycentric and multi-directional knowledge on the region.”<sup>34</sup>

Goh Beng Lan’s appropriation of Mignolo’s ideas represents a turn away from what may be considered as a “classical” formulation of postcolonial theory which she used to be excited about. It was a formulation permeated by the poststructuralist influences and thus highlights skepticism and the fluidity of knowledge. Her lengthy and thoughtful introduction, as well as her chapter, in *Decentering and Diversifying Southeast Asian Studies* (2011) reveal an exasperation towards the unintended use of the supposedly progressive, postcolonialist, and anti-Orientalist ideas for purposes favorable to conservative racial politics in Malaysia. She resuscitates the East-West divide and defends regional-national perspectives as acceptable “loci of enunciations” from which a knowledge worthy of being part of the universal social science may be formulated. I believe this position is problematic, as I explain in detail elsewhere.<sup>35</sup>

Goh’s aspiration for a universal but “polycentric and multi-



directional knowledge” dovetails well with Syed Farid Alatas’s effort to develop “alternative discourses.”<sup>36</sup> Alatas draws from the repositories of indigenous traditions in the non-western world concepts and ideas which may be incorporated into the mainstream social science. Just like Goh, and unlike proponents of hardcore indigenization movement, Alatas opts to work within the institutional or structural limits of the scholarly community. He is among those who aspire to break the Eurocentrism of the social science by making it truly universal via the incorporation of more and more knowledge from the non-western world. Apparently, the hope is to reach the tipping point when the pool of knowledge will be representative of all knowledge systems and therefore becomes truly universal. Reaching that point renders the category Western and non-Western knowledge meaningless. In other words, it is decolonization via universalization.

Questions may be raised as to the efficacy of the decolonization via universalization approach as exemplified by Alatas. One may wonder, for instance, whether the tipping point could ever be reached given the ever present, even expanding, inequality in power relations in the global scale.<sup>37</sup> This means, among other possibilities, greater marginalization among various groups including the indigenous communities. It is possible, nay likely, that indigenous knowledge would end up being reduced to a token in what amounts to a politically correct effort at academic multiculturalism. Domesticated or coopted by mainstream social science, indigenous knowledge could only settle for the position of inferiority in exchange for institutional recognition. Also, as social science is systemic and the form of logic or rationality that underpins it may run counter to that of indigenous knowledge systems, it is possible that what could be incorporated into the social science are only those elements that fit within the framework of its rationality, resulting in the other elements being discarded.<sup>38</sup> The danger of tokenism seems real. As for Goh’s approach, regional-national perspectives may be far too large an analytic scale to address effectively the inequalities between smaller groups or entities.

## indigenist Alternatives

Cognizant of the danger of tokenism, indigenist approaches such as the *Pantayong Pantayong* (PP, For-Us Perspective) takes off from the assumption of the incompatibility of the two knowledge systems. The systemic character of knowledge may be deep-seated such that the logic operating within one system may not be consistent with another. For PP in its hardcore formulation, decolonization means rejection of the Euro-American knowledge enterprise. It entails replacing it with an indigenous alternative. The strict injunction for the use of the Filipino language is an essential part of the whole project. So is the use of methods that are believed to be more attuned to the local contexts. For example, the data gathering methods in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (SP) such as *ginabayang talakayan* (guided discussion, or focused-group discussion), *pakikipagkwentuhan* (story-telling), *panunuluyan* (homestay), *pagdadalaw-dalaw* (visitation), *pagtatanung-tanong* (indirect questioning), and *pakikiramdam* (gut feel of informant's feelings) are all common modalities of social interactions among Filipinos. They are deemed not totally the same as their closest translations in English, such as interview, focused group discussion, or participant-observation.

The DM appears ambivalent in this regard. It is closer to the views of Alatas and Goh on the universalization of the social science than to PP's strongly indigenist stance. On the one hand, Mignolo declares that the logic of decoloniality cannot be Cartesian nor Marxist. On the other hand, border thinking presupposes the impossibility of avoiding the pervasiveness of Western ideas and methods. In his words: "border epistemology is the epistemology of the *anthropo(s)*,<sup>39</sup> who do not want to submit to *humanitas*, but at the same time cannot avoid it."<sup>40</sup> Notwithstanding the acknowledgment of the impossibility of avoiding *humanitas* or, roughly, the Euro-American knowledge system, DM strongly emphasizes the indigenous, conjuring the vision of "local histories confronting global designs."<sup>41</sup> The aspiration to integrate the two opposing views risks contradictions, which may be addressed on an existential or empirical level but probably not on an analytic plane.

The indigenist approaches such as PP have their share of challenges. By rejecting "Western" scholarly traditions and installing itself as

equally valid, if not the only valid, style of knowing, it has to cope with marginality imposed by the matrix of power relations that privilege Western scientific knowledge (*humanitas*). Often it is forced to confine itself within the limited scope of its discourses. For instances, despite the gains made PP and SP within the fields of history and psychology in the Philippines, they have to contend with the similarly marginalized position most indigenization movements have to endure, including those in Latin America where indigenization movement may have had the longest and most vibrant history.<sup>42</sup>

One can argue that the marginalized position of indigenization movements is precisely the reason for the earnest pursuit of pro-indigenous scholarship. Persistent marginality is a problem whose origin lies in the matrix of power relations in society or the world more broadly. What seems more salient is its double-edged character and the openness to misuse of the indigenization movement, just like many other progressive movements.<sup>43</sup> The long history of indigenous movements in Latin America, for example, is replete with stories of those who have greater sources and power within the community, both settlers and tribal leaders, appropriating for themselves the gains of pro-indigenous politics, leaving ordinary indigenous people dispossessed and marginalized even more than before.<sup>44</sup>

The case of the *Tadhana* Project illuminates the double-edged character of pro-indigenous politics. This project refers to the very ambitious history-writing project sponsored by the regime of Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s-1980s. Among the outstanding characteristics of this project was the involvement of historians who have had strong pro-people, pro-indigenous tendencies. This tendency was reflected in the historiographic backbone of the project that traced the roots of the formation of the state and Filipino nation back into the very distant past, encompassing geological processes, the evolutionary process or the idea of "Adam of the Philippines," Austronesian migration, etcetera. It also envisioned the coming together of three major religious groups—Christians, Muslims, and Lumads (or non-Muslim, non-Christian indigenous people)—to form the Filipino nation, which was corrective to the predominantly Christian character of Filipino nationhood. Never before were the Muslims and

Lumads given importance in the conception of Filipino nationhood, which was traditionally and proudly seen as Christian.<sup>45</sup>

What attracted the otherwise aloof historians to join the project were the resources, the promise of freedom, and the accompanying opportunity to advance their historiographic agenda. Aware of the strong anti-Marcos sentiment among the liberal-left that dominated the Philippine academia, they defended their participation in this very controversial project by saying that they dealt with periods in history decades or centuries far removed from the Marcos years. They believed that the historically more distant the periods they were assigned to study, the “safer” they were from the charge of complicity in whatever political plans Marcos had had in sponsoring the project.<sup>46</sup> What politics supportive of Marcos, they would rhetorically ask, one could find in geological formation, evolutionary process, Austronesian migration, indigenous state formation, Spanish period, etc.?

What politics indeed? Unbeknownst to them, in the grand scheme envisioned by Marcos, even the highly technical discussion of geological process in the first volume of the Tadhana project had a role to play in supporting the regime. By emphasizing the depth of the indigenous roots of Filipino identity, it helped to validate Marcos’ critique both of liberalism and Marxism as foreign and colonial, and thus unsuitable for the Philippines. It paved for an indigenous alternative the road to which called for the declaration of Martial Law in 1972. It was supposedly a means to clean up the Philippines of the long-standing problems that were supposedly deeply rooted in its history and institutional practices. The goal was to establish a New Society (Bagong Lipunan) where the oligarchy was neutralized and prosperity for common people became possible. It was after all the *tadhana* (destiny) of the Filipino nation, the fate supposedly inscribed in the roots of Filipino identity which may be traced to the deepest roots in the past.

The significant point to emphasize in the case of the Tadhana project is that the author’s intentions at the moment of writing may be easily superseded by new meanings once the components are framed differently. Roland Barthes’ idea of the “death of the author” deserves more serious attention among scholars who are often focused only

on empirical accuracy and methodological appropriateness and are nonchalant about how exactly knowledge is used on a daily basis. Marcos did not have to manipulate the scholars to yield a result favorable for his political purpose. He merely had to package things in a certain way so that interpretations favourable for his purpose became apparent.

### **A Red Herring?**

One consequence of the centrality accorded to decolonization, anchored as it is in long colonial history, is the unintentional diversion away from the more recent and possibly more decisive reasons for contemporary problems faced by marginalized sectors in society. With scholars focusing on the lingering impact of colonization, the tendency is to look back into the colonial past for the roots of contemporary problems, and to the even deeper pre-colonial past for the solutions to them. This is clear in indigenist approaches as exemplified by PP and SP, and Tadhana project, as well as Postcolonial Theory and Decoloniality Movement. These approaches attribute many issues to the supposedly Western nature of the episteme and its accompanying scholarly tradition. As a solution, they try to recover worldviews and concepts that were supposedly extant before the coming of the Europeans and thus “untainted” by them, which leads them to downplay the adaptive and dynamic nature of culture. The flaws in the economic system, socio-culturally structured inequalities, self-serving rivalries, corruption, and rent-seeking behavior among the elites, which all weigh down the country and have recent origins are overshadowed in favour of the overriding concern for the supposed deeper roots of these problems. The impression that dominates is that what deserves to be blamed, in the case of the Philippines for example, are a colonial mentality, a “damaged culture,” and the lingering neocolonial relations with foreigners. Diverting attention away from the more recent causes of such problems as severe disparities between rich and poor and political corruption, it allows a convenient escape for the ruling political elites from their culpability.

There seems a paradox here. The internalist perspectives such as

Sartono Kartodirdjo's *Indonesiasentris* and Zeus Salazar's *Pantayong Pananaw* are driven explicitly by the desire to foreground the natives as *dramatis personae*. As agents or subjects of historical change, native actors are by implications enabled to take charge and shift the course of history in the direction beneficial for the people, as opposed to merely obeying the dictates of foreigners. At the same time they are envisioned to take responsibility for the historical choices they made. It seems ironic that a deeply historical approach as mentioned above ends up sidetracking the question of responsibility.

### Multi-edged Knowledge and Levels of Analysis

Rather than just irony, the situation above perhaps points to the inherently fluid, multiple-edged character of knowledge. Poststructuralists such as Roland Barthes may have pushed things to the extreme when they upheld the "death of the author," implying that all there is to a text is what the readers make of it. But the idea seems to have a fundamental import that cannot be ignored. Historians and many other scholars tend to be fixated on authorial intent as well as on the accuracy of facts and meanings that supposedly inhere to a text. They appear oblivious to the possibility, and more so the implications, of meanings being constituted at the act of reading and interpretation, which suggests that at the end the day the meaning and significance, as well as material or behavioral impact, of a text depends less on what the scholar-author wish to convey and, rather, more on what readers, individually and collectively, make of it.

This point raises the question of whether the agenda set by progressive scholars coincide with what is advantageous for marginalized people they claim to speak and fight for. Often, the marginalized groups are lumped together as a category, such as that of the subaltern. We know, however, there is a whole range of variations that the truth-effect of a category masks. In addition, the hierarchy and power relations that regulate interaction among members of each sub-groups within the category are likely to be shifting rather than fixed. Given the complexity of the contexts that underpin power relations,

and the staggering range of challenges subalterns face in their everyday lives, is it apt for well-intentioned, progressive scholars such as those associated with the DM collective, PC, and PP, to expend enormous effort to combat the epistemic roots of social and economic problems, at the risk of diverting attention away from the more immediate but possibly more impactful factors?

The scale or level of analysis is crucial in upholding the internalist perspective. While one can easily concede that what they do has its own usefulness, both methodological regionalism as proposed by Thompson<sup>47</sup> and methodological nationalism which is endemic in area studies appear problematic in the eyes of progressive scholarship. Because of the scope of their aggregation, these approaches tend to be easily co-opted by avaricious political and economic elites for their own interests at the expense of the common people. The critique of nationalism is a well-trodden theme in postcolonialism as emphasized, say, by Partha Chatterjee<sup>48</sup> among many others. Scaling down to small communities or sectors seems more promising, as shown for instance by James Scott's anthropological works such as *Weapons of the Weak*.<sup>49</sup> The long history of anthropology's complicity with colonial project, however, casts a dark shadow on such a promise.<sup>50</sup> Pantayong Pananaw is notable for allowing a built-in mechanism to calibrate the scope depending on need or projected membership to the we-group (the tayo), but regardless of the size of the group, the possibility of hierarchy and the accompanying abuse of the idea of community cannot be ruled out simply because of the differential access to sources of power within the group. The last resort is to limit the scope to individual perspective, but this option may be virtually ruled out by the prevailing predilection for collectivity, typology or generalization in social science scholarship (Latour 1986). Whenever the individual standpoint is upheld, as in literature, history and psychology, it is tempered by reference to broader contexts, thus asserting the analytic primacy of the social over the individual. The rather lukewarm response to Bruno Latour's<sup>51</sup> declaration that "society is not what holds us together, it is what is held together" is a stark indication of this tendency.

It seems that no matter how one adjusts perspective to suit a

particular progressive agenda, the possibility that it would be used for a purpose other than intended—say, for reactionary, conservative or self-serving purposes—cannot be ruled out. Shifting perspective from the outside to the inside amounts to no more than an intermediate, and inadequate, solution. It merely changes the locus of power, as the powerful insiders may prove as exploitative as outsiders, such as the native elites in various Southeast Asian countries who replaced the colonizers or the local elites who represent the economically dominant classes in the capitals of Manila, Jakarta, or Kuala Lumpur. In short, the root of the problem of unequal power relations is only partially addressed.

### **Return to Power/Knowledge?**

For some time power/knowledge as analytic trope had been at the center-stage of the non-Marxist wing of progressive scholarship. Overlapping with, but significantly different from, the notion of power-knowledge which foregrounds the impact or influence of political power on knowledge production (a Marxist-inspired analytic thread), power/knowledge refers to a much more intimate, mutually constituting, mutually reinforcing relationship between the two. The salience of the critique of Orientalism in the development of postcolonial theory in the 1980s and 1990s attests to this situation.<sup>52</sup> The shift of the subaltern studies towards postcolonial theory, a shift much bewailed by Marxist critics in India such as Vasant<sup>53</sup> and Aijaz Ahmad,<sup>54</sup> was yet another.

The prominent position of power/knowledge analytics in critical scholarship followed from the “linguistic turn” in the humanities and social sciences. This development was manifest in the inroad of the poststructuralist thought in various fields such as literary theory, cultural studies, and gender studies, among many other fields. By the 1990s, however, the backlash against poststructuralism was mounting, occasioned as it was by, among other factors, the realization that it tends to be contradictory and its skeptical stance goes too far in undermining the foundation for any scholarship including progressive ones.<sup>55</sup> Along with the receding of poststructuralism is the sidelining or downplaying



of the analytics of power/knowledge.

The poststructuralist conception of power/knowledge is a major source of criticism against postcolonial studies. Recent efforts to re-orient or re-invent postcolonial studies involved the shedding off, toning down or downplaying of power/knowledge, culturalism, and logocentrism as well as putting greater emphasis on other factors such as political economy.<sup>56</sup> The flight from the poststructuralist conception of power/knowledge is clearly manifest in the Latin American decoloniality movement. Hardly one can find in the published key works among proponents of this approach references to the work of Foucault, Derrida, Nietzsche, etc. The idea seems to be that as Eurocentric critiques of Eurocentrism, they remain Eurocentric at their core.

In Southeast Asian Studies, a retreat from postcolonial theory, at least its "classical" formulation, was amply demonstrated by Goh Beng Lan in the lengthy and thoughtful introduction to the book *Decentring and Diversifying Southeast Asian Studies*. I have discussed in detail this episode elsewhere so I shall not repeat it here.<sup>57</sup> Suffice to note that it was to me was a stunning reversal of an earlier favorable attitude Goh had had vis-à-vis postcolonial theory. In hindsight, however, it ought not surprise given that it follows the broader pattern of initial enthusiastic engagement with postcolonial theorizing, followed by wariness toward it. The poststructuralist element of power/knowledge seems to be deeply disquieting to many of PC's erstwhile eager followers, including Gayatri Spivak.<sup>58</sup>

Joan Scott deplored the declarations, nay celebration, of the supposed "obituary" of poststructuralism as both "premature" and "foolish."<sup>59</sup> She reiterated the continuing relevance of poststructuralism as an ethically imperative critique of knowledge. I share Scott's view. In my mind, poststructuralist critique has become even more necessary as technological advances result in the increased potential to control or influence information dissemination and knowledge production.

Among its many important implications, power/knowledge foregrounds the deeply, if cryptically, political nature of knowledge. What this suggests is that no matter what social science scholars do to ensure conceptual refinement, theoretical efficacy, empirical accuracy,

and methodological soundness, the resulting knowledge claim may not avoid the possibility of being politicized. The reason for this is simple: knowledge depends on human-generated meanings which in turn cannot exist in a socio-political vacuum. The various forms of the political can only be concealed, and this is what is being achieved via scholarly debates and deliberations. Insofar as knowledge is concerned, there seems no space on empirical ground beyond the political. But such “pure” or politically “untainted” space needs to be imagined in the theoretical or metaphysical level, for such imagining is a necessary precondition for analytic practice. The more salient question therefore has long ceased to be whether power/knowledge is valid, but why many refuse to believe so, or if they do believe as proponents of PC do, they limit power/knowledge to a certain degree and avoid pushing its logic to conclusion.<sup>60</sup>

The approaches or schools of thought referred to in this paper do not deny the political purposes which they serve. They invariably aspire to a progressive or pro-people stance. What is often forgotten is that the political salience of a particular knowledge claim depends more on pragmatics, or how actually knowledge is used on a day-to-day basis, rather than on the author’s intention. As shown by the case of *Tadhana*, as briefly discussed above, a patently pro-people historiographic vision can be used to serve a purpose directly opposed to the authors’ intent. It is the context of knowledge use that decides.

In short, the “progressiveness” of progressive scholarship does not inhere in the claims of knowledge it produces, but in how on daily basis such knowledge is appropriated. This explains why PC’s progressivist intent in critiquing Orientalism could end up being supportive of the racist politics in Malaysia (as earlier noted bewailed by Goh Beng Lan) or pro-Hindu nationalist stance in India. Or PC’s critique of nationalism inadvertently lending support to pro-globalization forces.<sup>61</sup> The same may be said, but in reverse fashion, of Latin American decoloniality movements’ blanket critique of things Western such as the Euro-American episteme, which blindsides the benefits many of marginalized people today—women, indigenous groups, children, LGBT, etc.—derive from the discourses on human rights, equality, and diversity. No matter

how limited or problematic, one cannot deny they do lend support to certain sectoral, pro-marginalized politics.

Because of the primacy of the context of knowledge use, a scholarship that is true to its progressive aspirations needs to devote greater attention to the mapping out of actual knowledge use and to account for power relations that sustain the patterns of use through time. The more important question seems not whether a particular body of knowledge is pro-people or not, but how in fact knowledge is used, by whom, in what context, for what purpose, and why. These types of information and the comprehensive manner they are produced, and the systematic ways they are disseminated are likely to help inform the truly the marginalized people and allow them a more meaningful and favourable participation in democratic process. Habermas' vision of communicative competence which entails a truly open public sphere is likely to be served well by this type of progressive scholarship.

### **Conclusion: Progressive Scholarship for Whom?**

"For whom is progressive scholarship?" is one of the questions that this paper tries to revisit. At first glance this question appears pedestrian and ridiculous. Dominant discourses have it that it is for the majority, the common people, particularly the subalterns or the marginalized. If this kind of scholarship is really for them, one wonders if there is really a need to go back very deep into the past and dig deep into various areas including the epistemic roots of contemporary problems to serve the purpose? For many subalterns, what they badly need remain very basic: food, shelter, clean water, access to education and employment, fair labor practices, land reform, among other things. These may be obtained through a mechanism for efficient and equitable use and distribution of resources, regardless of the civilizational origin of such mechanism. In other words, they may not care about whether a possible solution is indigenous or Western or whatever. What matters to them is that their lives improve.

As humans do not live by bread alone, they also need dignity, self-esteem, sense of acceptance, equality and other favorable sentiments for

their sense of psychological well-being. Question may be raised as to whether these may be achieved only via indigenous or any non-Western cultural traditions. If not, as it appears to be the case, then what is really the point of wholesale rejection of Eurocentrism as espoused by the schools of thought covered in this paper?

The truth of the matter was that colonization was not an undiluted evil. It has had an ambivalent or uneven impact as certain sectors benefitted and embraced it, even regarding it as a blessing, while other elements of society suffered. The same may be said about knowledge production. While there was an upsurge of anti-scientific anti-Enlightenment sentiment, it cannot be denied that others have found science and the host of other branches of “Western” reason not only beneficial, but necessary to living well in the modern world.

There seems to be a disconnection between what self-identified progressive scholars thought to be the nature of the problems of the subalterns on whose behalf they wield the cudgel of progressivism, on the one hand, and on the other hand, what the subalterns themselves think and need. Rather than falling prey to scholastic or intellectualist fallacy whereby they assume superior vantage point, progressive scholars ought to see the world from the eyes of the subalterns. Women, for example, who cry out for equality may not need to trace the root of gender inequality to what is called the coloniality of Being.<sup>62</sup> What they need is a practical mechanism to assist them in seeing through the veil that hides and justifies inequality and evaluate for themselves available options.

Scholars in general and progressive scholars in particular undoubtedly mean well. When they go deep into the epistemological and historical roots of many contemporary problems, they do so in good faith. Scholars, however, must become aware of the bias of professionalism—the tendency to do or emphasize what one is good at, thereby validating or justifying one’s *raison d’être* and generate various forms of intellectual capital in the process. The need for this awareness becomes all the more pressing because of the danger it has of creating a red herring effect, which diverts attention away from the more immediate causes of social and economic problems.

The other major question that this paper seeks to re-consider is, “what topics should progressive scholarship pursue?” I have noted earlier that it is common among progressive scholars to presume that progressive politics inheres in the content of knowledge. To an extent this is true, but instances are also common when progressive content may be used for contrary purposes. This is the reason why the pursuit of decolonizing knowledge may not be enough as the actual use, in a particular context, decides the direction in which knowledge goes. What needs to be done is to re-orient progressive scholarship so it would allot more time and effort to map out how exactly knowledge is used and to account for the matrix of power relations that underpin knowledge production, consumption and distribution. How exactly this may be done requires a lengthy explication, which is better reserved for a future endeavor.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See for example “Decolonization(s) and Education,” New Men and New Politics Conference at Humboldt University, Berlin, November 25-28, 2015. Center of Study and Investigation for Decolonial Dialogues Decolonizing Knowledge and Power: Postcolonial Studies, Decolonial Horizons, A summer school in Barcelona, Spain, July 11-21, 2016. The website *Decolonialidad Europa* alone lists eight research/advocacy groups in Europe, <http://decolonialityeurope.wix.com/decoloniality#the-movements/c1k8g>.

<sup>2</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, “(De) Coloniality and Uneasy (Post) Colonialism,” *The Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise Project*, 2013, <https://globalstudies.trinity.duke.edu/volume-3-dossier-3-uneasy-postcolonialisms>.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Enrique Dussel, “Modernity, Eurocentrism, and Trans-Modernity: In Dialogue with Charles Taylor,” in *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), 129–59; Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (March 2007): 168–78; María Lugones, “Toward a Decolonial Feminism,” *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (2010): 742–59; Walter D. Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought, and Decolonial Freedom,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7–8 (2009): 159–81; Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 263.

<sup>5</sup> J. C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social Andeconomic*

*History* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1955), 251.

<sup>6</sup> John Smail, "On the Possibility of an Autonomous History of Modern Southeast Asia," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 2, no. 3 (1961): 72–102.

<sup>7</sup> Harry J. Benda, "The Structure of Southeast Asian History: Some Preliminary Observations," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 1962): 106–38.

<sup>8</sup> John S. Bastin, *The Study of Modern Southeast Asian History* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, 1959).

<sup>9</sup> W. F. Wertheim, "Asian History and the Western Historian. Rejoinder to Professor Bastin," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde*. 119, no. 2 (1963): 149–60.

<sup>10</sup> A. D Rangkuti, *Sedjarah Indonesia Untuk Sekolah Menengah* (Medan: Pustaka Timur, 1953).

<sup>11</sup> Sutjipto Wirjosuparto, *Dari Lima Zaman Pendjadjahan Menujdu Zaman Kemerdekaan : Buku Peladjaran Sedjarah Indonesia Untuk Sekolah Menengah Atas Bagian A. B. Dan C* (Djakarta: Indira, 1958).

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Yamin, *6000 Tahun Sang Merah Putih: Jaitu Hasil-Penjelidikan Sedjarah Dan Arti Jang Dikandung Sang Merah-Putih Sebagai Warna-Kebangsaan Dan Bendéra-Negara Republik Indonésia* (Djakarta: Siguntang, 1951).

<sup>13</sup> Dipa Nusantara Aidit, *Indonesian Society and the Indonesian Revolution* (Jakarta: Jajasan Pembaruan, 1958).

<sup>14</sup> Jose Maria Sison, *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Hong Kong: Ta Kung Pao, 1971).

<sup>15</sup> Hussein Alatas, "The Captive Mind in Development Studies," *International Social Science Journal* 34, no. 1 (1972): 9–25; Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of TheMalays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and Its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: F. Cass, 1977).

<sup>16</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888: Its Conditions, Course and Sequel. A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966); Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Indonesian Historiography* (Yogyakarta Indonesia: Penerbit Kanisius, 2001)."

<sup>17</sup> Zeus Salazar, "Ang Pagpapasakasaysayang Pilipino Ng Nakaraang Pre-Ispaniko," in *Kasaysayan: Diva at Lawak*, ed. Zeus Salazar (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1974); Zeus A. Salazar, "Pantayong Pananaw: Kasaysayang Pampook, Pambayan at Pambansa," in *Pantayong Pananaw: Ugat at Kabuluhan, Pambungad Sa Pag-Aaral Ng Bagong Kasaysayan*, ed. Atoy Navarro, Mary Jane Rodriguez, and Vic Villan (Quezon City: Palimbagan ng Lahi, 2000), 35–53.

<sup>18</sup> Virgilio Enriquez, "Mga Batayan Ng Sikolohiyang Pilipino Sa Kultura at Kasaysayan (The Bases of Filipino Psychology in Culture and History)," *General Education Journal* 26 (1975): 61–88; Virgilio Enriquez, *Indigenous Psychology and National Consciousness* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Farid Alatas, *Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science: Responses to Eurocentrism* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006); Syed Farid Alatas, "Alternative Discourses in Southeast Asia," *Sari*, no. 19 (2001): 49–67.

<sup>20</sup> Goh Beng Lan, ed., *Decentring & Diversifying Southeast Asian Studies: Perspectives from the Region* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> For example, a good number of conferences and summer schools are sponsored and/or held by European universities. See for examples the web portal of Decoloniality Europe or Decolonialidad Europa, <http://decolonialityeurope.wix.com/decoloniality>.

<sup>23</sup> Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*; Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom."

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Phillips, "Beyond Bandung: The 1955 Asian-African Conference and Its Legacies for International Order," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70, no. 4 (2016): 329–41; See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya, eds., *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Michael D. Barr, "Lee Kuan Yew and the 'Asian Values' Debate," *Asian Studies Review* 24, no. 3 (September 2000): 309–34; Surain Subramaniam, "The Asian Values Debate: Implications for the Spread of Liberal Democracy," *Asian Affairs* 27, no. 1 (2000): 19–35.

<sup>26</sup> Letizia R Constantino, *World Bank Textbooks: Scenario for Deception* (Quezon City: Foundation For Nationalist Studies, 1982); Luisa Doronila, *The Limits of Educational Change: National Identity Formation in a Philippine Public Elementary School* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1989).

<sup>27</sup> Vasant Kaiwar, *The Postcolonial Orient: The Politics of Difference and the Project of Provincialising Europe* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality."

<sup>29</sup> Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being."

<sup>30</sup> Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom."

<sup>31</sup> Michael Doxtater, "Indigenous Knowledge in the Decolonial Era," *American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 3/4 (2004): 618–33.

<sup>32</sup> Christopher Mattison, "Delinking, Decoloniality & Dewesternization: Interview with Walter Mignolo (Part II)," *Critical Legal Thinking*, May 2, 2012, accessed April 1, 2017, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2012/05/02/delinking-decoloniality-dewesternization-interview-with-walter-mignolo-part-ii/>.

<sup>33</sup> Walter. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom"; Mignolo, "(De) Coloniality and Uneasy (Post) Colonialism."

- <sup>34</sup> Beng Lan Goh, "Southeast Asian Perspectives on Area Studies in a Global Age," *Jati: Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15 (2010): 45–61.
- <sup>35</sup> Rommel A. Curaming, "Postcolonial Criticism and Southeast Asian Studies: Pitfalls, Retreat, and Unfulfilled Promises," *Suvannabhumi* 7, no. 2 (2015): 3–25.
- <sup>36</sup> Alatas, "Alternative Discourses in Southeast Asia."
- <sup>37</sup> Branko Milanović, *The Haves and the Have-Nots: A Brief and Idiosyncratic History of Global Inequality* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).
- <sup>38</sup> Elaine Coburn et al., "Unspeakable Things: Indigenous Research and Social Science," *Socio*, no. 2 (2013): 331–48.
- <sup>39</sup> Roughly antropos refers to the "uncivilized" state, that is, from the "Western" standpoint, or the "inferior knowledge." Humanitas signifies the opposite, the civilized, and the superior knowledge. See Naoki Sakai, "Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of Humanitas and Antropos," *Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 4 (2010): 441–64, for an illuminating discussion of this point.
- <sup>40</sup> Walter Mignolo, "Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (de)Coloniality, Border Thinking, and Epistemic Disobedience," *Confero Essays on Education Philosophy and Politics* 1, no. 1 (2013): 130–31.
- <sup>41</sup> Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*.
- <sup>42</sup> Jean E. Jackson and Kay B. Warren, "Indigenous Movements in Latin America, 1992–2004: Controversies, Ironies, New Directions," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34, no. 1 (2005): 549–73; Francesca Merlan, "Indigenous Movements in Australia," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34, no. 1 (October 2005): 473–94; Donna Lee Van Cott, "Indigenous Peoples' Politics in Latin America," *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. 1 (2010): 385–405.
- <sup>43</sup> R. Stahler-Sholk and H. E. Vanden, "A Second Look at Latin American Social Movements: Globalizing Resistance to the Neoliberal Paradigm," *Latin American Perspectives* 38, no. 1 (2011): 5–13.
- <sup>44</sup> Jackson and Warren, "Indigenous Movements in Latin America, 1992–2004: Controversies, Ironies, New Directions"; Kay B. Warren, *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- <sup>45</sup> Rommel A. Curaming, "When Clio Meets the Titans: Towards Rethinking State-Scholar Relations in Indonesia and Philippines" (Ph.D. Thesis, Australian National University, 2006), Chapter 3.
- <sup>46</sup> Rommel Curaming, "When Clio Meets the Titans: Towards Rethinking State-Scholar Relations in Indonesia and the Philippines" (doctoral dissertation, Australian National University, 2006).
- <sup>47</sup> Eric C. Thompson, "In Defence of Southeast Asia: A Case for Methodological Regionalism," *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 1, no. 2 (2013): 281–302.



<sup>48</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London, U.K: Zed Books for the United Nations University, 1986); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>49</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>50</sup> Diane Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism," *Current Anthropology* 14, no. 5 (December 1973): 581–602

<sup>51</sup> Bruno Latour, "The Powers of Association," in *Power, Action, and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?*, ed. John Law (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

<sup>52</sup> Diana Brydon, ed., *Postcolonialism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, 5 v. (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000); Ato Quayson, "Postcolonialism and Postmodernism," in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Massachusetts & London: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000), 87–111.

<sup>53</sup> Kaiwar, *The Postcolonial Orient: The Politics of Difference and the Project of Provincialising Europe*. See my review of this book Rommel Curaming, "Review of Vasant Kaiwar, *The Postcolonial Orient: The Politics of Difference and the Project of Provincialising Europe*," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 44, no. 4–5 (2016): 627–29.

<sup>54</sup> Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992).

<sup>55</sup> Wendell V. Harris, ed., *Beyond Poststructuralism: The Speculations of Theory and the Experience of Reading* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> Janet Wilson, Cristina Sandru, and Sarah Lawson Welsh, eds., *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>57</sup> Rommel Curaming, "The Internalist Perspectives and Scholastic Fallacy in Southeast Asian Studies," The 2015 International Conference of BUFS/ISEAS, Busan, South Korea: ISEAS/BUFS, 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>59</sup> Joan Scott, "History-Writing as Critique." in *Manifestos for History*, ed. Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow (London: Routledge, 2007), 20.

<sup>60</sup> I call this refusal to push the logic of power/knowledge among proponents of PC and other strands of critical theory as "analytic constipation." It refers to the "inability or unwillingness to push the logic of analysis to its ultimate conclusion arising from the situation where the logical conclusion carries exceedingly controversial, disadvantageous or hideous (from certain standpoint) philosophical, moral, religious, academic or political implications. Faced with this situation, scholars often hold back within the permissible zone, maintaining critical stance by alternative means or by continually teasing the limits using, among other tools, intellectually inflationary and involutory practices of complexifying concepts, theories and methods, but ultimately

without addressing the fundamental roots of the problem.” Curaming, “The Internalist Perspectives and Scholastic Fallacy in Southeast Asian Studies.”

<sup>61</sup> Simon During, “Postcolonialism and Globalization: Towards a Historicization of Their Inter-Relation,” *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3–4 (July 2000): 385–404.

<sup>62</sup> Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being.”