Oppositional Postmodernism and Globalizations

Boaventura de Sousa Santos

Eve Darian-Smith's review of my book is an excellent, engaging, thoughtful, and provocative essay, and I am happy for having provided the pretext for it. It raises several issues, all of them relevant. I shall concentrate on two of them, in my view the most important ones.

The first issue concerns the character and epistemological location of the critical theory I propose in the book. According to Darian-Smith, my position, which I call oppositional postmodernism, is not sufficiently spelled out. The second issue concerns the conceptualization of globalization and the hierarchies of the world system. According to my reviewer, I accept all too acritically such modernist dichotomies as global/local, core/periphery, and North/South, thereby indicating my "deeper ideological and moral leanings" (Darian-Smith 1998, 115) at the cost of coherence and consistency with my epistemological concerns laid out in the first part of the book. Rather than responding intra-textually to these criticisms—that is to say, rather than resorting to passages in my book where Darian-Smith's criticisms may be said to be partially preempted, an easy strategy in the case of such a lengthy book—in this comment I will develop my position on the two issues I have singled out and let the reader grasp the project I undertake in the book and the direction of my current thinking.

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On Oppositional Postmodernism

Perhaps more than ever today, the most important problems faced by each one of the social sciences, far from being specific, are the same as those faced by the social sciences in general. As a matter of fact, some of these problems are also faced by the natural and life sciences, and that is what leads me to believe that these problems are the symptoms of a general crisis of the paradigm of modern science. In these comments I shall concentrate on a problem that can be formulated by the following question: Why has it become so difficult to construct a critical theory? a question that sociology shares with the remaining social sciences. I shall first formulate the problem and identify the factors that contributed to its particular importance during the past decade. Next, I shall suggest a few clues for the resolution of this problem. As I do so, what I mean by oppositional postmodernism, a concept underlying the trajectory of my analytical thinking in the book under review, will be fully underscored.

The Problem

The most puzzling problem that the social sciences face today can be formulated like this: If at the close of the century we live in a world where there is so much to be criticized, why has it become so difficult to produce a critical theory? By critical theory I mean the theory that does not reduce "reality" to what exists. Reality, however conceived it may be, is considered by critical theory as a field of possibilities, the task of critical theory being precisely to define and assess the level of variation that exists beyond what is empirically given. The critical analysis of what exists lies in the assumption that existence does not exhaust the possibilities of existence, and that there are, therefore, alternatives capable of overcoming what is criticizable in what exists. The discomfort, nonconformism, or indignation vis-à-vis what exists inspires the impulse to theorize its overcoming.

Such situations or conditions as provoke in us discomfort, indignation, and nonconformism do not seem to be lacking in the world today. Suffice it to recall how the great promises of modernity remain unfulfilled or how their fulfillment turned out to have perverse effects. Regarding the promise of equality: The advanced capitalist countries, amounting to 21% of the world population, control 78% of the world production of goods and services and consume 75% of all the energy produced. Textile or electronics workers in the Third World earn 20 times less than workers in Europe and North America doing the same jobs with the same productivity. Since the debt crisis emerged in the early eighties, Third World countries in debt have been contributing to the wealth of the developed countries in liquid terms, by paying them each year an average of $30 billion more than what they get

as new loans. During the same period, available food in Third World countries decreased about 30%. However, the area of soybean production in Brazil alone would suffice to feed 40 million people if corn and beans were cultivated there instead. More people died of hunger in our century than in any of the preceding centuries. The gap between rich and poor countries has not stopped widening.

Concerning the promise of liberty: Violations of human rights in countries living formally in peace and democracy reach overwhelming proportions. Fifteen million children work in bondage in India alone (they are the bonded child laborers); police and prison violence are inordinate in Brazil and Venezuela; racial conflicts in the United Kingdom increased almost threefold between 1989 and 1996. In addition, sexual violence against women; child prostitution; street kids; thousands of victims of land mines; discrimination against drug addicts, HIV positives, and homosexuals; trials of citizens by faceless judges in Colombia and Peru; ethnic cleansing and religious chauvinism are some of the manifestations of the diaspora of liberty.

With respect to the promise of perpetual peace that Kant formulated so eloquently: While in the eighteenth century 4.4 million people died in 68 wars, in our century 99 million people died in 237 wars. Between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries, the world population increased about three and a half times, whereas war casualties increased over 22 times. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, the peace that many thought possible at long last became a cruel mirage in view of the increase, for the past six years, of conflicts between states and inside the states themselves.

Last, the promise of domination over nature was fulfilled in a perverse way in the destruction of nature and the ecological crisis. Two examples alone: During the past 50 years the world lost about a third of its forests. In spite of the fact that the tropical forest provides over 40% of plant biomass and oxygen, 600,000 acres of Mexican forests are destroyed every year. Nowadays, multinational corporations hold the right to fell trees in 12 million acres of the Amazon forest. Desertification and water scarcity are the problems that will most affect Third World countries in the next decade. A fifth of humankind no longer has access to drinking water.

This brief enumeration of the problems that cause us discomfort or indignation suffices to make us question ourselves critically about the nature and moral quality of our society and search for alternatives theoretically grounded on the answers we give to such questions. Such questions and search were always the basis of modern critical theory. Max Horkheimer has defined modern critical theory better than anyone else. Modern critical theory is, above all, a theory epistemologically grounded on the need to overcome the bourgeois dualism between the individual scientist as autonomous

producer of knowledge and the totality of the social activity surrounding him. Says Horkheimer: "Reason cannot become transparent to itself as long as men act as members of an organism that lacks reason" (1972, 208). The irrationality of modern society lies in that it (society) is the product of a particular will, that of capitalism, and not of a general will, "a united and self-conscious will" (208). Hence, critical theory cannot accept such concepts as "goodness," "usefulness," "appropriateness," "productivity," or "value" as they are understood by the existing social order, and it refuses to conceive of them as nonscientific presuppositions about which nothing can be done. "[T]he critical acceptance of the categories which rule social life contains simultaneously their condemnation" (208). This is why the identification of critical thought with its society is always full of tensions.

Modern critical theory draws from historical analysis the goals of human activity, particularly the idea of a reasonable social organization capable of fulfilling the needs of the community as a whole. Such goals, though immanent to human work, "are not correctly grasped by individuals or by the common mind" (Horkheimer 1972, 213). The struggle for such goals is intrinsic to the theory, and hence "the first consequence of the theory which urges a transformation of society as a whole is only an intensification of the struggle with which the theory is connected" (1972, 219).

Marx's influence on Horkheimer's conception of modern critical theory is quite obvious. Indeed, Marxism has been the fundamental supporting basis of critical sociology in our century. However, critical sociology has also sources in eighteenth-century romanticism, nineteenth-century utopianism, and twentieth-century American pragmatism. It developed along multiple theoretical orientations, such as structuralism, existentialism, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, its most prominent analytical icons being perhaps class, conflict, elite, alienation, domination, exploitation, imperialism, racism, sexism, dependency, world system, liberation theology.

That all these concepts and their theoretical configurations are still today part and parcel of the work of sociologists and social scientists might allow us to think that it is still today as easy or as possible as before to produce critical social theory. But I believe this is not the case. In the first place, many of these concepts no longer have the centrality they used to have, or they have been so much reelaborated and nuanced in themselves that they lost much of their critical power. Second, and indeed particularly as concerns the case of sociology, conventional sociology, both in its positivist and antipositivist guises, managed to make acceptable, as remedy for the crisis of sociology, the critique of critical sociology. In the case of positivist sociology, this critique is based on the idea that the methodological rigor and social usefulness of sociology presuppose that it concentrate on the analysis of what exists and not on alternatives to what exists; in the case of antipositivist sociology, on the idea that social scientists cannot impose

their normative preferences because they lack the privileged viewpoint that would allow them to do so.

As a consequence, the question that has always been the starting point for critical theory—which side are you on?—became for some illegitimate, for others irrelevant, for others still an unanswerable question. If some, believing that they do not have to take sides, have stopped worrying about the question and criticize those who still do, others, perhaps the youngest generation of social scientists, though they would like to answer the question and take sides, see sometimes with anguish the seemingly increasing difficulty in identifying alternative positions in relation to which it would be imperative to take sides. They are also the ones most affected by the problem that is my starting point here: why, if there is so much, perhaps more than ever, to criticize, is it so difficult to construct a critical theory?

Possible Causes

Let me identify some of the factors that, to my mind, are the cause of this difficulty in constructing a critical theory. First, following Horkheimer's position earlier quoted, modern critical theory conceives of society as a totality, thereby proposing a total alternative to the existing society. Marxist theory is the clearest example. Conceiving of society as a totality is a social construction like any other. Its grounding presuppositions alone distinguish it from rival constructions. Such presuppositions are the following: a form of knowledge that is itself total (or absolute) as a condition for grasping totality in a credible way; a single principle of social transformation and a collective agent, likewise a single one, capable of accomplishing it; a well-defined institutional political context allowing for the formulation of struggles deemed credible in light of the goals they propose. The critique of these presuppositions has been done, and it would not serve to repeat it here. All I want is to understand the place we ended up in with that critique.

Totalizing knowledge is the knowledge of order over chaos. What in this respect distinguishes functionalist sociology from Marxist sociology is the fact that the former aims at the order of social regulation whereas the latter aims at the order of social emancipation. At the end of the century, we face disorder—both of social regulation and emancipation. Our place is in societies that are authoritarian and libertarian at the same time.

The last great attempt at producing a modern critical theory was Foucault's, which addressed precisely the totalizing knowledge of modernity, modern science. Contrary to current opinion, to my mind, Foucault is a modern, not a postmodern, critic. He represents, paradoxically, the climax and the collapse of modern critical theory. By pushing to its ultimate consequences the disciplinary power of the panoptic built by modern science, Foucault demonstrates that in this "regime of truth," there is no

emancipatory way out, since resistance itself becomes a disciplinary power, hence a consented, because internalized, oppression.

Foucault's great merit was to show the opacities and silences produced by modern science, thus giving credibility to the search for alternative "regimes of truth," for other ways of knowing that have been marginalized, suppressed, and discredited by modern science. Our place today is a multicultural place, a place that is constantly engaged in a hermeneutics of suspicion against presumed universalisms or totalities. Multiculturalism has, however, flourished in cultural studies, transdisciplinary configurations that convene the different social sciences as well as literary studies, and where critical knowledge—feminist, antisexist, antiracist, postcolonial knowledge—is steadily being produced.

The single principle of social transformation underlying modern critical theory is based on the inevitability of a socialist future generated by the constant development of the productive forces and the class struggles that signify it. Unlike what happened in previous transitions, a majority, the working class, not a minority, will be the protagonist in overcoming capitalist society. As I said, modern critical sociology has interpreted this principle with great freedom and added sometimes profound revisions. In this respect, modern critical theory shares two important points with conventional sociology. On the one hand, the conception of the historical agent corresponds perfectly to the duality of structure and agency underlying all sociology. On the other, both sociological traditions had the same conception of the relations between nature and society, and both saw in industrialization the midwife of development.

No wonder, then, that in this respect the crisis of modern critical theory becomes largely confused with the crisis of sociology in general. Our position can be thus summarized. First, there is no single principle of social transformation; even those who continue to believe in a socialist future see it as a possible future in competition with other and alternative futures. There are no historical agents nor a single form of domination. The faces of domination and oppression are multiple, many of them, such as patriarchal domination, having been irresponsibly neglected by modern critical theory. Not by chance, for the last couple of decades feminist sociology has produced the best critical theory. If the faces of domination are multiple, so must be resistance to it as well as the agents of resistance.

In the absence of a single principle, it is not possible to gather all resistance and all agents under the aegis of one common grand theory. More than a common theory, we need a theory of translation capable of making the struggles mutually intelligible and allowing for the collective actors to talk about the oppressions they resist and the aspirations that mobilize them. Second, industrialization is not the motor of progress nor the midwife of development. On the one hand, industrialization presupposes a retrograde

conception of nature in that it misses the relationship between the degrada-
tion of nature and the degradation of the society supported by nature. On
the other hand, for two-thirds of humankind industrialization has brought
no development. If by development is meant the growth of GNP and the
wealth of less-developed countries so that they can come closer to devel-
oped countries, it is easy to show that such a goal is a mirage, for the ine-
quality between rich and poor countries has not ceased to deepen. If by
development is meant the growth of GNP to grant the populations a better
way of life, it is today quite simple to demonstrate that the welfare of popu-
lations does not depend so much on amount as on distribution of wealth.
Since the failure or the mirage of development appears today more and
more obvious, perhaps rather than looking for models of alternative devel-
opment the time has come to create alternatives to development. Even the
phrase the *Third World* is increasingly meaningless, and not only because the
Second World is no longer there.

In this respect, the crisis of modern critical theory has some disturbing
consequences. For a long time, scientific alternatives were unequivocally
political alternatives as well, and they were identified by distinct analytical
icons that made it easy to distinguish the fields and their contradictions.
The crisis of modern critical theory brought about the crisis of the iconic
distinction. The same icons began to be shared by fields previously well
demarcated, or alternatively, hybrid icons were created that eclectically in-
cluded elements from different fields. Thus, the icon of the capitalism/so-
cialism opposition was in turn replaced by the icon of industrial society,
postindustrial society, and at last, informational society. The opposition be-
tween imperialism and modernization was gradually replaced by the intrinsi-
cally hybrid concept of globalization. The revolution/democracy opposition
was almost drastically replaced by the concepts of structural adjustment and
Washington consensus, as well as the hybrid concepts of participation and
sustained development. By way of this semantic policy the fields stopped
having a name and a badge, thus stopping largely to be distinct. Herein lies
the difficulty of those who, though willing to take sides, find it hard to
identify the fields among which sides must be taken.

The correlative of the difficulty in identifying the fields is the enemy's
or adversary's lack of definition or determination, a syndrome that is only
reinforced by the discovery of the multiplicity of the above-mentioned op-
pressions, resistances, and agents. When at the beginning of the nineteenth
century the Luddites were breaking the machines that were robbing them of
their jobs, it might have been easy to show them that the enemy was not
the machines but whoever had the power to buy and utilize them. Nowa-
days, the opacity of the enemy or adversary seems to be much greater. Be-
hind the nearest enemy there seems to be always another one. Besides,
whoever is behind may also be before. At any rate, virtual space may well be

the metaphor for this indeterminacy: the screen before may likewise be behind.

In sum, the difficulties today in constructing a critical theory may be formulated like this. Because they were not fulfilled, the promises of modernity have become problems for which there seems to be no solution. In the meantime, the conditions that brought about the crisis of modern critical theory have not yet become the conditions to overcome the crisis. Hence the complexity of our transitional position, which can be thus summed up: we are facing modern problems for which there are no modern solutions. According to one stance, which might be called reassuring postmodernity, the fact that there are no modern solutions indicates that probably there are no modern problems either nor, before them, any promises of modernity. What exists is therefore to be accepted and celebrated. According to another stance, which I designate as disquieting or oppositional postmodernity, the disjunction between the modernity of the problems and the postmodernity of the possible solutions must be entirely assumed and turned into a starting point to face the challenges of constructing a postmodern critical theory. The latter is my stance and I cannot but sum it up here in very broad terms.

Toward a Postmodern Critical Theory

One failure of modern critical theory was that it did not recognize that the reason that criticizes cannot be the same reason that thinks, constructs, and legitimizes that which is criticizable. There is no knowledge in general as there is no ignorance in general. What we ignore is always ignorance of a certain way of knowing, and vice versa; what we know is always knowledge vis-à-vis a certain form of ignorance. Every act of knowing is a trajectory from a point A that we designate as ignorance to a point B that we designate as knowledge. In this regard I introduce in my book a distinction that is crucial to my argument.

Within the project of modernity we can distinguish two forms of knowledge: knowledge-as-regulation, whose point of ignorance is called chaos and whose point of knowledge is called order, and knowledge-as-emancipation, whose point of ignorance is called colonialism and whose point of knowledge is called solidarity. Though both forms of knowledge are inscribed in the matrix of Eurocentric modernity, the truth is that knowledge-as-regulation ended up overriding knowledge-as-emancipation. This was due to the way in which modern science became hegemonic and was thus institutionalized. By neglecting the epistemological critique of modern science, modern critical theory, though claiming to be a form of knowledge-as-emancipation, rapidly became a form of knowledge-as-regulation.

On the contrary, in a postmodern critical theory, all critical knowledge must begin by a critique of knowledge itself. In the current phase of paradigmatic transition, postmodern critical theory is constructed on the basis of a marginalized and discredited epistemological tradition of modernity, what I call knowledge-as-emancipation. In this form of knowledge, ignorance is colonialism, colonialism being the conception of the other as object, hence not recognizing the other as subject. According to this form of knowledge, to know is to recognize the other as subject of knowledge, to progress by bringing the other up from the status of object to that of subject. Such is the way of knowing as recognition that I designate as solidarity.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Darian-Smith considers this conception of knowledge as "rather complicated" (1998, 94). We are so used to conceiving of knowledge as a principle of order over things and people that we find it difficult to imagine a form of knowledge that might work as a principle of solidarity. However, such difficulty is a challenge that must be faced. Knowing what happened to the alternatives proposed by modern critical theory, we cannot rest content with merely thinking of alternatives. We need an alternative thinking of alternatives.

What I mean by knowledge-as-emancipation may become clearer if, resorting to a kind of thought experiment, we go back to the origins of modern science. At that point, the coexistence of regulation and emancipation at the core of the enterprise of knowledge advancement is transparent. The new knowledge of nature (i.e., to overcome the threatening chaos of unmastered natural processes by bringing them under a principle of order sound enough to dominate them) has no other purpose than to liberate human beings from the fetters of whatever has been previously considered to be natural: God, tradition, customs, community, ranks. Liberal society is emerging as a society of individuals, free and equal, and equally endowed with freedom of choice. The emancipatory character of this new societal paradigm lies in the extremely broad principle of recognizing the other as an equal, such reciprocal recognition being nothing else but the modern principle of solidarity. As modern science advances in its regulation of nature it also promotes the emancipation of humankind. But this virtuous circle is fraught with tensions and contradictions. To begin with, what counts as nature and what counts as humankind are themselves problematic and objects of debate. Seen from our perspective today, nature at this early moment is a much broader concept, including "sections" of what we would call today humankind: slaves, indigenous peoples, women, children. These groups are not included in the circle of reciprocity because they are considered to be nature, or closer to nature than humankind in its presumed proper sense. To know them is to regulate them, to bring their chaotic and irrational behavior under a principle of order.

Moreover, the liberal society that is then emerging is also a market society, a capitalist society. In this society the powers of individuals are premised upon access to enough land or capital to work on—access, that is, to means of labor. If the means of labor are concentrated in the hands of a few, he who has no access to them has to pay a price to get it. As Macpherson says, "[I]f he can get some access but cannot get it for nothing, then his powers are reduced by the amount of them that he has to hand over to get the necessary access. This is exactly the situation most men are in, and necessarily so, in the capitalist market society. They must, in the nature of the system, permit a net transfer of part of their powers to those who own the means of labor" (1982, 43).

This net transfer of power as a structural feature of the liberal capitalist society became a source of conflict. It posed a problem of order—to the extent that conflicts caused chaos—as much as it posed a problem of solidarity, to the extent that large sections of populations were deprived of effective reciprocity and hence of real recognition as being free and equal. However, when in the nineteenth century the social sciences started the process of institutionalization, the issue of order was privileged to the detriment of the issue of solidarity. The workers became "dangerous classes," prone to outbursts of irrational behavior. Knowledge of nature provided the model for the knowledge of society and so knowledge in general became knowledge-as-regulation.

My plea for the reinvention of knowledge-as-emancipation implies a revisitation of the principle of solidarity as well as the principle of order. As regards the principle of solidarity, I conceive of it both as the guiding principle and the always incomplete product of knowledge and normative action. Knowledge becomes a question of ethics, meaning that since there is no universal ethics, there is no universal knowledge. There are knowledges— different ways of knowing. Both alternatives of knowledge and alternatives of action must be searched for, either where they have been most obviously suppressed or where they have managed to survive, in however marginalized or discredited a form. In either case, they have to be searched for in the South, the South being my metaphor for human suffering under global capitalism. The social scientist is neither to be dissolved in the activist nor to keep an identity without reference to the activist.

As regards the principle of order, knowledge-as-emancipation excels in a hermeneutics of suspicion vis-à-vis order, and reassesses chaos, not as a form of ignorance, but as a form of knowledge. This reassessment is guided by the need to reduce the discrepancy between the capacity to act and the capacity to predict, engendered by modern science while knowledge-as-regulation. "Chaos invites us to a praxis that insists on immediate effects, and warns against distant effects, a style of action that privileges a transparent, localized connection between action and its consequences. That is, chaos

invites us to a prudent knowledge" (Santos 1995, 26). The adoption of knowledge-as-emancipation has three implications for the social sciences in general and for sociology in particular.

The first one can be formulated as follows: from monoculturalism toward multiculturalism. Since solidarity is a form of knowledge that is acquired by recognizing the other, the other can only be known as a producer of knowledge. Hence, all knowledge-as-emancipation is necessarily multicultural. The construction of multicultural knowledge faces two difficulties: silence and difference. The global dominion of modern science as knowledge-as-regulation brought about the destruction of many forms of knowledge, particularly those that were peculiar to peoples subjected to Western colonialism. Such destruction provoked silences that rendered unpronounceable the needs and aspirations of the peoples or social groups whose forms of knowledge were subjected to destruction. Let us not forget that under the guise of universal values authorized by reason, the reason of a race, sex, and social class was in fact imposed. Thus, the question is how to engage in a multicultural dialogue when some cultures were reduced to silence and their forms of seeing and knowing the world have become unpronounceable. In other words, how do we make silence speak without having it necessarily speak the hegemonic language that would have it speak? These questions constitute a great challenge for a multicultural dialogue. The unpronounceable silences and needs are graspable only by means of a sociology of absences capable of advancing through a comparison between the available hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses as well as through the analysis of the hierarchies among them and the empty spaces such hierarchies create. Silence is, therefore, a construction that asserts itself as the symptom of a blockade, a potentiality that cannot be developed.

The second difficulty facing multicultural knowledge is difference. There is knowledge, hence solidarity, only in differences. Now, difference without intelligibility leads to incommensurability and, lastly, to indifference—hence the need for a theory of translation as an integral part of postmodern critical theory. It is through translation and what I call diatopical hermeneutics (Santos 1995, 340) that a need, an aspiration, a practice in a given culture can be made comprehensible and intelligible for another culture. Knowledge-as-emancipation does not aim at a grand theory, rather at a theory of translation that may become the epistemological basis of emancipatory practices, all of them finite and incomplete and therefore sustainable only as long as they become networked. Multiculturalism is one of those hybrid concepts I mentioned above. There are regulatory as well as emancipatory conceptions of multiculturalism. It is up to postmodern criti-

cal theory to specify the conditions of either type of conception, a task that is beyond the scope of these comments.[1]

The second challenge of knowledge-as-emancipation can be formu lated in the following way: from heroic expertise to edifying knowledge Modern science, and hence modern critical theory as well, reside in the assumption that knowledge is valid regardless of the conditions that made it possible. Consequently, the application of knowledge depends only on the conditions that are indispensable to guaranteeing the technical operational ity of its application. Such operationality is constructed by means of a pro cess that I designate as *trans-scaling,* and which consists of producing and hiding an imbalance of scale between the technical action and the techni cal consequences. By this imbalance the large scale (detailed map) of action is juxtaposed to the small scale (undetailed map) of consequences. Trans scaling is crucial in this paradigm of knowledge. Since modern science has developed a great capacity for action but not a correspondent capacity for prediction, the consequences of a scientific action tend to be less scientific than the scientific action itself.

This imbalance together with the trans-scaling that hides it are what makes possible the technical heroism of the scientist. Once decontextual ized, all knowledge is potentially absolute. The kind of professionalization prevailing today is the outcome of such decontextualization. Even though the situation seems to be changing, it is still quite easy today to produce or apply knowledge while escaping the consequences thereof. The personal tragedy of knowledge can only now be observed in the biographies of the great creators of modern science at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century.

Postmodern critical theory starts from the presupposition that knowl edge is always contextualized by the conditions that make it possible and that it only progresses as long as it changes such conditions in a progressive way. Thus, knowledge-as-emancipation is earned by assuming the conse quences of its impact. And that is why it is a prudent, finite knowledge that keeps the scale of actions as much as possible on a level with the scale of consequences.

The professionalization of knowledge is necessary, but only insofar as the shared and deprofessionalized application of knowledge is made possible. At the basis of this mutual responsibilization lies an ethical commitment. In this regard we live today in a paradoxical society. The discursive affirmation of values is all the more necessary to the extent that dominant social prac tices render impossible the realization of such values. We live in a society dominated by what Saint Thomas Aquinas calls *habitus principiorum,* the habit to proclaim principles so as not to be compelled to abide by them. It

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1. Elsewhere, I have specified the conditions of an emancipatory, progressive conception of multiculturalism in the field of human rights (Santos 1997,13).

should, therefore, come as no surprise that postmodern theory relativizes values and hence strongly partakes of deconstruction, as prominently articulated by Derrida. But oppositional postmodernism cannot stop at deconstruction, for deconstruction pushed to its limits deconstructs the very possibility of resistance and alternatives. Here from derives the third challenge of knowledge-as-emancipation to the social sciences in general and to sociology in particular.

These challenge can be formulated thus: from conformist action to rebellious action. Modern critical theory, just like conventional sociology, has focused on the structure/agency dichotomy and constructed upon it its theoretical and analytical framework. I do not question the usefulness of the dichotomy but note that in time it became more a debate on order than a debate on solidarity. That is to say, it was absorbed by the epistemological field of knowledge-as-regulation.

From the point of view of postmodern critical theory, we must focus on another duality: the duality of conformist and rebellious action.[2] Both in the realm of production and in the realm of consumption capitalist society appears increasingly as a fragmentary, plural, and multiple society, whose borders seem to be there only to be trespassed. The relative replacement of the provision of goods and services by the market of goods and services creates fields of choice that are easily confused with exercises of autonomy and liberation of desires. All this occurs within the narrow limits of selecting choices and having the means to make them effective. However, such limits are easily constructed symbolically as real opportunities, be they loyalty to choices or credit consumption. Under such conditions, conformist action easily passes for rebellious action. By the same token, the rebellious action appears to be so easy that it readily turns into a form of alternative conformism.

It is in this context that postmodern critical theory attempts to reconstruct the idea and the practice of emancipatory social transformation. The most important task of postmodern theory is to inquire into the specific forms of socialization, education, and work that promote rebellious or, on the contrary, conformist subjectivities.

These three challenges have significant implications for the future of sociology or, if you like, for the sociology of the future. How such challenges will be faced and the impact they will have in the current practice of the social sciences remain to be seen. But these are unavoidable issues. Indeed, if we want alternatives, we must also want the society where such alternatives are possible.

I grant that it is possible to see in this critical position more of a modernist than a postmodernist stance. This is partly because the dominant ver-

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2. The outline of a theory of history centered around this duality can be read in Santos (forthcoming).

sion of postmodern theory has been by far of a celebratory rather than oppositional kind. This fact alone might explain why such a serious scholar as Terry Eagleton (1996) engaged recently in such a rash and superficial critique of postmodernism. Since celebratory postmodernism reduces the idea of social transformation to the notion of accelerated repetition and refuses to distinguish between emancipatory or progressive and regulatory or conservative versions of hybridity, it has been easy for modernist critics to claim for modern critical theory the monopoly of the idea of a better society and normative action. Oppositional postmodernism, on the other hand, radically disputes these monopolies. The idea of a better society is central to it, but contrary to modern critical theory, it conceives of socialism as a radical democratic aspiration, one among other possible futures, neither inevitable nor ever to be fully accomplished. It also claims a normativity that both posits sides and establishes criteria to choose among them. However, contrary to modern critical theory, oppositional postmodernism conceives of such normativity as being constructed from bottom up and in a participatory and multicultural fashion. Given the crisis of modern critical theory, in spite of Habermas's brilliant tour de force, it is my contention that the antagonism between oppositional and celebratory postmodernism is much more pregnant with political and theoretical consequences than the antagonism between modernism and postmodernism. Unfortunately, the former antagonism has been obfuscated by the latter antagonism due to the awkwardly convergent discourse of reconstructed modernists and hyperdeconstructed postmodernists. Since Darian-Smith does not belong to either camp, I dare to suggest that the critical eye that so neatly defines and distinguishes positions, both modern and postmodern, is probably more complicit, as *compagnon de route*, with the criticized eye than it recognizes.

The Global/Local and Other Hierarchies

The second main issue raised by Darian-Smith concerns the way in which I conceive of the binary global/local, as well as other "modernist" binaries such as North/South, core/periphery. According to my reviewer, on the one hand, I assume such dualisms as a given, as comprising solid distinctions; on the other, I romanticize the local, the South, and the periphery, failing to see that they "are not in some way 'pure' or exempt from moral censure" (Darian-Smith 1998, 115). I shall start by specifying what I mean by globalization. There are today so many definitions of globalization that one would think that defining it is an easy task. In fact, this is not the case. Most definitions present themselves with ease because they are descriptive, thus failing to take into account the social relations that globalization, or rather globalizations, comprise. Moreover, most definitions focus on the economy, that is to say, on the new world economy that has emerged in the

last decades as a consequence of the globalization of the production of goods and services, and of the expansion of financial markets, a process through which the transnational corporations have risen to a new and unprecedented preeminence as international actors.

For my analytical purposes I prefer a definition of globalization that is more sensitive to the social, political, and cultural dimensions. I start from the assumption that what we usually call globalization consists of sets of social relations; as these sets of social relations change, so does globalization. There is no single entity called globalization; there are, rather, globalizations, and we should use the term only in the plural. Any comprehensive concept should always be procedural rather than substantive. On the other hand, if globalizations are bundles of social relations, the latter are bound to involve conflicts, hence, both winners and losers. More often than not, the discourse on globalization is the story of winners as told by the winners. Actually, the victory is apparently so absolute that the defeated end up vanishing from the picture altogether.

Here is my definition of globalization: it is the process by which a given local condition or entity succeeds in expanding its reach over the globe and, by doing so, develops the capacity to designate a rival social condition or entity as local. The most important implications of this definition are the following. First, in the conditions of Western capitalist world system, there is no genuine globalization. What we call globalization is always the successful globalization of a given localism. In other words, there is no global condition for which we cannot find a local root, a specific cultural embeddedness. Indeed, I can think of no entity without such a local grounding. The only possible but improbable candidate would be airport architecture. The second implication is that globalization entails localization. In fact, we live in a world of localization as much as we live in a world of globalization. Therefore, it would be equally correct in analytical terms if we were to define the current situation and our research topics in terms of localization rather than globalization. The reason we prefer globalization is basically because hegemonic scientific discourse tends to prefer the story of the world as told by the winners. Many examples of how globalization entails localization can be given. The English language as lingua franca is one such example. Its expansion as global language has entailed the localization of other potentially global languages, namely, the French language.

Therefore, once a given process of globalization is identified, its full meaning and explanation may not be obtained without considering adjacent processes of relocalization occurring in tandem and intertwined with it. The globalization of the Hollywood star system may involve the ethnicization of the Hindu star system produced by the once-strong Hindu film industry. Similarly, the French or Italian actors of the sixties—from Brigitte Bardot to Alain Delon, from Marcello Mastroianni to Sophia Loren—who

then symbolized the universal way of acting, seem today, when we see their movies again, as rather ethnic or parochially European. What happened was that between then and now, the Hollywoodesque way of acting has managed to globalize itself.

One of the transformations most commonly associated with globalization is time-space compression, that is to say, the social process by which phenomena speed up and spread out across the globe. Though apparently monolithic, this process does combine highly differentiated situations and conditions, and for that reason it cannot be analyzed independently of the power relations that account for the different forms of space and time mobility. On the one hand, there is the transnational capitalist class, really in charge of the time-space compression and capable of turning it to its advantage. On the other hand are the subordinate classes and groups, such as migrant workers and refugees, who are also doing a lot of physical moving but are not at all in control of the time-space compression. Between corporate executives and immigrants and refugees, tourists represent a third mode of production of time-space compression. There are also those who heavily contribute to globalization but who, nonetheless, remain prisoners of their local time-space. The peasants of Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia, by growing coca, contribute decisively to a world drug culture, but they themselves remain as "localized" as ever. Just like the residents of Rio's favelas do, who remain prisoners of the squatter settlement life while their songs and dances are today part of a globalized musical culture.

Finally and still from another perspective, global competence requires sometimes the accentuation of local specificity. Most of the tourist sites today must be highly exotic, vernacular, and traditional in order to become competent enough to enter the market of global tourism.

In order to account for these asymmetries, globalization, as I have suggested, should always be referred to in the plural. In a rather loose sense, we should speak of different modes of production of globalization to account for this diversity. In the book (Santos 1995, 263) I distinguish four modes of production of globalization, which I argue, give rise to four forms of globalization.

I conceive of the global and the local as mutually constituted and dialectically interdependent. As illustrated in the way I distinguish between the modes of production of globalization, my conceptualization is geared to highlighting the power relations that run through this dichotomy. Quite frankly, of all the conceptions of globalization that have been presented in the literature in recent years, the conception I offer in my book is probably the one most concerned with power inequalities and power relations. There is, therefore, no essentialism in my conceptualization of the global/local. Suffice it to note that because I conceive of globalization as the expansion

of a given localism, the local may appear both as dominant and as subordinated.

The global/local constellation is a constellation of moments and vectors of power relations. The elucidation of such relations becomes impossible if one collapses the distinction. Of course, in a trivial sense it may be said that every globalization occurs locally. Whenever I am plugged into the Internet and navigating in cyberspace, I am in my office or my study at home on the street and in the town I live in. However, this tells me little about the social and power relations that make the event possible.

What I have said about the global/local constellation can equally be said about the North/South or core/periphery constellation. Both convey the idea of inequality in the world system, coded in the former in political and cultural terms, and in the latter in economic terms. The examples I gave at the beginning of the previous section to illustrate the unfulfilled promises of modernity suffice to indicate the types of inequalities and power relations highlighted by these constellations. The terms of these constellations have an expansive, symbolic character that underlines and intensifies inequalities and polarizations. As I make it clear in the book (e.g., Santos 1995, 507), I use the South as a metaphor that "signifies the form of human suffering caused by capitalist modernity." This explains why I consider the indigenous peoples as the South of the South (1995, 325).

The sociological content of these constellations has changed over time. For instance, the exponential growth of social inequalities in the North has drawn attention to how much the South as the other of the North is both "outside" and "inside" the North, becoming in the latter case an "internal Third World." Similarly, the core of the world system is today less constituted by individual countries than by hegemonic power structures in suprastate regions. Conversely, the periphery has become so much more heterogeneous that, as I said earlier, the concept of Third World has become questionable.

The inequalities and power relations in the world are, therefore, changing. But they are not disappearing. On the contrary, enough evidence shows that they are being intensified and polarized through ever more powerful mechanisms of social exclusion. In such conditions, what does it amount to, both in analytical and political terms, to claim the collapse of such categories as North/South and core/periphery? In analytical terms, such a claim may risk ignoring the extent to which the vertigo of change manages to wrap up ever more powerful processes of social exclusion in ever more powerful discourses of social inclusion. In political terms, it may run the risk of playing the game of those interested in keeping these two "realities" apart and incommensurable.

The power flows that today produce the conditions that change the hierarchies and inequalities in the world are powerful enough to change the

analytical conditions that would allow us to see in those changes what does not change. In this context, oppositional postmodernism distinguishes itself both from modernism and from celebratory postmodernism by recognizing, against modernism, the depth of the changes underway (the final crisis of the paradigm of modernity), and by insisting, against celebratory postmodernism, on the invariance that persists in, and indeed engenders, the said changes (global capitalism). That is why the emancipatory recon-struction of the changes is premised upon the supercession of the invari-ance, an accomplishment that in the current circumstances can only be aimed at as a utopian aspiration.

In light of this, it should be clear that I do not romanticize the local, the South, or the periphery. I do not romanticize, I take sides. In order to be able to do so, I specify the conditions under which the social processes and struggles conveyed by such concepts may have an emancipatory orientation and meaning. That is why, with this concern in mind, I distinguish the imperial South (the South as a product of empire) and the nonimperial South (Santos 1995, 510). Furthermore, in my analysis of nonstate legal fields, I emphasize that "there is no intrinsic reason why state law should be less despotic or, for that matter, less democratic than nonstate law" (1995, 121). The same concern with specification and concrete analysis is patent in my discussion of Pasargada law, human rights, indigenous peoples strug-gles, ecology, law, modes of production of social power, etc., etc.

My book is about current transformations in epistemological, social, and political constellations of meaning, subjectivities, and practices, as well as about possible paradigmatic transitions. It is also a reflexive book and therefore I try to see myself in transit through the transition I am writing about. The attempt is as mobilizing as it is demanding in analytical and political terms, and never to succeed in full. It is like walking upon the sea without being god, a mixture of swimming and drowning. With her engaged and insightful review, Darian-Smith has helped me to swim a bit further. I am grateful for that.

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