

Theory of Social Sciences and Humanities: The West and Beyond (In Progress)

No doubt, this is a highly ambitious undertaking project. And I have a quite modest sense of my capacity to adequately address the issues raised. But I will offer analyses and suggestions that may stimulate and guide others to take this effort further.¹

At its best natural/social science can answer human questions for survival; but the humanities, in questioning scientific answers, not only aims for sustainable survival, but for human and social transformation.

Background

The world continues to become increasingly homogeneous under the impacts of the Western colonial project and the recent intensification of globalized neoliberal capitalism. Both trends can be understood as a continuation of the Western Enlightenment project during the 16th and 17th century which aimed to bring Light into the Darkness. In contemporary parlance this is known as ‘development’ – science, industrialization and consumption based-economy as solution to the human condition. For Enlighteners, the world is being slowly transformed from the darkness to light through the discovery of new knowledge and made publicly available so that everyone can obtain and use it to liberate and emancipate themselves from the Darkness. This knowledge is found through the exercise of empirical observation and arrive at scientific truth based on Reason. Consequently, ‘Have courage to use your own reason!’ become the motto of the Enlightenment (from Immanuel Kant).

This knowledge and its circulation is no longer based on faith and revelation as practiced during the Middle Ages. Religious authority is now frowned upon. Since the 18th century, this secular knowledge is made publicly available through national education project by the nation-state and the project of Encyclopedia. This model of secular education has subsequently been exported to the rest of the world through the missionary impulse to “civilize the colonized countries.”

The massification of this scientific knowledge, since then, has transformed every aspect of human life and society. It has even changed human relations towards nature. This scientific method exercised by human being questions everything outside the “self” who tries to obtain this scientific knowledge. From this perspective, any intrinsic value outside the “self” is no longer true, with individual reason as “self” becoming the sole arbiter of right (from René Descartes, I think, therefore I am). It is from here that the life of Antropo-Euro-Centrism was born; the Modern Age.

This Antropo-Euro-Centric Self sees other human and non-human as having extrinsic value for its “Self”. Therefore, the utilitarian calculation method dictated by social contract of ‘economisation’ or ‘marketisation’ of life and society is applied. This social contract believes that it can avoid the return to the state of nature where man is a wolf to man (from Thomas Hobbes). This single world

¹ David Sprintzen (2009). Critique of Western Philosophy and Social Theory, New York: Palgrave, p.13.

utilitarian system promotes the cult of endless consumption (consumerism) and thus endless production backed by tech-science advancement. At the core of this logic is the growth oriented development, where strong competitive strategies, supported by socio-economic system and institution, either among individuals or nations, is the operating principle (from liberal capitalist economy). This principle is taught and learned from early ages through the existing systems of education and schooling, and these systems are being progressively tightened to focus only on business & entrepreneurship and STEM to produce more marketable products and services.

What are the consequences?

There are multiple consequences derives from this Antropo-Euro-Centric way of organizing life and society. The first set of consequences are environmental: despite United Nation warnings as early as 1972 about an impending environmental crisis², there has been little action taken and now the world stands on the brink of irreparable loss of life and nature. A second set of consequences might be deemed cultural: indigenous philosophical-cultural systems have been nearly wiped out and cut short in their development due to the modernizing education system around the world. The recent internationalization of education in conjunction with the growth of tech-scientism, continues this trend despite the fact that these systems represent resources for constructing an alternative to Western scientific knowledge, structural-cultural hegemony. Around the globe there is an intensive cutting back of any social or cultural education programs not directly linked to tech-science and business entrepreneurship, programs which ultimately take markets and consumption or practical value as the referent point. The third set of consequences are structural: growing inequality in term socio-economic conditions between Western and non-Western countries and within the country due to the adaptation of the intrinsic value of the Self in both Western and non-Western countries. Finally, a common phenomenon is observed worldwide, ‘a growing priority on the Self, but one destined to live a life of loneliness (or to use a Japanese word, a ‘modern hermit’).

Is there any awareness?

Philosophically, within Europe there is still an on-going debate whether its tradition of thinking is no homogeneous or pluralistic. The critique of this Antropo-Euro-Centric Self could be found among thinkers even during Enlightenment Age and throughout modern period. However, the critique actually started to be popularized somewhere during the World War and , then gaining greater currency at the end of World War II. Water Mignolo argues that up until now, there are three types of critique to enlightenment and modernization project. One type is internal to the history of Europe itself and in that sense these premises are still an Euro-centered critique of enlightenment and modernization project (for example, psychoanalysis, neo-Marxism, poststructuralism, postmodernity), and the other two types emerged from non-European histories entangled with Western modernity. One of them focuses on coloniality (such as postcoloniality, decoloniality), and the other on the idea of Western civilization itself (for example, dewesternization, Occidentosis). Postmodernity originated in Europe but dispersed around the world. Decoloniality originated among Third World countries after the Bandung Conference in 1955, and also dispersed all over the world. Dewesternization originated in East Asia, especially in Japan, but the dewesternizing argument is not widely present all overall the world as in the case

² This intrinsic value of nature is defended by Rolston (1986), Callicott (1989), and also by the Earth Charter (1992).

of Post-modernism and Post-colonialism or decolonialism. However, it is important to note that there is also a school of thoughts and scholars who defend the project of the Enlightenment, something call for the pursuit of an ‘unfinished’ project of Enlightenment and modernity. On that ground Jürgen Habermas has defended the critical principles of the Enlightenment. If the movement failed, he maintains, it was not because of them, but because they were abandoned before having had the time to prove their effectiveness³.

Focus of the Course

- Culture – human studies – culturronics – transformation of culture⁴
- Society – social sciences – politics, economic and ethics – transformation of society
- Nature – natural sciences – technology – transformation of nature
- Education – transmission and generation of (new) knowledge – transformation of human thinking

Human: Humanities Studies, in Western context, was traditionally classified as classical studies. These studies stood in opposition to divinity studies. Today, it is more common to contrast humanities with the natural and even social sciences studies due its critical and speculative approach rather than conventional empirical approaches of scientific inquiry. In its original meaning of Ancient Greek and Rome, Humanities Studies refers to “the way of doing”, but this notion was changed since the Renaissance, which treated Humanities Studies as subjects and “the way of doing” must follow scientific knowledge, hence Human Science. The question here then what is are the human issues that we are facing today after we follow “scientific way of doing” thing advocated by Enlightenment project more than 500 years.

Society: Social Sciences, in Western context, are concerned with society and the relationships among individuals within a society. Today, the term mainly refers to Sociology, a discipline that pursued a science of society by adopting a natural scientific approach to study society (positivism). Following the spirit of Enlightenment, society must also progress as science progresses. This progression has been referred to currently as social development backed by tech-sciences which is empirical and pragmatic foundations for society for the material era facilitated by the industrial production and marketization of the economy. It is through this material foundation of society that traditional relationships among individuals within a society has been transformed. The question here is what are the social issues that we are facing today after we follow the material foundation of society advocated by Enlightenment project more than 500 years.

Nature: Natural Sciences as we know today is the descendant of the Scientific Revolution of the 17th Century that interprets the natural world according to the empirical and abstract reasoning, and is purportedly not based on religious or transcendent/cosmological worldview. From this belief in mastering the nature, Enlightened human treats nature as raw materials and unlimited source of resources for industrial productions to serve human consumptions

³ Louis Dupre (2004). *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p.10.

⁴ Adopted from Mikhail Epstein (2012). *The Transformative Humanities: A Manifesto*. New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, p.12.

regulated by market economy. The behavior that is considered as the attempt to maximizing human pleasure/leisure. The question is here is whether there are any consequences of the treatment of nature as having a purely extrinsic value for human being?

Education: National education system in 18th century was put in place not only to re-socialize every aspect of human relation and interaction, but also sought to liberate the human mind from religious dogmas and encourage skepticism, tolerance, and critical thinking in order to achieve the goal of Enlightenment project. Currently, national education system have carried on this spirit with the emphasis on STEM and business and entrepreneurship. The whole purpose is to make education an engine of growth and national development through increasing material consumption and physical infrastructure expansion by exploiting the natural world. The question here is that what does the humanities look like within this model of education?

Objectives of the course

The Objectives of this course is four, although the primary elaboration focuses mainly on Objective 2 and Objective 3. Objective 1 will be presented in the form of the historical background while the Objective 4 will be presented in the form of ‘rough outline’ and as an ongoing experimentation in the search for potential contribution to the broader research project entitled “Mapping Cambodia: Retracing Khmer (Religio) Philosophical Thought”.

The fourth fold objectives are:

Objective 1: aiming to provide students with background knowledge on humanities and social sciences looking from its origination in the West and how these ideas have traveled to other part of the world and have become the globally dominant symbolic system

Objective 2: aiming to provide an overview of the critique of the Western project from within and where it seeks to go?

Objective 3: aiming to provide an overview of the critique of the Western project from outside, especially from Japanese perspective and where to?

Objective 4: aiming to explore whether there could be a Cambodian approach to humanities and social sciences that can replace the dominance of current Western project in Cambodia.

The detail focus of each objective

Objectives 1: aiming to provide students with background knowledge on humanities and social sciences looking from its origination in the West and how these ideas have traveled to other part of the world and have become the globally dominant symbolic system.

To achieve this objective, we will critically look at the Western concept and theory of humanities and social sciences and the movement of this concept and theory out from the West to other part of the world through answering to the following key questions:

Where did the Western concept and theory of Humanities and social sciences come from?

Modernity

Modernity is a subject of humanities and social sciences, as well as a historical period followed by Renaissance (The age of reason and science) and Enlightenment (a unitary view of truth and nature as fundamentally knowable and controllable). While many Enlightened people had radically different philosophical positions, they all shared the promise of cleaning out both mind and society, brushing away the cobwebs of metaphysics, mythical thought, feudal corporatism, and the religious authority. Robert Wokler argues that there was an Enlightenment project determined not only to interpret the world but to change it⁵. The result of this project has brought the world into the Modernity. The concept of 'Modernity' is often associated with the secular, rational and progressive aspects of the Enlightenment, more specifically with the growing status of secular public opinion and scientific knowledge. This part of the course will examine these aspects of modernity such as modern man (selfhood), modern society (politics, economics, ethics), modern project and nature, and finally modern education.

Modern Man: Selfhood

Core reading materials

- ✓ Louis Dupre (2004). *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 3: A new sense of selfhood, pp. 45-77.
- ✓ Nicholas Capaldi (1998). *The Enlightenment Project in the Analytic Conversation*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Chapter 7: Analytic Philosophical psychology, pp. 245-291.

Supplementary material (optional, recommended)

- ✓ Charles Taylor (2001). *Sources of the Self: The making of modern identity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Modern Society: Politics, economic and ethics

Core reading materials

⁵ As quoted in Robert Alan Sparling (2011). *Johann Georg Hamann and the Enlightenment Project*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p.13.

- ✓ Louis Dupre (2004). *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 6: The Origin of Modern Social Theories, pp.153-186.
- ✓ Nicholas Capaldi (1998). *The Enlightenment Project in the Analytic Conversation*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, Chapter 10: Analytic Social and Political Philosophy, pp.349-392.
- ✓ Larry Neal and Jeffrey G. Williamson (Eds) (2014). *The Rise of Capitalism: From Ancient Origins to 1848*, Vol 1, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Chapter 12: The formation of states and transitions to modern economies: England, Europe, and Asia compared (by Patrick Karl O'brien), pp.357-402; Chapter 16: British and European industrialization (by C. Knick Harley), pp.491-532; Chapter 18: The political economy of rising capitalism (by Jose´ Lui´s Cardoso), pp.574-599.
- ✓ Louis Dupre (2004). *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 5: The moral crisis, pp.112-152.
- ✓ Nicholas Capaldi (1998). *The Enlightenment Project in the Analytic Conversation*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Chapter 9: Analytic ethics, pp.317-348.

Modern Project and Natural World

Core reading materials

- ✓ John C. McCarthy (Ed.) (1998). *Modern Enlightenment and the Rule of Reason*, Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press. Chapter 2: Bacon's reform of nature (by Richard Kennington), pp.40-54.
- ✓ Stipe Grgas and Svend Erik Larsen (eds). *A Discursive Strategy in Modern European Thought*, Retrieved from <http://www.zbi.ee/~kalevi/larsen.htm#A11>, access on 21,9,2019.

Modern Educational Program

Core reading materials

- ✓ Norman Geras and Robert Wokler (Eds) (2000). *The Enlightenment and Modernity*, Houndmills, Macmillan Press LTD. Part I: Interpreting enlightenment principles, Chapter 2: Education Can Do All (by Geraint Parry), pp.25-49.
- ✓ Denis Lawton and Peter Gordon (2002). *A history of Western Educational Ideas*, London: Woburn Press. Chapter 8: The Eighteenth Century, The Enlightenment, pp.87-100; Chapter 10: Industrialism, Nationalism and the Cult of Efficiency, pp.115-132.

How was this model exported to the rest of the world? (Colonialism)

Colonialism and coloniality/Modernity

In principle, colonialism is the policy or action of a nation that seeks to extend or retain its authority/superior over other people or territories generally, usually with the aim of extending the economic interests of the metropolis. Though there are different type of colonialism such as Settler

colonialism, Exploitation colonialism, Surrogate colonialism, the policy or action of colonialism over colonies is nothing more than the nature of modernity as discussed earlier. Historically, colonialism ended roughly around in 1975 when majority of the colonies gained independence. But what colonialism left for colonies is its coloniality which later Walter Mignolo argues it is two sides of the same coin along with modernity. Thus, this part of the course will examine these aspects of modernity/coloniality that transported and implanted in the colonies.

Core reading materials

- ✓ Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (Eds) (2010). *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, London: Routledge. Chapter I: The Emergence of An-Other-Paradigm, Part 2: Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality (by Aníbal Quijano), pp.22-32; Chapter II: (De)Colonization of Knowledges and of Beings, Part 6: Development of a concept (by Nelson Maldonado-Torres), pp.94-124.

Colonized Higher Educational Program and a new selfhood

Core reading materials

- ✓ Water Ruegg (Ed.) (2004). *A history of the University in Europe, Vol. III*, New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6: The diffusion of European Models outside Europe (by Edward Shils and John Roberts), pp.163-230.

Supplementary Text (optional, recommended)

- ✓ Gail P. Kelly and Philip G. Altbach (Eds.) (1984). *Education and the Colonial Experience*. New Brunswick: Transaction. Introduction: The Four Faces of Colonialism, (Kelly, Gail P. and Philip G. Altbach), pp.1-5.

Colonized Society: Politics, ethics and economic

Core reading materials

- ✓ Larry Neal and Jeffrey G. Williamson (Eds) (2014). *The Rise of Capitalism: From Ancient Origins to 1848, Vol 2*, Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 10: Capitalism and the colonies (by Gareth Austin), pp.301-347.
- ✓ Gilbert Rist (2008). *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (third ed). Translated by Patrick Camiller, London: Zed Books. Chapter 2: Metamorphoses of a Western Myth, What the Metaphor Implies, Landmarks in the Western View of History, pp.25-46; Chapter 3: The making of the World System: Colonization, The League of Nations and the Mandate System, pp.47-68.

Supplementary Text (optional, recommended)

- ✓ Martin J. Murray (1980). *The Development of Capitalism in Colonial Indochina (1870–1940)*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- ✓ John Tully (2002). *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia, 1863–1953*. Lanham, MD: University Press.

Objective 2: aiming to provide an overview of the critique of the Western project from within and where to?

To achieve this objective, we will critically look at the common critiques of concepts and theories of Western humanities and social sciences within Europe and examine in what direction these critiques offer.

Post-colonial discourse

Since the formal occupying foreign territory is virtually ended and the descendent of colonized peoples lives everywhere, the whole world can be understood to be in the condition of post-colonialism, although when is the exact date of the departure from colonialism is debatable; whether we take 18th, 19th and toward the end of the 20th century as the break point (America, Australia, New Zealand, Canada to Brunei in 1984). However, there are three core issues here. The first issue is that how far are we in term of departing from coloniality/modernity mentality, when these old independent countries even the old colonial masters are considered to carry forward the old coloniality mentality into the new form of neo-colonialism. Second, the continuation of the older form of coloniality/modernity mentality is also carried out within the poor developing countries too, a phenomenon known as internal-colonialism (or uneven development after the end of formal colonialism). Thirdly, though at a different degree, the old coloniality/modernity mentality still persist within the former colonizer. In this sense, the postcolonial societies around the globe are not the same. They differ from one another according to the economic, social, cultural, historical and political context. So, what are we really talking about when we refers to post-colonial discourse?

Is the reality of contemporary society still a modernity? If so, how has this model been renewed and revamped under neoliberal globalization, a form of neocolonialism?

Neoliberal globalization

The politics of Cold War (1947-1991) did not alter the core of ideas of modernity, but actually fueled the intensification of the scientism as the communist and liberal block utilized the advancement of science and technology, especially in military field as a way to demonstrate their power to win the war. Leaving aside the military aspect, the issue during the Cold War is the weighing between “the market and the state” to solve the long unsolved modern dilemma “individual happiness, equality and social progress”. By earlier 1990s when the Berlin war and former USSR collapsed, the state lost the war to the market, thus giving life to the new world order ruled by neoliberalism where economic growth is at the heart of its development goal. David Sprintzen notes that “The ever-growing economy demanding increasing consumption and material well-being. It has celebrated the growth of consumption, even advocating the notion of an individual’s “entitlement” to whatever would satisfy his or her needs (actually fulfills his/her desires [my addition]). This “morality” is doctrinally enshrined in the economist’s assertion that tastes are subjective, and all are equally worthy of being satisfied. “Objectively,” one can only “value” a taste by the willingness of individuals to expend their hard-earned money by paying the market-determined price”⁶. In this sense, the market of the capitalism become the sole agent to sell

⁶ David Sprintzen (2009). Critique of Western Philosophy and Social Theory, New York: Palgrave, p.43.

happiness⁷ to whoever can/wants to buy it. Science and technology are treated as the means to exploit the nature and to produce goods available at the market price to be purchased and consumed. This is the legacy of modernity in which reality had ceased to be intrinsically intelligible. Henceforth meaning was no longer embedded in the nature of things: it had to be imposed by the human mind⁸; a core idea of enlightenment project. It is important to note that the intensification of regionalization and globalization since 1990s bring the market of capitalism of multi-national corporates dominated by the West closer to people around the globe. During this period, we also notice the facilitation of the growth of the local capitalist by the global capitalism.

Core reading materials

- ✓ Pundy Pillay (2011). *Higher education and economic development: literature review*. Wynberg: CHET.
- ✓ Luc E. Weber and James J. Duderstadt (eds) (2008). *The Globalization of Higher Education*. London: Economica, Glion colloquium Series No 5.
- ✓ Ozay Mehmet (2002). *Westernizing the Third World: The Eurocentricity of economic development theories* (2nd Ed), London: Thaylor & Francis. Chapter 1: Westernizing the third world, pp.1-32.

The situation of the world today

- ✓ Felipe Fernandez-Armesto (ed) (2019). *The Oxford Illustrated history of the world*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Part 5: The great acceleration: Accelerating change in a warming world, 1815-2008, pp.337-433.
- ✓ Gilbert Rist (2008). *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (3rd ed). Translated by Patrick Camiller, London: Zed Books. Chapter 10: The Environment, or the New Nature of 'Development', pp.171-196.
- ✓ Ozay Mehmet (2002). *Westernizing the Third World: The Eurocentricity of economic development theories* (2nd Ed), London: Thaylor & Francis. Chapter 6: The latest state of the art: economic development theorizing since 1980, pp.121-246.

Are we all, especially among academia, in agreement with this Western concept and theory? What have been the critiques of this Western story? How have the West's Other's understood the challenge to be?

Within the West, there is a growing awareness of the challenges faced by contemporary way of organizing society as well as the way of life. Two critical approaches are advocated among academic community in the West, post-modernism to get rid of modernity and deepening modernity to salvage the promise of modernity.

Post-modernism is the movement since the mid-20th century defined broadly as a departure from the modernity, often questioning or even rejecting the grand designed narrative and ideology

⁷ Following the utilitarianism, happiness means the fulfillment/maximization of one's own pleasure and minimization of one's own pain.

⁸ Louis Dupre (2004). *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp.2-3.

of modernism derived from the enlightenment rationality. Generally, this critique, using psychoanalysis, neo-Marxism and post-structuralism, aims to address the issue of race, class, gender (politico-economic relation) and recently environmental issue or addressing the idea of selfhood and departure from absolute universalism to relativism. Post-modernism helped inspire parallel movements such as post-colonialism (Said) and later developments in feminism. Using post-modern insights about knowledge and language, both of these movements have recently emerged as powerful critiques of the Western Enlightenment project.

It is important to note that while the critique of the West from within is going on, there is also a counter-movement to this critique. This movement represented by Habermas calls for a deepening Western humanities and social sciences with adjustment. Working hand in hand with the scientism group, this group believes that with the advancement and innovation of science and technology require the adjustment of political and economic arrangements, specifically preventing the capture of the political realm by instrumental rationality. These thinkers believe the original mission of the Project on Modernity will be achieved through such action, thus achieving equality, liberty, emancipation and progress. This approach is also adopted by Christian secular capitalists (modern missionary) who denies the existence of natural material limits and promotes unlimited material wants vs. limited natural material resources with the support from techno-scientists who believe in techno-fixes (techno-optimism) through human scientific rationality. To have more products timely and diversely to consume an indicator of development, the only solution, they believe, is to deepening STEM education, promote robot, Artificial Intelligent, Industrial 4.0, and the Internet of Things.

Core reading materials

- ✓ Robert J. C. Young (2003). *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ✓ Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (Eds) (2010). *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, London: Routledge. Chapter II: (De)Colonization of Knowledges and of Beings, part 7, decolonization and the question of subjectivity: Gender, race, and binary thinking (by Freya Schiwy), pp.125-148.
- ✓ Val Plumwood (1993). *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, London, Routledge.
- ✓ Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 1994, *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, New York: Colombia University Press.
- ✓ Samuel Fleischacker (2013). *What is Enlightenment?*, Oxon: Routledge. Part 1: Kant's enlightenment pp.9-40; Part 6: Kantian enlightenment today, pp. 157-193.
- ✓ Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves and Seyla Benhabib (1997). *Habermas and the unfinished project of modernity: Critical essays on the philosophical discourse of modernity*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp.38-35.

Supplementary Text (optional, recommended)

- ✓ Cascardi, Anthony (1999). *Consequences of Enlightenment*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- ✓ David Sprintzen (2009). *Critique of Western Philosophy and Social Theory*, New York: Palgrave.

Objective 3: aiming to provide an overview of the critique of the Western project from outside and where to?

To achieve this objective, we will critically look at the common critiques of concepts and theories of Western humanities and social sciences found outside Europe and examine *what solutions have been offered by these critiques*. According to Walter D. Mignolo, there are two streams of the critique of the Western project outside the West. One is the decoloniality project, though originated among Third World countries, it dispersed all over the world. The reason why the decoloniality project can easily dispersed all over the world is simple that is because it still uses colonial language; English, French, Spanish or Portuguese. The other is the Dewesternization originated in East Asia, especially Japan, but the dewesternizing argument is not widely present or exist in the marginal space in other parts of the world due to the particular nature of language that it uses.

Beyond post-colonial discourse, how has Non-Western country deal with this situation?

De-colonialism and its project

Though the formal and explicit form of colonization ended, neo-colonialism/Eurocentricism continues to persist. Scholars from European academic community argues that there is a need to delinking from Western centricism, challenge the very fundamental assumptions of Western knowledge, think from non-Western view, a movement call decolonialism. The core areas to be addressed is the politico-economic power relation between the North and the South.

Core reading

- ✓ Walter D. Mignolo (2011). *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- ✓ Raewyn Connell, 2007, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Supplementary Text (optional, recommended)

- ✓ Talal Asad (2003). *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Beyond explicit critiques of the Western story, how have non-Western thinkers dealt with this situation? What creative work has been done?

De-westernization

Addressing the politico-economic power relation between the North and the South with the ultimately aim to get an equal power relation does not mean that it will recontent the way we are doing thing or seeing reality from a rather different perspective. Actually, the practice since the decolonization have been started over 200 years ago in most cases end up with either a neocolonialism or internal colonialism. Since the post-modernism in Europe also does not lead to anywhere beyond relativism, we must explore different way to conceptualize human and social issues. Addressing the current cultural way of living and organizing society as a capital or

consumer accumulation and the adaptation of the scientific and technological practices, resource efficiency discourse (deepening modernity) and the absolute relativist approach toward cultural way of living, humanity should turn toward a prudential type of reasoning about what is conducive to the good life based around human flourishing concept. The evolution of Japanese concept and theory derived not only from its readjustment of Western knowledge, but from its seeing ‘reality’ of the world differently. Japan takes that reality as the basis for their humanities, social sciences, and education.

Main reading

- ✓ Ken Kawasaki (2002). A Cross-Cultural Comparison of English and Japanese Linguistic Assumptions Influencing Pupil? Learning of Science, <http://www.compilerpress.ca/Competitiveness/Anno/Anno%20Kawasaki%20A%20Cross-Cultural%20Comparison%20CIE%202002.htm> ***
- ✓ Thomas P. Kasulis (2002). *Intimacy and Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural differences*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press. ***
- ✓ Richard E. Nisbett (2003). *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently . . . and Why*, New York, The Free Press.
- ✓ Angel, Leonard (1994). *Enlightenment East and West*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- ✓ James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis and John C. Maraldo, 2011, *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, Honolulu: Hawaii University Press.
- ✓ Iris C. Rotberg (Ed) (2010). *Balancing Change and Tradition in Global Education Reform* (2nd Ed), Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Education. Chapter 10, Japan: *Encouraging Individualism, Maintaining Community Values* by Ryo Watanabe
- ✓ Frans B. M. de Waal (2002). *Silent invasion: Imanishi’s primatology and cultural bias in science*,
- ✓ Walter D. Mignolo (2011). *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham: Duke University Press. (The Roads to the Future: Rewesternization, Dewesternization, and Decoloniality)

Objectives 4: aiming to explore whether there could be a Cambodian approach to humanities and social sciences that can replace the dominance of current Western project in Cambodia.

The first three objectives aim to introduce approaches to humanities and social sciences that can inspire Cambodia's students to create a new sort of philosophical-theoretical-historical-sociological knowledge, one that will eventually replace/reorient the dominance of current Western knowledge, STEM, and the logic of the market in Cambodia. This project requires contemplation at two levels: structural and cultural.

1. Higher Education and Social Sciences and Humanities: Structural level

How has the structure of Cambodian learning evolved over the past 30 years?

Has the aim been to create the Western story in Cambodia? Or to help Cambodia to develop its indigenous philosophical-cultural traditions?

What we need to do is to construct a social order that gives us a sense of place and that sustains a sense of the meaningfulness of our personal effort not in isolation based on individualism, but on a community based agreed value. The dilemma that is well summarized in the following message. At the individual level, the commitment, sacrifice, love, and death all confront modern/globalized individualism with apparently insurmountable challenges that place contemporary society on grounds ever more uncertain, confronting an ever more desperate future. At the societal level, despite the establishment of the regional and international organization and United Nations special agencies, all societies continues their struggle to obtain maximum economic well-being and political security for their citizens.⁹ The core issue here how their education program, especially at the tertiary level addressing these issues.

Reading materials

- ✓ Leang Un & Say Sok (2018). “Higher Education Governance in Cambodia: An update”, in Handbook of Internationalization of Higher Education. Berlin: DUZ Academic Publishers.
- ✓ Leang Un & Say Sok (in progress). “(Higher) Education Policy and Project Intervention in Cambodia: Its Development Discourse”, in Education in Cambodia: from Year Zero towards International Standards, in coming publication of Springer.
- ✓ Leang Un & Lars Boomsma (2019). ‘Higher Education’ and ‘Development’: The World Bank in Cambodia. HESB, Issue 5, February 2019, the Head Foundation.
- ✓ Leang Un, Lars Boomsma & Say Sok (2018). Higher Education Reform in Cambodia since 1990s: How or What?, THink, October 2018, the Head Foundation Digest.

⁹ Thomas R. McFaul (2010). The Future of Truth and Freedom in the Global Village: Modernism and the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century, Santa Barbara: ABC- CLIO, LLC, p.159.

2. Attempts to date in Cambodia to see reality differently from Western culturally derived concepts and theories: Cultural level

How have Cambodian intellectuals, scholars, and thinkers tried to build an alternative to the Western story? What have been the challenges?

How might Cambodia's indigenous philosophical-cultural systems be recovered, rebuilt, and be placed on the path to continual development and innovation?

How might this philosophical-cultural project later come to have impact on the structural level? What would it take for this rebuilt cultural layer to influence actual practices in society, schools, and beyond?

At the cultural level, I believe that we must return to our tradition, something that is transcendent and immutable principle. When we lose this aspect we just have discourse, argumentation and fragmentation as in the case of post-modernism in the West. However this does not mean that this transcendent aspect is absolute, it can apply to the particular time and space and produce what we call an identity of a particular tradition that evolves overtime. But what remains correct is that we need a mythology which never ceases to perform self-transformation and self-reflection, quasi internal self-enlightenment.

Reading materials

- ✓ Rolanda M. Gripaldo (2005). Cambodian intellectual development through philosophy, a paper presented during the international conference on Khmer Studies, Phnom Penh, Royal university of Phnom Penh, 2005.
- ✓ Gally-Pap perhaps (2007). Reconstructing the Cambodian polity: Buddhism, kingship and the quest for legitimacy, pp.71-103, in Buddhism, Power and Political Order, Ian Harris (Ed). London: Routledge.
- ✓ Penny Edwards (2007). Cambodia; The cultivation of a nation, 1860-1945. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- ✚ Mapping Cambodia: Retracing Khmer (Religio) Philosophical Thoughts (Un Leang, on-going project)