Voyage to Autonomous Knowledge, with Farid Alatas

A conversation with
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1 Doing sociology differently: Critique and construction

Takeo Suzuki (TS): Could you tell us about your first encounter with sociology?

Syed Farid Alatas (FA): I learned about sociology from my father (Syed Hussein Alatas), who was a sociologist. We always had discussions in the house, especially during dinner time, about society and social issues, about social problems, and history. So, I was very familiar with sociological discourse, although I was not introduced to sociology formally until I went to university. I did my undergraduate study at the University of Oregon and graduate work at Johns Hopkins University.

TS: What was your impression of the sociology taught at university? Was it different from your father's talks, or was it familiar?

FA: Much of it was familiar, because whether the sociology is Eurocentric or not, there are similarities in sociological modes of reasoning and in sociological interest in the group. The sociology department at the University of Oregon offered many courses that were quite leftist and paid attention to sociology of the masses. For me this was also very comfortable because my father conducted class analyses connected to the study of ideology (his book *The Myth of the Lazy Native* analyzes colonial ideology and colonial capitalism[1]). I was very familiar and comfortable with Marxist analysis. At the same time, I understood very well the problem of intellectual imperialism and the captive mind,[2] and I could see how the American sociology curriculum was uncritically adopted by scholars outside of the West.

TS: So, you were conscious of this from your student days.

FA: I was conscious of it because of my father. He wrote on the captive mind in the 1970s and was one of the first in the Third World to conceptualize intellectual imperialism (his first essay about this was published in 1969[3]). At that time, very few people spoke about intellectual imperialism. Among those who did were Professor Johan Galtung, a renowned professor of peace studies from Scandinavia, who wrote about scientific colonialism in the 1960s.[4] The Indian journal Seminar also published a special issue on intellectual colonialism in 1968.[5] These familiarized me with the issues.

I attended university in the 1980s and as a young academic in the 1990s, my interest was more the critique of Eurocentrism. But during the last ten years or so, I have become more focused on the construction of alternative discourses—in going beyond the critique to construct new knowledge, new theories, and new concepts.

TS: I can see that change in your works. In the 1990s, you were dealing with the indigenization of knowledge and from around 2000, you began to talk about autonomous knowledge production.

Zenta Nishio (ZN): How did this transition happen? From the outside it looks like a transition, but maybe inside your thinking process these two orientations coexisted?

FA: Yes, it is not really a transition. These are just logical developments.

TS: It is a continuum, right?

FA: That's right. And it is also overlapping. When we study knowledge creation, there is critique and there is construction—critique of Eurocentrism and construction of non-Eurocentric social science. I am still interested in critiquing Eurocentrism, but I am also going more into construction of non-Eurocentric social science. For this, I have focused especially on Ibn Khaldūn's works as an example of non-Eurocentric social science.[6] I have also published some on José Rizal, and plan to do more.[7] This is the construction part. At the same time, I think my critique of Eurocentrism has developed and become more sophisticated. Compared to the way I defined Eurocentrism in the 1990s, today my definition is more nuanced, more sophisticated, more complex. I continue with the critique of Eurocentrism, analyzing the structural context within which Eurocentric knowledge production takes place: intellectual imperialism, academic

1 Alatas, Syed Hussein. 1977. *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and Its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*. London: Frank Cass.

2 "Captive mind" is the concept that Hussein Alatas, father of Farid, used to criticize the uncritical reception and imitation of Western thoughts by non-Western intellectuals (see also note 3).

3 Alatas, Syed Hussein. 1969. "The Captive Mind and Creative Development," in K.B. Madhava, ed., *International Development*, New York: Oceania Publications.

4 Galtung, Johan. 1967. "Scientific Colonialism." *Transition*, 30: 10–15.

5 *Seminar* (1959–) is a monthly opinion journal. Its 112th issue in December 1968 focused on academic colonialism.

6 See for example Alatas, Syed Farid. 2014. *Applying Ibn Khaldūn: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology*. London: Routledge.

7 See for example Alatas, Syed Farid. 2010. "Religion and Reform: Two Exemplars for Autonomous Sociology in the Non-Western Context," in Sujata Patel, *The ISA Handbook of Diverse Sociological Traditions*, London: Sage.

dependency, and academic extractivism. So there is no transition. In the 1990s and early 2000s I was more concerned with the critique of Eurocentrism, and I continue to have that interest. But during the past ten years or so, I have begun to pay more attention to the construction of alternative social sciences.

ZN: Did any specific event or turning point lead to this change?

FA: I do not remember any specific turning point, but I would say that over the last 15 or even 20 years, I began to realize that we were spending too much time critiquing Eurocentrism without constructing alternative knowledge. We speak about alternative knowledge, we speak about the need to create alternative knowledge, but we are not doing it. We are just speaking about it.

TS: Often just in conclusion, right?

FA: Exactly.

TS: I think this is a very important point. Too many scholars, probably, indulge in that critique and do not, or cannot, endeavor to construct alternative ways of doing sociology and doing social sciences.

ZN: When you began to realize this, did you already have Ibn Khaldūn in mind and did you think studying him may lead to an alternative sociology? Did you already have a pathway, so to speak?

FA: Yes, I had been interested in Ibn Khaldūn since I was a student. I began collecting articles and books by and about Ibn Khaldūn, but when I was a student and a young scholar, I had no idea how to construct a Khaldūnian sociology. I believed it could be done, but I had no idea how to go about it. As time went on and I read more and had more discussions with various scholars, I began to realize that we need a kind of structural framework for the construction of the theory.

Are you familiar with George Ritzer? During my masters' degree course, I was a teaching assistant for him at the University of Maryland. He used to speak about the architectonics of sociology, or the underlying structure of social theory.[8] This gave me some idea about how to reconstruct Ibn Khaldūn's social theory for a modern sociology. As I became older, my thinking matured, and I was able to write two books about Ibn Khaldūn.[9] I am now trying to do the same for José Rizal. I am currently writing a paper on the construction of Rizal's theory of colonial society in which I use Ritzer's concept of architectonic.

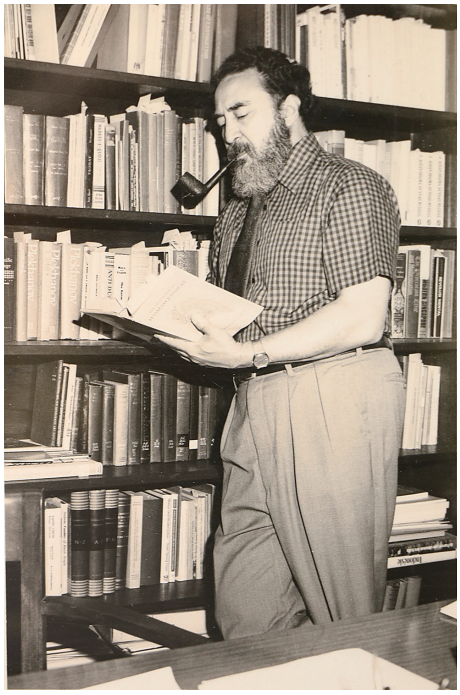
ZN: I listened to your keynote speech at the 2020 Decolonizing Global Studies conference.[10] In it, you talked about how decolonial thought can be discovered in José Rizal. This left quite an impression—although we Filipino area scholars know Rizal very well, we do not view him that way. Your description of the potential science that one can find in Rizal was very eye-opening.

FA: When you read Rizal, you find a critique of colonial knowledge. Rizal did not call it Eurocentrism, but he was critiquing colonial knowledge. On the one hand, he presents a critique of colonial knowledge, and on the other, he offers his own understanding of colonial society. These are the two basic parts of his theory of colonial society.

Rizal examines Filipino history to criticize the Spanish (colonial) understanding of Filipinos as backward and uncivilized. Drawing on the work of German anthropologists,[11] he demonstrates that Filipinos had a progressive, or advanced, civilization, that they controlled trade routes, and that they were involved in shipbuilding and other industries. Having established that before colonial rule the Filipinos had a progressive society, he then argues that the reason for the "backwardness" is not because of Filipino culture or because the Filipinos are uncivilized, but rather it is because of colonization. In this way, his theory of colonial society is a critique of colonial rule.

ZN: In your speech, you quoted this from Rizal: "the miseries of a people without freedom should not be imputed to the people but to their rulers."[12]

FA: Yes. I am currently expanding this speech into a paper, using a detailed structure to reconstruct Rizal's theory. When I



Syed Hussein Alatas in his office (photo courtesy: Syed Farid Alatas)

8 For Ritzer's argument on architectonics, see Ritzer, George. 2001. "The Delineation of an Underlying Architectonic," in his *Explorations in Social Theory: From Metatheorizing to Rationalization*, London: Sage.

9 Alatas, Syed Farid. 2013. *Ibn Khaldun*. Delhi: Oxford University Press; 2014, *Applying Ibn Khaldūn* (note 6).

10 Alatas, Syed Farid, September 17, 2020, "Theorising from Asia," a keynote speech delivered at the international conference "Decolonizing Global Studies: Charting Trends, Mapping Trajectories" (Retrieved December 9, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BejPL5Ex7g).

11 While studying in Germany, Rizal was in contact with Wilhelm Joest (1852–97) and Adolf Bastian (1826–1905, who influenced Franz Boas). See Mojares, Resil B. 2013. "José Rizal in the World of German Anthropology." *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 41(3/4): 163–94. Rizal tried to translate Theodor Waitz's "Die Malaien (The Malays)." For this, see Quibuyen, Floro Cayanan. 2020. *The Future Has an Ancient Heart: In Search of Our Antiguas Buenas Calidades. A Voyage of Rediscovery from José Rizal's (Ignored) Translation of Theodor Waitz's Die Malaien to the Jesuit Missionaries' (Forgotten) Reports on the Chamorros of Marianas*. Quezon: UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies.

12 Rizal, José. 1963. "The Truth for All," in his *Political and Historical Writings*, Manila: National Historical Institute, 31. Farid quotes this phrase in the keynote speech (from 39:43 to 40:21 of the video cited in note 10).

say structure, I mean that every theory, every sociological theory, has a concept of human society. This is a concept of how human societies create institutions and how those institutions dominate people. People create the institutions, but the institutions dominate the people. They do not allow people to develop their potential as humans, and they distort human nature. For example, Marx said that capitalist institutions create alienation. As people become conscious of the problems of the institutions, they revolt against them and there is a struggle for emancipation. Like Marx's social theory, every theory has a main structure. I use such a structure to construct Rizal's theory of society.

TS: In other words, you apply the structural model to Rizal's works because we cannot know directly from them about his sociological thinking. This is very theoretical work.

FA: Yes, because Rizal does not present his thinking as sociology. In fact, he wrote journalistic articles, novels, and poems. Therefore, we need to develop a structure and select the aspects from all his writings and thought that can fit into the structure, to give us a theory.

2 Collaboration: "South-to-South"?

ZN: I imagine collaboration among various scholars and networks is important when trying to construct and reconstruct social theories. Some may pretend as if they are writing articles alone, but in fact other people are always around them: friends, colleagues, and so on. What are your thoughts on collaboration in academia?

FA: Well, I think it is very good to do collaborative work, there is no question about that. Collaborative work is always important. Unfortunately, in my case, I have never found many scholars with whom I could collaborate. An exception is my colleague Vineeta Sinha, with whom I have been teaching a course on sociological theory for many years. From our teaching together and our similar thinking about the problem of Eurocentrism, a natural collaboration emerged, and we decided to co-write a book, *Sociological Theory beyond the Canon*.[13]

I have not found such similar possibilities for collaboration for my work on Ibn Khaldūn or José Rizal. I have not come across people with a similar way of thinking. This is something that I miss. In the Arab world—as you know, Ibn Khaldūn was an Arab thinker—I did not encounter thinkers who would like to approach Ibn Khaldūn in a similar manner. The same is true with the Philippines; it seems that most of the scholars interested in José Rizal are not sociologists or anthropologists, but perhaps more historians.

ZN: It seems that in the Philippines, José Rizal is basically a kind of symbol. How we understand him is the basis of our understanding of Filipino history. This is important, but at the same time quite limited. You try to establish a construct, a new science. This kind of idea is perhaps new for Filipino scholars.

FA: Yes, I remember joking with some Filipinos once that we need to save José Rizal from the Filipinos, because, as you said, he has for many years been only a symbol. But of course, there have been great Filipino works on José Rizal. The writings of scholars like Rey Ileto and Floro Quibuyen are excellent. The works of Resil Mojares and Ramon Guillermo have also been very beneficial. I think their works have been very important in terms of providing ideas for the reconstruction of Rizal's thinking. For example, Quibuyen provides some very important arguments to support the claim that Rizal was not an assimilationist, but rather a revolutionary for Filipino independence.[14] The works of Ileto and Quibuyen also help us to understand the roots of Rizal's thinking in Filipino folklore Christianity and Catholicism.[15] Ramon Guillermo's argument have been very useful in terms of helping me to articulate Rizal's concept of the human being, which for me is the starting point of understanding Rizal's social theory.[16]

I have not been formally collaborating with these scholars, but I am in touch with some of them and I very much benefit from their work, although they are not doing the same thing that I am, and they have different interests and different expertise. I do look forward to continuing contact. In fact, through the National University of Singapore and the University of Malaya, where I am a visiting professor at the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, we are organizing a study trip on José Rizal to Manila in February (2023). Through that trip, we will try to establish stronger ties with our colleagues and with students in the Philippines, especially regarding Rizal studies.

TS: It is common to label that kind of collaboration as South-to-South relations in the Third World.

ZN: People say that South-to-South collaborative relationships are very important, but this sometimes feels like a North idea. Of course, it is sometimes good and sometimes not good. People do not say "North to North collaboration is productive." Productivity depends on the people and what they do.

TS: Yes, collaborative relationships are not produced artificially, but rather begin from a common issue or similar interest. In the book *Decolonizing Sociology*, Ali Meghji critiques your arguments for not engaging in South-to-South collaboration.[17] I feel that this is unfair to some extent, because South-to-South relations,

13 Alatas, Syed Farid and Vineeta Sinha. 2017. *Sociological Theory beyond the Canon*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

14 See for example Quibuyen, Floro Cayanan. 1999. *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony, and Philippine Nationalism*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

15 See for example Ileto, Reynaldo Clemeña. 1979. *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

16 See for example Guillermo, Ramon. 2012. "Moral Forces, Philosophy of History, and War in José Rizal." *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints*, 60(1): 5–32. Guillermo, Ramon. 2009. *Translation & Revolution: A Study of José Rizal's Guillermo Tell*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

17 Meghji, Ali. 2021. *Decolonizing Sociology: An Introduction*, Cambridge; Medford: Polity. Farid's arguments are treated in pp. 86–90 of the book with his father's, and critically commented as they are mainly about how to deal with Western knowledge and do not endeavor to have dialogue with other non-Western traditions.

if there is such a thing, cannot be so readily discovered just from the text.

FA: It is not about South-South collaboration; what is important is collaboration between people with similar minds. In other words, you may be a scholar working in North America, but you may have a South mentality. Who we are looking for is not the scholars belonging to specific university or country, but those with similar mentality and interests.

3 Decolonizing the mind: "Take our language seriously"

ZN: In your 2021 keynote speech at the Bandung international conference on social science, you said that we must take our language seriously.[18] When you said "seriously" and "language," what did you really mean?

FA: After we critique Eurocentrism, we want to construct new knowledge that is not Eurocentric. The core of this is theory building and concept formation, which is where language comes in. Taking language seriously for concept formation means that the words in our language are not just used as terminology, but rather that we see concepts in the words. Words are not simply translated from one language to another. When we look at the words in our language seriously, we see the possibility of social scientific concepts.

To give you an example, in Malay or Indonesian migration studies, scholars use the English word "migration," modified as *migraci*. They simply use the conventional concept of migration. They do not take their own language seriously, because in Malay or Indonesian there are other words that refer to migration, such as the word *marantau*. This word is not just a translation of "migration." Instead, it refers to a specific *type* of migration and hence signifies a different concept of migration. Another word in Malay, *berhijrah*, also refers to migration, but it is different from *marantau*. This is a very simple example of how different words can present different conceptions of the movement of people, different conceptions of migration. This is what I mean by "take the language seriously": look at the meaning of words and see the possibility of concepts.

ZN: This is part of the process of the construction of alternative knowledge.

FA: Yes. I will give another example. In Western social science, the dichotomy of urban and rural is very important because the history of modern Western society is the history of conflict between towns and the countryside. All the revolutions in Europe were a result of the bourgeoisie emerging in the towns and attempting to destroy the feudal model. Town versus countryside. Now, in the Malay world—Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines—the dichotomy is not town and countryside, but land and sea. We had communities that lived on the sea, *Orang Bajau* in Sabah and the Philippines.[19] In other words, the sea was not just a medium of transportation, but also where people lived. These communities provided military support for the rulers on the land. Therefore, the dynamics of history in the Malay world does not mainly concern relations between towns and the countryside, but relations between the sea and the land. This is why we have the associated terminology of land people and sea people, or *Orang Darat* and *Orang Laut*. If you look at the language, then you will find new ideas. This is the point.

4 Knowledge production beyond academic texts

TS: As I mentioned earlier, I think we need to look beyond the outside of academic texts to find collaboration really happening among people. This is related to the topic of decolonization: how to produce decolonial knowledge not only in a text, but also using other ways. We are interested in such communication outside the academic papers.

ZN: Some area studies scholars are not very familiar with decolonial texts, but try to widen the scope of the "decolonial" through various practices. For me, if the decolonial is only limited to the text, it can become narrow. How we can think about decolonial practices outside of the academic text, for example in the films, photography, or other art forms, is also important.

FA: This is a good point. One of my critiques of Eurocentric social science is that it limits the source of knowledge: the method of knowledge construction is limited to the scientific method, meaning induction and deduction. This requires facts, from which you generalize, and then you have a premise or principle from which you make conclusions. The Western tradition, the modern tradition, limits social science to scientific methods. But within premodern methods, from the Christian to the Greek and Islamic traditions, we find knowledge creation through such things as poetics and rhetoric. Poetics is related to art, which means you make a claim about knowledge through imagination, not through induction or deduction.

For example, some write about the Philippine Revolution based on archives and making some generalizations from the facts. This is the scientific method. Others, like Juan Luna, paint a scene of the revolution.[20] This is also knowledge about the revolution, but through imagination, through feeling and emotion. It is knowledge, because knowledge is not only fact; it is not only assembling data and making a conclusion from that. Knowledge can be created through a poem, or through a novel like *Noli Me*

18 Alatas, Syed Farid. 2021, July 7, "Autonomous Social Science: Contemporary Issues in Social Science," a keynote speech delivered at the 1st Bandung international conference on social science (Retrieved December 10, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BkLXUpV8PA&t=973s). Farid says "Part of the problem is that we don't take our language seriously" from 14:20 to 14:23 of the video.

19 A part of a people called as *Sama* or *Bajau* (*Badjau*, *Bajo*) live in Sabah in Malaysia and southern Philippines.

20 Juan Luna (1857–99) was a painter, sculptor, and political activist of the Philippine Revolution.

Tángere.[21] Novel is a method of poetics that uses metaphors, similes, allegory. The novel (*Noli Me Tángere*) gives us information about the conditions of colonial society by allowing us to imagine ourselves through the characters in the novel. Literature, arts, music—these are all means of making knowledge claims that we should use. We should not restrict ourselves to the scientific method.

I use song, music, films, and novels in my teaching. For example, next week in my class we are reading *Noli Me Tángere*. Last week we read Multatuli, a Dutch colonial officer who became critical of colonization and wrote a book that eventually influenced Rizal.[22] We read Multatuli, Rizal, and then *The Myth of the Lazy Native*. Every week my students read a book. But I also ask them to watch movies and listen to music, which we discuss in class. I like 1970s British (not American) rock, because it is progressive, it includes a critique of society. There is a sociological theory *in* the rock music. These are just some of the ways that we can teach.

ZN: For you, then, the important thing is stimulating and expanding imagination, whether that is through music, films, novels, poems, or other means.

FA: Yes, that is right. The imagination through poetics is important for inspiration: to influence and inspire us and our students to be interested in different types of issues, especially those related to the decolonial. Reading novels or watching films, rather than reading theoretical texts, can be very influential.

ZN: How do you distinguish inspiration and imagination?

FA: Imagination works when you put yourself in the place of a character in a novel—you feel you are in their place, and you try to imagine what it is like to be in their time. For example, when you read *Noli Me Tángere*, you imagine what it is like to be the character Ibarra in Manila during the Spanish time. This

is imagination. Inspiration is feeling encouraged to do something. You may be inspired because of imagination. For example, after watching the movie *José Rizal*,[23] I wanted to study Rizal more, because I was inspired.

5 How to teach in a different way: Some prerequisites

ZN: Although teaching is difficult, it must be also an important practice in the construction of alternative knowledge.

TS: What are your thoughts on teaching sociology and sociological theory?

FA: Well, if we want to teach in a decolonial way (let's just say we want to teach in a decolonial way), there are some prerequisites. The first prerequisite is that the professor, or teacher, must be interested in the critique of Eurocentrism and in presenting new knowledge which is decolonial. They must be inspired. And I would say that they must feel shame—meaning they should feel shameful that they do not know their own intellectual tradition and history of ideas, and that they are unable to communicate this to their students. When you have this shame, then you will feel the urge to critique and to create new knowledge.

For example, suppose that you were a Japanese anthropologist who knows Franz Boas and Malinowski, but cannot explain Yanagita's theories.[24] If you do not feel embarrassed about this, then there is nothing to do. But if you feel shame, then it will inspire them to read Yanagita and other thinkers, such as Fei Hsiao-tung[25] or José Rizal. Then your thinking becomes more civilizational, more cosmopolitan, not only American or Western. This is one prerequisite.

Secondly, a professor must have the freedom within their institution. The university, even if it is Eurocentric, should not stop you from teaching in a different way, or interfere. If you want to teach sociological theory or historiography, the head of the department should not tell you that you cannot teach this or you must teach that. It is important that the university gives you enough flexibility and freedom to develop your own syllabi.

If we have these two prerequisites, then the professor can do anything in class. Right? If I was a Japanese sociologist teaching social theory in Japan, I would teach Marx and Weber, but I would also teach Rizal and Yanagita. I would use text, but I would also use films and novels.

21 *Noli Me Tángere* is Rizal's novel first published in Berlin in 1887.
22 Multatuli is the pen name of the Dutch writer Eduard Douwes Dekker (1820–87).
23 A historical drama film directed by Marilou Diaz-Abaya that was released in 1998.
24 Kunio Yanagita (1875–1962) is the founder of modern Japanese folklore studies.
25 Fei Hsiao-tung, or Fei Xiaotong, (1910–2005) was a pioneering Chinese social anthropologist who studied at the London School of Economics under Malinowski.

It is not difficult, but the professor must have the interest. If the professor does not have the interest, then there is nothing else to discuss.

It is also important to mention that education is not just in the classroom, but also outside the classroom. I spend a lot of time with students sitting in cafes and talking for hours. I also have a reading group in my home. Some of the people in the reading group are my students, but some may come from other universities. We read all kinds of things, including Rizal. Once a month we read books and discuss them informally over coffee and cigars. This kind of informal discussion sometimes is more important than discussing in the classroom because it can provide a kind of mutual inspiration through close contact, which you cannot achieve in the classroom. Sometimes you develop a relationship with students for many years, learning from each other. This is very important.

TS: It sounds very nice. I hear that in Japan we had that kind of culture in the past among early anthropologists in Kyoto. Before there was an anthropology department at Kyoto University, or any university in Kyoto, they would gather and discuss together on their own. This was a self-made grassroots collective, without funding and without a department.[26]

ZN: It is quite interesting that you organize reading groups in your home. While the autonomous is sought at the institutional level, at the same time, the autonomous is also emerging in more private or semi-private levels. We should have a broad imagination when it comes to producing autonomous knowledge.

6 Autonomy from hegemonic orientations

TS: Recently there is a trend to "decolonize" everything. Perhaps we must be more careful about how we use the term "decolonize" and what we mean by the term exactly. In this regard, I'm interested in Hountondji's concept of "endogenous."[27] What do you think about his arguments on endogenous knowledge?

FA: It is important. Raewyn Connell often refers to him in her book *Southern Theory*.[28]

TS: Yes. Is "endogenous" different from what you think by the term "decolonial"?

FA: No. Well, in the 1970s, (in knowledge production) people did not really use the word "decolonization." They spoke about "indigenization" of knowledge and "endogenous" knowledge. "Indigenize" means you take concepts from the outside, such as the West, and localize them. "Endogenous" means you take concepts from inside and you make them into social scientific ideas. To decolonize knowledge, both "indigenize" and "endogenous" are necessary.

TS: What do you think of Bhambra and Holmwood's work in *Colonialism and Modern Social Theory*?[29] While it is kind of decolonial, the figures dealt with in the book are still largely limited to Western scholars like Hobbes, Tocqueville, Marx, and Durkheim.

FA: Yes, that is right, but it is important to remember that decolonized social theory does not only involve non-Western scholars. It also involves critiquing Western scholars from a decolonial perspective. In *Sociological Theory beyond the Canon*, my colleague and I also have chapters on Marx and Weber, but from a decolonial perspective.

I would like to make two points about the decolonization of knowledge. First, decolonization should not be limited to diversity. In the US and the UK, people are concerned with the need for proper representation of, for example women or people of color. This is of course important, but it is not what I mean by decolonization. It is not just about representation; it is about ideas and concepts. It is about having a decolonial politics.

Second, while decolonization *is* important, it is not our only problem. Not all the problems in knowledge creation can be reduced to coloniality. This relates to autonomous knowledge. If you speak about decolonization, the problem is Eurocentrism, right? But there are other hegemonic orientations that are not related to coloniality, such as sectarianism, ethnonationalism, or traditionalism. These are also hegemonic orientations that affect knowledge production. But they are not due to colonialism or Eurocentrism.

TS: But they are related to each other, aren't they?

FA: Some of them are. But sectarianism, for example, and the way it affects knowledge production in the Muslim world, predates Eurocentrism and colonialism by centuries. There is a long tradition of sectarian thinking that has nothing to do with colonialism. We must distinguish between those that are entangled with colonialism and those that are independent of colonialism. Take androcentrism—you may solve the Eurocentric problem, but you may still be androcentric.

This is why in the Malay world, we not only speak about decolonization, but we also speak about autonomous knowledge. Knowledge must be autonomous from Eurocentrism—that is the decolonization. But it also must be autonomous from androcentrism, traditionalism, sectarianism, ethnonationalism, and various hegemonic orientations. I have written about this in the *Third World Quarterly*.[30] Eurocentrism is only *one* hegemonic orientation. The decolonization of knowledge is only *part* of the effort to produce autonomous knowledge.

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26 Referring to *Konoe Rondo*, an anthropology study gathering held around Kyoto University from 1964 to at least 1989.

27 Hountondji, Paulin J., ed. (translated by Ayi Kwesi Armah). 1997. *Endogenous Knowledge: Research Trails*, Dakar: CODERSIA.

28 Raewyn Connell. 2007. *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science*. Crows Nest NSW: Allen & Unwin.

29 Bhambra, Gurminder K. and John Holmwood. 2021. *Colonialism and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge; Medford: Polity.

30 Alatas, Syed Farid. 2022. "Knowledge Hegemonies and Autonomous Knowledge." *Third World Quarterly*. DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2022.2124155. This was also the title of the CSEAS special seminar.