

Crisis and Criticism: The Predicament of Global Modernity*

I will make a case in this discussion for closer attention to demands on criticism thrown up by current global circumstances that are yet to be recognized in mainstream critical practice for their urgent significance. That we are living through a time of unprecedented crisis is widely acknowledged. What is less certain is whether this crisis is one of the crises endemic to the capitalist world system, an outcome of systemic transformations at work that suggest an impending hegemonic shift (with the People's Republic of China [PRC] as the up-and-coming claimant), or a terminal crisis that signals the collapse of life as we know it as unbridled capitalist development in its various competing versions runs up against the ecological limitations of the earth.

At the same time, the social and geo-cultural issues that have dynamized criticism for the past half century seem presently to have reached a dead-end. The drift to social division, political authoritarianism and cultural fragmentation no doubt is responsible for the apparent sense of helplessness that has become the refrain of critical work, and needs to frame discussion of the crisis of criticism. But there is also an urgent need to attend to the part played in this crisis by the failure of critical practice to update its concerns in response to changing social and global circumstances. These circumstances call for reconsideration of the conceptual and political orientations that inspired criticism in its origins in the 1960s, but are most striking presently for their seeming helplessness if not irrelevance in the face of a new global situation.

Of special interest in my discussion are issues of culture and cultural difference at both national and global levels. The relationship between culture and criticism has been a staple for the last two decades both of postcolonial criticism and geopolitical thinking, provoked by questions pertaining to the past and present status of the hegemony of Euromodernity and

Eurocentric ways of thinking. Ongoing reconfiguration of power relations globally, and emergent claims to alternative “centrism’s” (and “alternative modernities”), suggest a need to recast the terms of this relationship: whether or not criticism, if it is to remain meaningful, needs to reconsider some of the intellectual and ideological impulses that have driven it since the upheavals of the 1960s. Any such consideration raises delicate political questions, which may be one fundamental reason for the reluctance to confront them. Criticism, if it is to be worthy of the name, needs to face up to these problems lest it in its silence over these questions it degenerates into complicity with emergent configurations of political power, social oppression, and cultural obscurantism.

Central to the question of criticism are the problematic legacies of the Enlightenment as the cultural hallmark of Euromodernity, especially the issue of universalism. The Enlightenment has been credited with the achievements of Euromodernity. It also has been condemned for the latter’s destructive consequences. Its claims to universality have drawn much criticism in recent years along with the challenges to Euromodernity. As the Enlightenment also has been endowed with seminal significance as the fountainhead of critical practice, the appearance of alternative claims on modernity throws up significant questions for criticism. I take up some of these questions below.

It is not my intention here to engage in an abstract discussion of what may constitute “criticism,” which already has been taken up by a long line of thinkers but also because too much preoccupation with abstraction often ends up in a theoretical autism that afflicts much critical writing that appears lost in the maze of its own theoretical elaborations. Suffice it to say that I understand criticism not in the routine professionalized and politically constrained sense that it appears in our educational system(as in the promise of cultivating “critical thinking”—often not

very critical in what it excludes), but radical critical work that seeks to go “to the root” of things, pursues inquiry into foundations and totalities, into the very categories of analysis we deploy to grasp and explain the conditions of our existence, and throws it all back in the face of power to demand a better world. Critical work in any meaningful sense needs to be transformative in its consequences, not just in exploring more efficient functioning of the existing system but in opening its social and political assumptions to questioning and change. It seems increasingly that there is no promise on the horizon of all the things criticism seeks to achieve (including “critical thinking”), which raises painful questions about the meaning of radical criticism and what is to be expected of its further pursuit. And yet, this makes criticism not less but all the more urgent against a status quo whose promise of a bright future secured by unencumbered markets and technological innovation are not sufficient to cover over the deepening marginalization if not the threat of actual extinction of ever greater numbers of people around the world--dangers widely recognized even by those who preside over the existing system, as well as those who are responsible for its ideological sustenance.¹

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I would like to enter my discussion through a scandalous incident that took place at the recent 20th biennial meeting of the European Association of Chinese Studies (EACS). The meeting this year, hosted by the venerable universities of Minho and Coimbra in Portugal, was devoted to the exploration of the development of China studies, entitled, “From the origins of Sinology to current interdisciplinary research approaches: Bridging the past and future of Chinese Studies.” When they received their conference programs, the participants discovered that two pages had been torn out of the programs by the organizers, apparently at the insistence of Mme. Xu Lin, Director-General of the Hanban, the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) state

organ in charge of the so-called Confucius Institutes, who in 2009 was appointed counselor to the State Council (the cabinet) with vice-ministerial rank, presumably in recognition of her contribution to the propaganda goals of the state. The pages torn out related to the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation in Taiwan, which long had sponsored the EACS and, according to a report in a Taiwanese newspaper, donated 650, 000 Taiwanese yuan (around US\$ 22,000) to this year's meeting.² EACS investigation of the incident also found that, according to Mme. Xu, some of the abstracts in the program "were contrary to Chinese regulations, and issued a mandatory request that mention of the support of the CCSP [Confucius China Studies Program] be removed from the Conference Abstracts. She was also annoyed at what she considered to be the limited extent of the Confucius Institute publicity and disliked the CCKF [Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation] self-presentation."³

This act of academic vandalism has been met with dismay, at least among those who are still capable of being shocked at the intrusion of PRC propaganda organs into the very institutional structures of academic work. If I may share with you responses from distinguished colleagues who must remain nameless since I do not have their permission to cite them by name:

1) A Danish historian who long has been involved with EACS: "Indeed, what did the organizers of the conference and the EACS have in mind when accepting such a move? It is a very hot summer in Europe, but surely no excuse for not fighting Hanban considering the very long relationship between the EACS and the CCK Foundation. As far as I have understood the CCK Foundation did not even have any representatives present at the conference! Well, it is difficult in Europe in general fighting back Hanban's Confucius Institutes..."

2) A distinguished historian of religion in China from the University of Paris, presently teaching in Hong Kong: "Europeans are even more gutless than Americans, and clearly no less

stupid. You are right: disgusting! Every book I put out in Shanghai I have to fight to get "CCK-financed" in the English acknowledgements. Impossible to put it in the Chinese version."

3) A US historian of religion commenting on a news item on the conference I had posted on Facebook: "Moments like these when the veil drops are precious, let's hope it exposes some truths."

4) A distinguished anthropologist from Beijing University: "the kind of 'original rudeness' has been practiced for decades as 'civility'. A disgrace, urgently needing treatment." And after I asked him to further explain these terms, he responded that "by 'civility' I usually refer to civilization; 'original rudeness' is what I invent in English to describe the rough manners encouraged in Mao's time and continued to be performed until now. In old and new Chinese movies, we often see those boys or girls who look really straightforward and "foolish" are more attractive to their opposite sex. To some extent, the kind of rudeness has been seen as what expresses honesty...but the bad performance from the official of Hanban might just be another thing. I would see it as stupid; but other Chinese may see it differently - some may be even proud of him [sic] we can see from this that cosmopolitan civility is still needed in China."

I share these messages with you to convey a sense of the deep frustration among many scholars of China with their impotence against the insinuation of PRC state and propaganda organs in educational institutions in Europe and North America.⁴ In the case of the colleague from Beijing University, there is also embarrassment at the delinquent behavior of a government official, combined with a different kind of frustration: that the act is unlikely to make much impression on a PRC academic and popular culture that is inured to vandalism if it does not actually condone it, beginning with the Party-state itself.

The frustration is not restricted to scholars of China. The Canadian Association of Higher Education Teachers and the American Association of University Professors have both rebuked universities in the two countries for allowing Confucius Institutes into universities and/or for their compliance with the terms set by the PRC.⁵ University of Chicago professors have petitioned the university administration to reconsider its agreement with the Hanban. The most thorough and eloquent criticisms of the institutes have been penned not by a China specialist but the distinguished anthropologist Marshall Sahlins.⁶ This broad involvement of university faculty indicates that the issues at hand go beyond Confucius Institutes or the PRC, and is revealing of accumulating frustration with significant trends that promise to end higher education as we have known it. The Institutes have been beneficiaries but also possibly the most offensive instance to date of the increasingly blatant administrative usurpation of faculty prerogatives in university governance, progressive subjection of education to business interests, and the normalization of censorship in education. At the behest of the Hanban for confidentiality, agreements over the institutes have been entered in most cases without consultation with the faculty, or at best with select faculty who, whatever the specific motivations may be in individual cases, display few qualms about complying with trends to administrative opacity or the secrecy demanded by the propaganda arm of a foreign state. The promise of the institutes to serve as bridges to business opportunities with the PRC has served as a major enticement, giving business and even local communities a stake in their acceptance and promotion, but further compromising academic autonomy. Despite all manner of self-serving protestations by those involved in the institutes, formally entered agreement to avoid issues that might conflict with so-called Chinese cultural and political norms—or whatever might “hurt the feelings of the Chinese people”—translates in practice to tacit self-censorship on questions the PRC would like to keep out of public hearing—

the well-known issues of Taiwan, Tibet, June Fourth, jailed dissidents, etc., etc. It also legitimizes censorship.⁷

These issues concern, or should concern, everyone who has a stake in higher education. The questions facing scholars of China are narrower in focus and more specific to disciplinary concerns, but they may be even more fundamental and far-reaching in their implications than the institutional operations of the university. Beneath mundane issues of language teaching, teacher quality, academic rigorousness lays a very important question: who controls the production of knowledge about China. Like other similar organizations, including the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, the Hanban has already entered the business of sponsoring research and conference in research universities. But control is another matter. Interestingly, in its very vulgarity, Xu Lin's attempt to suppress the mention of a Taiwan competitor at an academic conference brings up this question more insistently than the sugar-coated representations of Confucius Institutes as simple providers of knowledge of Chinese language and culture to school-children, or facilitators of business. The conjoining of teaching and business in Hanban activity itself should give us pause about easy acceptance of those representations. But the problem goes deeper.

It is a puzzle that a great many commentators in the US and Europe should be in self-denial about PRC aspirations to global hegemony when within the PRC it is a matter of ongoing conversation among Party leaders and influential opinion-makers, as well as the general public. To be sure, there is no end of speculation over elusive questions of whether or not and when the PRC might achieve global hegemony.⁸ But there is far less attention to the more immediate question of aspirations to hegemony—except among some on the right—possibly because it might fuel animosity and ill-feeling. It seems safer to go along with the more diplomatically

innocuous official statements that all the PRC wants is equality and equal recognition, not world hegemony, even as it carves out spaces of “influence” around the globe.

In recent years, PRC leaders have made no secret that they wish to replace the existing world order over which the US presides. At the most modest level, President Xi Jinping’s suggestion to the US President that the Pacific was big enough for the two countries to share as part of a “new great power relationship” was remarkable for its erasure of everyone else who lives within or around the Pacific. It would take the utter blindness of servile partisanship to portray PRC activity in eastern Asia, based on spurious historical claims, as anything but moves to establish regional hegemony which, John Mearsheimer has argued, is the first step in the establishment of global hegemony—a Monroe Doctrine for Eastern Asia.⁹ At the popular level, an obscure philosopher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Zhao Tingyang, has achieved fame nationally and in international power circles for his design of an alternative to the current international system based on a modernized version of the hierarchical “Under-Heaven” (*Tianxia*) tributary system that informed imperial China until the early twentieth century.¹⁰

Zhao’s work is interesting because it has been acclaimed as a plausible example of the call for “IR theory with Chinese characteristics” that corresponds to the PRC’s rising status—a call that eloquently brings together knowledge-production and the search for hegemony. The prevalent obsession with tagging the phrase “Chinese characteristics” onto everything from the most mundane to the most abstractly theoretical is well-known. But it seems to have acquired some urgency with the Xi Jinping leadership’s apparent desire to regulate “Western” influence on scholarship and intellectual activity in general as part of his vaunted “China Dream” that also includes the elimination of corruption along with rival centers of power, enhancing Party prestige

and control over society, and the projection of PRC hard and soft power both upon the global scene.

The policy blueprint laid down in the landmark third plenary session of the 18th Central Committee stressed “the strengthening of propaganda powers and the establishment of a Chinese system of discourse (*Zhongguo huoyu xitong*) to propel Chinese culture into the world at large (*tuidong Zhonghua wenhua zouxiang shijie*).”¹¹ The discourse is to be constructed upon the three pillars of “the fine tradition of making Marxism Chinese,” or “socialism with Chinese characteristics, the creation of a contemporary Chinese culture by melding the Chinese and the foreign, and the old and the new. The Xi leaderships stress on the “ninety-year” revolutionary tradition—perhaps the foundation of Party legitimacy—is not necessarily in conflict with the plans for greater integration with the global neoliberal economy, since in Party theorization of “Chinese Marxism” the content of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” is subject to change in response to changing circumstances--and in accordance with the policies of each new generation of leaders.¹² While the “China dream” is the subject of ongoing discussion, Xi Jinping has made his own the long standing “dream” of the rejuvenation and renaissance of the Chinese nation as the marker of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” under his leadership. Lest this be taken to be a return to a parochial conservatism, it is important to note that discussions of “Chinese discourse” note his emphasis on “making our own the good things from others” as well as “making the old serve the present” as fundamental characteristic of “Chinese” cultural identity. It might be recalled that the latter slogan caused much distress among foreign observers during the Cultural Revolution amidst reports that peasants, taking the slogan at its word, had begun to dismantle the Great Wall to use its stones to build homes for themselves! Presently, according to President Xi, the rich products of this 5000 year old tradition should be taken out to

the world to foster awareness of the universal value of a living Chinese culture that transcends spatial and temporal boundaries in its rich intellectual and artistic achievements. He also called upon Chinese scholars around the world to “tell China’s story” (*Zhongguode gushi*).

A PRC expert on foreign relations and the US active in global international relations circles has provided a convenient summary of Party leaders and intellectuals’ close attention to “discursive struggles” over the last decade, beginning with the Hu Jintao leadership, and its institutional and intellectuals issues.¹³ The motivation, as he puts it, was to carve out a political cultural space of its own corresponding to the PRC’s rising stature as a world power: “Although China has already joined the mainstream international community through this policy [Deng Xiaoping’s opening-up policy], one of the main findings of the paper is that China does not want to be a member of Western system. Instead, China is in the process of developing a unique type of nation-building to promote the Chinese model in the coming years.”¹⁴ The formulation of a Chinese discourse was both defensive and promotional: to defend the PRC against its portrayals as a threat to world economy and politics, but at the same time to promote an image that would enhance its reputation in the world as a counterpart to a declining US hegemony caught up in constant warfare, economic problems, cultural disintegration and waning prestige.

It is interesting, however, that revamping the propaganda apparatus in public relations guise drew its inspiration mainly from the US example. The major inspiration was the idea of “soft power” formulated by the US scholar and one time government official Joseph Nye. US public relations practices and institutions are visible in everything from sending intellectuals out to the world to present a picture of PRC realities as the “Chinese people” perceive them to hosting international events, from publication activity in foreign languages to TV programming, from students sent abroad to students attracted to the PRC, and in the wholesale transformation

of the very appearance and style of those who presented the PRC to the world. The idea of discourse was of Foucauldian inspiration, subject to much interpretation and misinterpretation. But its basic sense was quite clear. Participants in the discussion of discursive power and in its institutional formulations “all emphasize discourse as a kind of power structure and analyze the power of discourse through the lens of dominant characteristics such as culture, ideology and other norms. They consist of the ways we think and talk about a subject matter, influencing and reflecting the ways we act in relation to it. This is the basic premise of discourse theory.”¹⁵ And they all share a common goal. In the author’s own words, without editing,

Obviously, China chooses to join the international society led by a western value held concept from thirty years ago, but it did not plan to accept completely the named “universal value concept” of the western countries, nor wish to be a member of those countries. Instead, China wishes to start from its national identity and form a world from China’s word, and insist in the development road with Chinese characteristics, so as to realize the great revival of the Chinese nation. In order to realize this century dream, China is busy drawing on its discursive power and achieving this strategy with great efforts in public diplomacy.¹⁶

Confucius Institutes (going back to 2004) were conceived as part of this discursive struggle, with “Confucius identified as a teaching brand to promote the [sic] Chinese culture.”¹⁷ Language teaching was crucial to this task. The number of foreigners learning Chinese (40 million at last count) is itself a matter of pride, but the ultimate goal is the assimilation of “Chinese culture” through introduction to the language and whatever cultural resources may be available locally (from art and opera to singing and dancing). It would be good to know how so-called Chinese culture is actually represented in the classroom beyond these consumer routines. To my knowledge, no one has so far been able to do a thorough ethnography of the Institutes,

partly because of the opaqueness (at the “mandatory request” of Hanban) of their operations.¹⁸

One of the most interesting and probably far-reaching aspect of Hanban educational activities is to employ higher education Confucius Institutes as platforms to reach out into the community and public school classrooms. While we may only guess at the intentions behind this outreach, I think it is plausible to assume that they are not there to train future China specialists, although that, too, may happen, but to create cultural conditions where “China” ceases to be foreign, and acquires the same kind of familiarity that most people around the world have with United States cultural activity and products; at its best, to feel at home in a Chinese world. Kids in kindergarten and elementary school are more likely to be amenable to this goal than the less reliable college students!¹⁹

Lest it seem that I am reading too much into this activity, let me recall a portrayal of an imaginary (“dreamlike?”) Chinese world by Tu Wei-ming, former Harvard professor, prominent promoter of Confucianism as a global idea, and presently founding Dean of the Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies at Beijing University--a highly respected and influential senior intellectual. In an essay published in 1991, he offered the following as a description of what he called “cultural China:”

Cultural China can be examined in terms of a continuous interaction of three symbolic universes. The first consists of mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—that is, the societies populated predominantly by cultural and ethnic Chinese. The second consist of Chinese communities throughout the world, including a politically significant minority in Malaysia...and a numerically negligible minority in the United States...The third symbolic universe consists of individual men and women, such as scholars, teachers, journalists, industrialists,

traders, entrepreneurs, and writers, who try to understand China intellectually and bring their conceptions of China to their own linguistic communities. For the last four decades the international discourse on cultural China has been shaped more by the third symbolic universe than by the first two combined...Sinologists in North America Japan, Europe, and increasingly Australia have similarly exercised a great deal of power in determining the scholarly agenda for cultural China as a whole.²⁰

“China’s rise” over the last two decades has reconfigured the geography of “cultural China,” and the dynamics of the interaction between these three “symbolic universes,” with the relocation of the “center” in mainland China which now seeks to bring the other two spheres under its hegemony. We need not view Tu’s description as some kind of blueprint in order to appreciate the valuable insight it offers into reading the contemporary situation. The PRC seeks to bring under its direct rule the Chinese societies of Hong Kong and Taiwan, with Singapore somewhat more problematic given its distance from the mainland, and this despite the fact that it served as a model for PRC development beginning in the 1990s. Chinese overseas are obviously a major target of PRC cultural activity, especially now that their numbers are being swelled by new immigrants from the PRC with considerable financial and political clout. What I have discussed above—and the Xu Lin episode—provide sufficient evidence, I think, to indicate the significance placed upon expanding the third sphere, and shaping its activities. Hegemony over the production of knowledge on China is crucial to this end.

There is nothing particularly earth-shattering about this activity except that the PRC’s habitual conspiratorial behavior makes it seem so. We may observe that the PRC is doing what other hegemonic powers—especially the US--have done before it: recruit foreign constituencies in the expansion of cultural power. To put it in mundane terms, as the so-called “West”

established its global hegemony by creating “westernized” foreigners, the PRC in search of hegemony seeks through various means to expand the sphere of “Chinized” foreigners, to use the term offered by the author of the article discussed above.²¹

There has been considerable success over the last decade in promoting a positive image for the PRC globally, although it is still unclear how much of this success is due not to cultural activity but the economic lure of a fast developing economy.²² PRC analysts are quite correct to feel that this may be the opportune moment, given that the existing hegemon is mired in social division, dysfunctional political conflict, continual warfare and a seeming addiction to a culture of violence. It is also the case that the craze for what is called “development” trumps in the eyes of political leaders and large populations around the world qualms about human rights and democracy, especially where these are not major concerns to begin with.

It is also the case that similarly to its predecessors going back to the Guomindang in the 1930s, the current PRC regime has been unable to overcome a nativist provincialism intertwined with anxieties about the future of the Communist Party that is a major obstacle to its hegemonic aspirations. Complaints about cultural victimization and national humiliation sit uneasily with assertions of cultural superiority and aspirations to global hegemony. Hankerings for a global “Tianxia” ignore that despite the scramble to partake of the PRC’s economic development, other nation-states are just as keen about their political sovereignty and cultural legacies as the PRC itself-- just as surely as they are aware of the spuriousness of claims to genetic peacefulness when PRC leaders, with enthusiastic support from public opinion, openly declare that “national rejuvenation” includes the recapture, if necessary by violence, the domains of their imperial predecessors, and then some.²³ Pursuit of the globalization of so-called “Chinese culture” is accompanied by a cultural defensiveness that tags “Chinese characteristics” to everything from

the most mundane everyday practices to crucial realms of state ideology. Claims of universal value for Chinese cultural products are rendered questionable by the simultaneous denial of universality as a tool of “Western” hegemony. PRC leaders and their spokespeople officially deny any aspirations to global hegemony, needless to say, but then we might wonder what they have in mind when they accuse other powers of “obstructing China’s rise,” when those powers celebrate the PRC’s economic development on which they have become dependent, and allow its propaganda organs into their educational systems! Similarly, if the goal is not hegemony over knowledge production about “China,” why would these same leaders and their functionaries be so concerned to show the world the universal value of Chinese civilization, when that is already very much part of the global perception that has made the PRC the beneficiary of a benign Orientalism—or tear out pages of a conference program on the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation which shares the same goal of promoting “Chinese” civilization?

While the new “public relations” approach has yielded impressive results, discursive struggle entails more than a competition in the global cultural or “discourse market,”²⁴ but finds expression also in the suppression of competing discourses at home and abroad. The “good things” from the outside world do not include the seven deadly sins which have been expressly forbidden as “dangerous western influences”: universal values, freedom of speech, civil society, civil rights, the historical errors of the Chinese Communist Party, crony capitalism, and judicial independence.²⁵ While the PRC boasts a constitution, talk of matters such as “constitutional democracy” is not to be permitted.²⁶ A prohibition against the use of terms like “democracy,” “dictatorship,” “class,” etc., has been in effect for some time and, according to a colleague from Shanghai, authorities look askance at the use even of a seemingly word like “youth”(qingnian) in titles of scholarly works. Just recently, the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy

of Social Sciences was chosen by the Party Central Commission for Discipline Inspection as the location from which to warn the Academy that “it had been infiltrated by foreign forces.”²⁷ The persecution and incarceration of both Han and Minority scholars and activists who transgress against these prohibitions is a matter of daily record. The same commentator who was cited above for the reference to a “global discourse market,” writes that “basically speaking,” the prohibitions have not changed the widespread attitude of reverence in the intellectual world for things western, “the blind and superstitious following of western scholarship and theories, and entrapment in the western ‘discourse pitfall’ (*xianjin*).” People may contend all they want, she concludes, but the discourse we need is one with Chinese “airs” (*fengge*) that strengthens China’s “discursive power” (*huoyu quan*).²⁸ This translates in practice to the construction of theories (including Marxism) and historical narratives built around Chinese development (with the Party at its core) that may also serve as inspiration if not an actual model for others.

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The case of the PRC is especially important for illustrating the challenge to knowledge production of the reconfigurations of global power, but it is by no means the only one. Arguably even more egregious than Xu Lin’s attempt at censorship at the EACS conference was the lawsuit brought against the University of Chicago scholar Wendy Doniger’s book, *The Hindus: An Alternative History*, for its alleged insults to Indian religion, which resulted in Penguin publishers’ agreement to pulp the copies of the book in India. The lawsuit was brought by a Dina Nath Batra whose own books, devoted to purging the study of the past of “Western cultur[al]” influences, have been compulsory reading in Gujarat under state minister, Narendra Modi, now the prime minister of India. The Modi government recently appointed as the chairman of the

Indian Council of Historical Research a little-known historian also devoted to what Indian scholars describe as “the saffronization of education.”²⁹

If such incidents were merely about censorship, we could easily ignore them as merely more vulgar and extreme cases of censorship which is not particularly novel at either the national or the global level, including in the USA. This is not to downplay their significance as threats to democracy and academic freedom globally, as they also set examples for others. Silence before such acts is to be complicit in oppressive practices.

Nevertheless, it would be a serious mistake to allow preoccupation with these oppressive practices to distract attention from even deeper problems with long term consequences. What renders these acts truly significant are the alternative knowledge or value system in whose name the censorship is exercised. The grievances that they express are hardly to be denied. Nor may we dismiss without due consideration the alternatives they offer at a time when the existing order presided over by Euro/American hegemony shows every sign of being unsustainable materially and spiritually.

It has been clear for some time now that “our ways of knowing” are in deep crisis. The social upheaval of the 1960s brought diverse new constituencies into educational institutions, who demanded representation both in the content of learning and its mode of delivery, which has expanded the scope of knowledge enormously but also made it more complicated than ever to determine what is and is not worth knowing. Similarly, on the global scene, postcolonial and post revolutionary regimes that emerged from post-World War II national liberation struggles demand new kinds of knowledge that counter the erasure of their pasts and their cultural interests by colonial domination and imperialist hegemony.³⁰ This has been a concern all along of Chinese revolutionaries of differing stripes. The Gandhian legacy in India is even better known. The list

may easily be expanded to include diverse peoples around the world, from indigenous peoples to formerly imperial entities. The colonial hubris that “progress” or “modernization” would doom to forgetfulness the pasts of the colonized or the dominated overlooked the very part colonial domination and imperial hegemony played in provoking the construction of the pasts that would serve the cause of independence and development. Those pasts have surfaced with a vengeance, insisting on their own voices in modernity, and the inclusion of their pasts in its making. Their very presence exposes the fallibility of the knowledge claims of Euromodernity, and the damage it has inflicted on nature and human societies in the very course of forcing them onto the path of “progress.” Almost by tacit common consent, it seems, modern knowledge is on trial, facing claimants who demand recognition of their various versions of how things came to be, and where they would like to see them headed.

These claims, however, are beset by contradictions. The same processes that have opened up the intellectual space to “alternative modernities,” as they are described, also are inexorably forcing people into a common future that will allow no viable alternative—what is commonly called globalization and/or development. This is a condition that I have described as global modernity: the simultaneous integration of the world through the globalization of capital, and its fracturing along a variety of faultlines which finds expression not only in conflicts of interest but in the assertion of reified sovereign cultural identities.³¹ The contradiction is visible also in the realm of knowledge in the denial of universality to social, political and cultural practices while endowing with nearly universal status the logic of technology and the culture of consumption. The former appear not only as endowments of nation or civilization, but also as guarantors that identity will not be lost in its globalization. This is the significance of knowledge production in support of the cultivation of those values. On the other hand, it is difficult to keep apart the two

realms of knowledge, the kind of knowledge for success in the capitalist economy and the kind of knowledge necessary to the cultivation of national or civilizational identity, as the dynamic interplay between the two realms produce new demands on identity and subjectivity.³² For over a century now, Chinese thinkers and leaders have not been able to find an answer to their search for a modernity that would preserve and strengthen a “Chinese” substance with “Western” instrumentality, the famous *ti-yong* distinction. Indeed, I hope it is clear from my discussion above of the search for a “Chinese discursive system” that even the effort to eliminate the influence of so-called “Western discourse” resorts to a conceptual vocabulary provided by the latter. This does not mean that there are no real differences among peoples, but it does suggest that those differences be viewed at all times also through the commonalities which are also a pervasive presence.

It seems deeply ironic that economic and to some extent social and cultural globalization should signal the end of universalism but it is not very surprising. Political universals follow the logic not of philosophy but of power and hegemony. Globalization may have been intended to complete the conquest of the globe for the capitalist modernity that for nearly half a millennium had empowered Euro/American domination. Capitalist modernity has emerged victorious, but contrary to expectations, rather than buttress the existing centers of hegemony, its benefits have gone mostly to challengers who now make their own claims on global power and hegemony, in the process denying the universality of value- and knowledge-claims that for two centuries have denied recognition to their intellectual and ethical inheritances. The denial of universality is at bottom little more than the denial of Euro/American hegemony in search of intellectual and ethical sovereignty, with the exception of the PRC whose aspirations, I have suggested, suggest not just a defensive nationalism but alternative global designs.

It might be useful here to recall two competing metaphors that appeared in the 1990s, almost simultaneously, that have a direct bearing on this question: the “clash of civilizations,” put forward by the late Samuel Huntington, and “hybridization,” that has held a central place in postcolonial criticism.³³ We can see both paradigms at work in the contemporary world, albeit in different mixes and subject to local inflections. It is interesting that both paradigms criticized Eurocentric universalism, if for different reasons. Huntington’s exclusivist culturalism led him to advocate hardened cultural boundaries for the reason that others did not or could not share the values the “West” considered universal. Postcolonial criticism, on the other hand, perceived in hybridity the possibility of rendering cultural boundaries porous as a first step in the recognition of cultures only unsuccessfully suppressed under Euromodernity, and offering the possibility of exchange and negotiation between different cultural entities once they had achieved some measure of equivalence. Radical critics have understandably been drawn to the latter alternative, and in the process ignored the appeals of the “clash” paradigm among patriotic groups, including “leftist” patriotic groups in countries like China where memories of revolutionary anti-imperialism survive the abandonment of revolution. The puzzling attraction to Philip Schmitter’s friend/enemy distinction among such groups also appears more easily comprehensible when taken in conjunction with the Huntingtonian anticipation of “clash” if and when these groups emerged from under the hegemony of “western civilization,” which they already seemed to be doing when he offered his paradigm in the early 1990s. The “clash” paradigm has insistently moved to the foreground over the last two decades. The “hybridity” paradigm is by no means dead, but its vulnerabilities have also become increasingly evident. Cultural hybrids are not “things,” as they may appear in their biological counterparts—like nectarines, as it were—but complexes of relationships and contradictions the resolution of which depends on concrete

historical circumstances.³⁴ Put bluntly, depending on context, “hybrids” may end up on the political right or the left—or anywhere on a broad spectrum of possibilities. The stress in much postcolonial criticism on hybridity along ethnic, national or “civilizational” boundaries, moreover, invites reification of these categories, distracting attention from the differences and hybridities in their very constitution. In a global environment of counterrevolutionary shift to the right—combined with nostalgia for lost imperial greatness—pressures to exclusionary culturalism along these boundaries are quite powerful despite intensifying transnationalism propelled by a globalized capitalism. This may be seen, for example, in the growth of diasporic nationalism in closer identification with nations of origin, especially in the case of countries such as the PRC, India and Turkey which have registered impressive success in their ability to employ globalization to national ends.

What these changes imply for critical practice is worth pondering. Globalization insistently forces into one common intellectual space diverse conversations on knowledge and values. It creates commonalities but also differences that challenge assumptions of universality in hegemonic societies that long have been able to treat alternative voices as a minor nuisance. Comparisons between the present and Cold War conflicts are widely off the mark. Cold War confrontations between capitalism and socialism presupposed competing political economic spatialities, but shared common assumptions about universality. Socialism assumed national form, to be sure, but we may recall that differences between existing socialist societies were voiced in the language of “revisionism,” suggesting deviation from a political project informed by universal principles. To take the case of the Chinese revolution, when revolutionaries in the 1940s began to insist on “making Marxism Chinese” (*Makesi zhuyi Zhongguohua*), the project was conceived as the integration of “the universal principles of Marxism” with the concrete

circumstances of Chinese society. The phrase is still commonplace in ideological discourse in post-revolutionary PRC, but more as a fading trace from the past than a meaningful guide to the future. The globalization of capitalism has abolished the competing spaces of political economy. Differences are expressed instead in claims to alternative cultural spaces. “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” is above all a cultural idea yoked to aspirations of national rejuvenation that are conspicuously suspicious of universality. To speak of “revisionism” in our day would no doubt seem farcically anachronistic. The global space capitalism claimed in the aftermath of the Cold War is already fragmenting under pressure from claims of cultural difference empowered by reconfigurations of the capitalist world economy. If universalism persists as a goal, it can no longer be phrased in the same terms as it was under the hegemony of Euromodernity, but will have to be formulated out of contemporary conversations that now include voices silenced or marginalized under the regime of Euromodernity.

Rescuing alternative knowledge and value systems from the erasures of Euromodernity has been part and parcel of radical critical thinking since the 1960s, nourished by a very Universalist belief in the possibilities of human diversity. This task is much more complicated than it may appear. What these alternative knowledge and value systems consist of has been open to question all along—whether we speak of the cultures of women, ethnicities, indigenous peoples or nations and civilizations. The “traditions” that identified nations and civilizations in Euro/American modernization discourses were reified misrepresentations of complex intellectual and cultural legacies, often with blurred boundaries between the inside and the outside. Diversity in these societies is erased by a multiculturalism that similarly identifies “authentic” cultural identity with reified traditions.

The relationship to Euromodernity has been equally complicated. After two centuries of global revolutionary transformation, it is hardly possible to speak of East/West, Asia/Europe, Chinese/ Western, etc., as if they were mutually exclusive cultural entities. The cultural identities that are attributed to Chineseness, Hinduism, Islam, or even more crudely, continental entities like Asia and Europe, are ironically legacies of Euromodern reification of these cultural entities. Their defense equally notably, draws upon the language of critical analysis that is rejected for being “Western.” Their sustenance requires not only warding off baneful “Western influences” by political fiat but also erasing or rewriting memories of their own revolutionary pasts in which those influences played crucial parts. After all, while the Communist Party of China may insist on the “Chineseness” of its Marxism, there is still a persistent reminder in the term “Marxism” of what it owes to the outside world, and the Universalist vision that initially inspired its politics. Scholars of religion have argued that “religion” itself is a category that came with “the West,” along with all the other disciplinary appellations that have shaped the discourse on learning globally.

The point here is that how we respond to claims on alternative knowledges and values—or what appears in our discourse as national or global “multiculturalism—is not simply a matter of respect for difference, or of cultural tolerance and cosmopolitanism, but is deeply political in its implications that calls for critical judgment and discrimination, not just on competing cultural claims but more profoundly the notions of culture that inform them. Radical multiculturalism driven by universal human goals that temper difference with commonality is a different matter entirely than the multiculturalism of an identity politics obsessed with difference, with little regard for commonality, the managerial multiculturalism of transnational corporations, or the consumptive multiculturalism promoted by global capitalism. The appreciation of “cultural

complexity,” the porosity of cultural boundaries, and the historicity of culture that emerged from the radical struggles of the 1960s challenged the reification of culture in modernization discourse but never quite overcame it. It has retreated in intervening years before the “polyculturalism” that multi-national corporations began to promote at about the same time, which replicated the reification of culture in modernization discourse, albeit with a recognition of contemporary presence to “traditions” that hitherto had been viewed as relics of doomed historical legacies.³⁵ “Difference,” likewise, has come to overshadow commonality as categories that inspired collective affinity and action such as class or third world solidarity” have lost their plausibility, or have been systematically discredited, along with the universalist ethic in which they were grounded.

In her recent study, *Moral Clarity*, Susan Neiman writes that “the relativism that holds all moral values to be created equal is a short step from the nihilism that holds all talk of values to be superfluous.”³⁶ We know that just as all cultural legacies and practices (including our own) are not bad, neither are they all good. We know that different cultural orientations have different motivations and consequences, so they are not all equal, without resorting to the language of good and evil. We know, or should know, that everyday life presents us with antinomies where choice seems impossible. We are all familiar with problems in the imposition of gender norms across ethnic and national boundaries. How do we respond when an elected member of the national assembly is prevented from taking her seat on account of wearing a head-dress, setting secular against democratic commitments? How do we respond when in the name of national order and security a state abuses its own citizens and intellectuals? What do we do when the identification of national culture with a set of religious precepts results in the oppression not only of its secular intellectuals but other sets of religious precepts upheld by its minority populations?

Perhaps most relevant to the question at hand of critical practice, how do we respond to the bizarre proclamation of an American academic that academic freedom is a “Western” idea that should not be imposed upon others when a PRC academic loses his job for his promotion of “Western” freedoms? There are differences within differences, and dealing with them calls upon us to make choices, choices that are not just intellectual but deeply ethical and political.

Neiman’s study is devoted to an argument for the retrieval of Enlightenment values that have been under attack for the last half century from the left, for their alleged complicity in Euro/American imperialism and, from the right, for the secular humanism that allegedly has undermined national morality and purpose. The argument draws on the work of Jonathan Israel, who has drawn a distinction between radical and moderate Enlightenment, with the former supplying most of the values that have come to be associated with Enlightenment as such. Israel identifies the “basic principles” of radical Enlightenment as:

democracy; racial and sexual equality; individual liberty of lifestyle; full freedom of thought, expression, and the press; eradication of religious authority from the legislative process and education; and full separation of church and state... Its universalism lies in its claim that all men have the right to pursue happiness in their own way, and think and say whatever they see fit, and no one, including those who convince others they are divinely chosen to be their master, rulers or spiritual guides, is justified in denying or hindering others in the enjoyment of rights that pertain to all men and women equally.³⁷

These are the same values, we might add, that are condemned by spokespeople for the PRC regime, orthodox Muslims, or fundamentalist Hindus for their incompatibility with so-called native cultures which, in their claims to cultural purity, find alibi in multi-culturalist

reification of cultural identity. Among the foremost casualties of the repudiation of the Enlightenment in cultural criticism is criticism itself. In the words of the British writer, Kenan Malik,

The issue of free speech and the giving of offence have become central to the multiculturalism debate. Speech, many argue, must be less free in a plural society. For such societies to function and be fair, we need to show respect for all cultures and beliefs. And to do so requires us to police public discourse about those cultures and beliefs, both to minimize friction between antagonistic cultures and beliefs, and to protect the dignity of individuals embedded in them. As [Tariq] Modood puts it, “If people are to occupy the same political space without conflict, they mutually have to limit the extent to which they subject each others’ fundamental beliefs to criticism.” One of the ironies of living in a plural society, it seems, is that the preservation of diversity requires us to leave *less* room for a diversity of views.³⁸

What we seem to be witnessing, I might add, is a slide to the logic of communal politics.

* * *

About a year ago, I had the pleasure of visiting a university in your neighboring state to the north at the invitation of the Department of Sociology. Over a casual dinner, some mention was made of the Enlightenment, possibly by self, as a resource for countering the seemingly worldwide drift to intellectual and cultural obscurantism. The response from one of the colleagues was swift and decisive: “there is nothing good to be said for the Enlightenment!”

What impressed me most about this response was the categorical denial of ambiguity and historicity to the Enlightenment and its legacies that left no opening for critical engagement and

dialogue. The Enlightenment presently invites criticism for endowing with universal status what were but the cultural assumptions of an emergent capitalist modernity infused with the values of its Euro/American origins. This meant by implication the denial of contemporary validity and relevance to alternative epistemologies and value-systems. In the unfolding of Euromodernity, universal reason would be captured for economic and technological rationality, and universal morality for the moral imperatives of the market economy and the nation-state. Euro/American capitalism was entangled from its origins in the colonization of known and unknown lands and peoples. Colonial modernity found ideological justification for rule over others in its claims to universal reason and morality, which made it “the white man’s burden” to rescue them from stagnant “traditions” they were mired in and usher them into modernity. Under the hegemony of Euromodernity, these assumptions have guided both politics and the production of knowledge of the world. Others—exterminated, colonized, deracinated, hegemonized—until recently have been silenced, by force if necessary but most effectively by being woven into an epistemological web designed by the hegemonic according to the dictates of Euromodernity. As a recent work puts it,

Euro-American social theory, as writers from the south have often observed, has tended to treat modernity as though it were inseparable from *Aufklärung*, the rise of Enlightenment reason. Not only is each taken to be a condition of the other’s possibility, but together they are assumed to have animated a distinctively European mission to emancipate humankind from its uncivil prehistory, from a life driven by bare necessity, from the thrall of miracle and wonder, enchantment and entropy.³⁹

None of this should be in dispute for anyone with an unbiased eye. What may be done about it, however, is much more problematic. Critics of the Enlightenment range from those who object to its ethnocentrism and its entanglement in colonial modernity to Tea Party ethnocentrists critical of democracy, science and secular humanism. The choices we make in dealing with the legacies of two centuries of colonial erasure and imperial hegemony are not merely intellectual, they are also profoundly political. The anti-hegemonic impulse that informs criticisms of the Enlightenment from anti-colonial anti-racist or gendered perspectives is more than matched by the service such criticism renders to political and cultural reaction and repression globally.⁴⁰

The fact that these attacks on Enlightenment culture and epistemology coincide with the globalization of capitalist modernity should give us pause about rendering the Enlightenment and Euromodernity into Siamese twins, or dissolving the one into the other.⁴¹ If Euromodernity was about Enlightenment, it was also about religious legacies the Enlightenment sought to counter that nevertheless shaped European societies, about narratives of capitalism and the nation-state. There are different possibilities in the articulation of these various narratives that shape our understanding of the emergence and consequences of the Enlightenment. Where “social theory” is concerned, too much emphasis has been placed on its Eurocentrism, obscuring its origins in the need for new ways of organizing knowledge demanded by the rise of capitalism and the nation-state. This may explain why despite criticism of its Eurocentrism, the globalization of capitalism seems inevitably to bring in its wake the disciplinary products of so-called “Western” theory.

These relationships in their complexity deserve a more dialectical analysis that accounts for the contradictory historical relationship between the two, exemplified by Horkheimer and Adorno’s critique of Enlightenment in response to the rise of Nazi’ism and the “culture

industries.”⁴² For all their political manipulation of human rights and democracy, capital and the capitalist state as in the US have repeatedly shown that they are no slaves to their professions of either of reason or the autonomous thinking individual, human rights and secularism---at home or abroad. If the Enlightenment could not resolve the tension between instrumental reason and a transcendent rationality, as generations of social philosophers attest to, it is also the case that instrumental reason is what matters in the pursuit of economic and political power—including the instrumentalization of human beings as labor power and consumers.⁴³ It is not to be forgotten that to the extent Enlightenment ideals have become social realities in Euro/American societies, it was a result not of some cultural disposition but of prolonged and arduous struggles against power by constituencies from workers to women and subaltern ethnic groups. These struggles continue—now with the additional burden of resisting efforts by states and capital to roll back these past gains.

The need to distinguish capitalist modernity and Enlightenment legacies is even more apparent presently in the case of non-Euro American societies anxious to partake of the fruits of global capitalism but equally anxious to keep at arm’s length the values most commonly associated with Enlightenment legacies. The reconfiguration of global power relations with the globalization of capital has empowered challenges to the cultural hegemony of Euromodernity, opening up the ideological space to the reappraisal of Enlightenment legacies from locations where they appeared not as instruments of liberation and progress but indispensable components of an oppressive apparatus of power. The rejection of these legacies is part of a broader effort to recover cultural and intellectual identities that had been consigned to the past as dead or stagnant traditions under the regime of Euromodernity. These traditions are now called upon as resources for “alternative modernities” that account for native values and system of knowledge, be it Islam,

Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism or the many indigenous legacies that demand recognition. The universalistic assumptions of Euromodernity are giving way, at least in the realm of thought, to alternative claims on both reason and morality.

In praise or in condemnation, the juxtaposition of the Enlightenment as the source of Euromodernity against alternative cultural modernities inevitably produces cultural reification and reductionism, which is itself a consequence of the many encounters of modernity. It is often overlooked (if not viewed as of marginal significance) that the same Enlightenment legacies that capitalist modernity claimed for itself have also provided legitimation for struggles against the new forms—labor, gender and racial oppression and exploitation took under the market economy. If Enlightenment legacies provided cultural justification for colonialism, moreover, it also offered a language of anti-colonialism that was readily assimilated by many in their struggles against European domination and capitalist modernity—not to speak of homegrown oppression and exploitation.⁴⁴

Euromodernity may have claimed possession of universal reason and morality, but what these consisted of have been subjects all along of disagreement, contention and conflict—and the considerable measure of openness that owed much to the institutionalization of dissent. Contrary to simplistic binarisms that set the vitality of modernity against the quietude of tradition, no world of thought and morality is free of dissent and disagreement, however strenuous the imposition of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, the institution of dissent as a normative principle over enforced loyalty to any ideological orthodoxy or lineage may be the distinguishing feature of Euromodernity as a cultural formation, embodied in the capitalist economy that empowered it. Neiman writes that “the Enlightenment is inherently self-critical, morally bound to examine its own assumptions with the same zeal it examines others.”⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, whose influential

writings have done much to reveal the complicity of Enlightenment ideals in shaping modern practices of power, wrote nevertheless that:

between the high Kantian enterprise and the little polemical professional activities that are called critique, it seems to me that there has been in the modern Western world(dating, more or less, empirically from the 15th to the 16th centuries) a certain way of thinking, speaking and acting, a certain relationship to what exists, to what one knows, to what one does, a relationship to society, to culture and also a relationship to others that we could call, let's say, the critical attitude....critique only exists in relation to something other than itself: it is an instrument, a means for a future or a truth that it will not know or happen to be, it oversees a domain it would want to police but is unable to regulate.⁴⁶

In her commentary on Foucault's text, "What is Critique?," Judith Butler suggests, along lines similar to Neiman's, that to Foucault this critical attitude, "this exposure of the limit of the epistemological field is linked with the practice of virtue, as if virtue is counter to regulation and order, as if virtue itself is to be found in the risking of established order. He is not shy about the relation here. He writes, 'there is something in critique that is akin to virtue.' And then he says something which might be considered even more surprising: 'this critical attitude [is] virtue in general.'"⁴⁷ Karl Marx, we may recall, felt equally virtuous in his commitment to "ruthless criticism of all that exists."

It should be obvious why political regimes that demand loyalty to their legitimizing principles should find this "critical attitude" undesirable or even dangerous. Attempts to establish ideological orthodoxies have been unable to withstand this combined force of economy and

culture that demanded constant flexibility, innovation and criticism—including in so-called democratic societies. The Enlightenment may be the fountainhead of Euromodernity, but conflicts over its meaning are as much a defining feature of Euromodernity as loyalty to the universalism it has claimed. Legacies of the Enlightenment are visible in the very criticisms of the Enlightenment. The question, “What is Enlightenment?” Foucault writes,

marks the discreet entrance into the history of thought of a question that modern philosophy has not been capable of answering, but that it has never managed to get rid of, either....for two centuries now. From Hegel through Nietzsche or Max Weber to Horkheimer or Habermas, hardly any philosophy has failed to confront this same question, directly or indirectly. What, then, is this event that is called the *Aufklärung* and that has determined, at least in part, what we are, what we think, and what we do today?⁴⁸

The same complexity attended the reception of Enlightenment ideas outside of Euro/America. Viewed in historical perspective, the contemporary attacks on the Enlightenment represent a reversal of the hopes Enlightenment ideals inspired for a century among intellectuals of the Global South struggling against despotism at home and imperialism abroad—and continue to do so. To be sure, Euromodern ideas and values provoked opposition among elites and populations at large for their foreignness or subversion of native values, and more often than not forced upon them.⁴⁹ But they were also assimilated in one form or another by generations who were products of the encounter as sources of new visions of change that ranged from the total repudiation of “tradition” in the name of the modern to indigenized modernities that sought to translate the new values to native idiom. Liberal and socialist visions that bore upon them the imprint of the Enlightenment would trigger revolutionary changes that have launched societies

globally on new trajectories of change. Indigenization itself is a two-way street: indigenizing foreign ideas to accommodate native legacies transforms not only the imported ideas but the traditions to which they are articulated. Even so-called “conservative” efforts to uphold native legacies have ended up endowing those legacies with new meanings and functions. Here, too, a distinction needs to be drawn between capitalist modernity and Enlightenment legacies, as the acceptance of one did not need automatically to acceptance of the other. Revolutions against capitalism and imperialist domination drew upon imported socialist and anarchist ideas for their legitimation. Conversely, participation in the global capitalist economy offers no guarantee of respect for freedom, democracy or human rights.

It may be no coincidence that contemporary attacks on the Enlightenment have acquired a hearing in a literally *counter*-revolutionary drift globally. Ideas derivative of the Enlightenment have nourished revolutionary or more broadly progressive movements and aspirations for two centuries not just in Europe and North America but globally. The relationship of Enlightenment legacies to modern revolutionary movements is as complex as their relationships to capitalist modernity, but the entanglement of Enlightenment visions in modern revolutionary movements is one important reason for the attacks directed against it at a time of wholesale repudiation of revolutionary pasts.⁵⁰ As in the PRC beginning in the 1980s, revolutions have been consigned to a “conservative” past while the mantle of progress has been transferred to an alliance of economic neoliberalism and increasingly dictatorial states aligned with global capital that nourish off cultural nationalism.⁵¹

What needs to be underlined is that the criticism of Euromodernity is not limited to the repudiation of the hegemony of Euro/America but also targets the revolutionary pasts which appear now not as agents of progress and liberation but deviations from the proper historical

paths of development. In the process, the pasts that revolutions sought to cast aside as obstacles to modernity have been revived as the sources of alternative modernities. Especially noteworthy is the mutually reinforcing relationship between liberal multiculturalism and cultural nativism or ethnocentrism that share common grounds in the criticism of Eurocentrism which is also their *raison-d'être*. It is not uncommon these days to encounter attacks in the name of alternative cultural traditions and multiculturalism on legacies of academic freedom and critical thinking for being “Western” peculiarities—even as millions around the world continue to engage in political struggles to achieve those ends. This supposed “Western” peculiarity, moreover, is under attack in the “West,” as institutions avail themselves of a rising tide of censorship and surveillance to restrict free speech in accordance with the dictates of political and economic pressures.⁵²

Kant’s own understanding of Enlightenment is phrased in terms that are striking for their relevance in a global political environment that seems devoted to the infantilization of populations or, in the more colorful phrasing of imperial Chinese critics of despotism, “stupid people policy” (*yumin zhengce*). The terms have been echoed repeatedly in anarchist thinking in subsequent years:

Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s understanding without guidance from another... The guardians who have so benevolently taken over the supervision of men have carefully seen to it that the far greatest number of them (including the entire fair sex) regard taking the step to maturity as very dangerous, not to mention difficult. Having first made their domestic livestock dumb, and having carefully made sure that these docile creatures will not take a single step without the go-cart to which they have been harnessed, these guardians then show them the dangers that

threaten them, should they attempt to walk alone... Thus, it is difficult for any individual man to work himself out of the immaturity that has all but become his nature... Thus a public can only attain enlightenment slowly... Nothing is required for this enlightenment, however, except *freedom*; and the freedom in question is the least harmful of all, namely, the freedom to use reason *publicly* in all matters.⁵³

The “freedom” Kant has in mind here is not the freedom of consumer society, which juxtaposes freedom against democracy, but the freedom to deploy reason for public ends, which is the very condition of democracy. Referring to the anarchist Rudolf Rocker, Noam Chomsky notes in a recent talk that,

This brand of socialism, [Rocker] held, doesn't depict "a fixed, self-enclosed social system" with a definite answer to all the multifarious questions and problems of human life, but rather a trend in human development that strives to attain Enlightenment ideals. So understood, anarchism is part of a broader range of libertarian socialist thought and action that includes the practical achievements of revolutionary Spain in 1936; reaches further to worker-owned enterprises spreading today in the American rust belt, in northern Mexico, in Egypt, and many other countries, most extensively in the Basque country in Spain; and encompasses the many cooperative movements around the world and a good part of feminist and civil and human rights initiatives. This broad tendency in human development seeks to identify structures of hierarchy, authority and domination that constrain human development, and then subject them to a very reasonable challenge: Justify yourself.⁵⁴

Critics of Enlightenment bear the burden for explaining why Enlightenment aspirations for freedom and democracy should be inconsistent with respect for and accommodation of alternative cultural legacies rather than as the very conditions that make possible recognition of those legacies in all their richness and diversity. Colonialism, denying the “maturity” of its subjects, also denied them the freedom necessary to come into their own as political and cultural subjects. Arguments based on “ontological differences” between native traditions and democracy or freedom share with the cultural colonialism they would resist assumptions that perpetuate popular dependence on the state not merely as an organ of government but also as the arbiter of cultural identity. On the other hand, from Frantz Fanon to Edward Said, seminal critics of Eurocentrism and colonialism from what used to be called the “third world” did not see any inconsistency between asserting the rights of the colonized and Enlightenment universalism, arguably because their affirmations of anti-colonial rights and subjectivities were framed within the critique of oppression in general rather than the temptations of identity politics.⁵⁵

Like it or not, we live in a post-Euromodern world. Repudiation of Euro/American cultural hegemony is not the same as repudiating the history of Euromodernity that has transformed societies globally, launching them in new historical trajectories. At a more substantial level, the legacies of the Enlightenment continue to offer legitimation for the embrace of difference that is missing from many of the ethnocentric culturalisms that would challenge it. At the same time, it is equally the case that reaffirmation of Enlightenment values may no longer be phrased in the language of the historical Enlightenment but has answer to the problems thrown up in the intervening two centuries, especially the postcolonial challenge. In the words of the late Emmanuel Eze,

In contrast to traditional theories of colonialism, critical theory in the postcolonial

age, in its many facets, carries forward the promise of emancipation embodied in aspects of the Enlightenment and modernist discourses. But it also seeks to hold the processes of modernity and the European-inspired Enlightenment accountable for the false conceptual frameworks within which they produced, for example, the idea of history as something in the name of which peoples outside of the narrow spheres of Europe appeared to many European states as legitimate objects of capitalist enslavement, political conquest and economic depredation. It is in these dual intentions that the *critical* element in postcolonial theory is to be understood.⁵⁶

As Chomsky's statement suggests, Enlightenment universalism is not a given, it is a project that remains to be realized. The project is no longer just Euro/American but needs to be global--not just in scope but in inspiration, inspiration that draws not only upon different historical legacies but even more importantly on ongoing grassroots struggles for human liberation, dignity and welfare—and increasingly, it seems, for survival in the face of impending ecological catastrophe. Against contemporary reifications of culture, we may recall the eloquent words of a thinker who, ironically, has been a foremost resource for postcolonial criticism of Euromodernity:

A national culture is not a folklore, *nor* an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature. ... A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence.⁵⁷

National culture as Fanon conceived it was an ongoing project that drew its inspiration not from parochial yearnings for past glory, or chauvinistic fantasies of global hegemony, but from struggles for liberation driven by universally shared aspirations to justice and democracy. It

was a conception that has been shared widely among those frustrated by Euromodernity's denial of who they were, but who also found a new promise in the vision of universality it offered. The author of a recent study writes, with reference to the seminal Chinese intellectual Liang Qichao and his social democratic disciples, Zhang Dongsun and Zhang Junmai, that, they

devised their cultural plan for constructing a new China along with their universal vision of a new world from a global perspective. ...they re- discovered cultural differences (Chinese tradition) within the global system of culture and evaluated all differences by a universal standard of morality...their cultural vision can be understood in terms of "global universalism," which denies "European universalism" but never abandons the universal itself...[they]envisioned a universal culture based on the universal human capacity for morality, and embraced Chinese culture as a local representation of this universal morality....they challenged Western universalism without falling into the traps of cultural relativism or nationalist cultural pride.⁵⁸

These sentiments may sound quaint in a neoliberal global environment in which Social Darwinian norms and conflicts over civilizational claims are on the ascendancy, and the fate of humanity hangs in the balance. Enlightenment is at its most elusive when we may need it the most. Enlightenment universalism is not to be dismissed as merely a handmaiden of capitalist modernity or colonialism, even though its entanglements with the latter have marred its image among those who encountered it upon the banners of Euro/American imperialism. We need to recall that it was also the inspiration for radical aspirations to freedom to live and breathe in dignity. Freedom is the condition of Enlightenment, as Kant maintained, but also its goal. It may hardly be discarded for its European origins, or the foul deeds that have been perpetrated in its

name, for it is an integral part of histories globally that continues to inspire struggles for human rights to existence--and democracy—against the betrayals of capital and its states. The answer to problems of public enlightenment is more enlightenment, not willing surrender to oppression and bigotry in the guise of cultural difference.

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Endnotes:

¹ See, for example, Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2014)

² Shih Hsiu-chuan, "Foundation angry over EACS brochures," *Taipei Times*, Tuesday, July 29, 2014, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2014/07/29/2003596160> (consulted 29 July 2014)

³ EACS, "Report: The Deletion of Pages from EACS Conference Materials in Braga (July 2014)," Issued August 1, 2014. For the report and the letter of protest ("To whom it may concern"), see, the association website, <http://www.chinesestudies.eu>, viewed 2 August 2014

⁴ For a broader spectrum of China specialists, see, "The Debate Over Confucius Institutes," in two parts, *China File*, 06.23.14 and 07.01.14, <http://www.chinafile.com/Debate-Over-Confucius-Institutes> (Consulted 10 August 2014). It is interesting that most of the contributors to the debate are critical of the institutes. Indeed, in this sample at any rate, the defenders are those associated with the institutes or with business. Business organizations all along have been against criticism of the PRC for fear that it will interfere with business, and also supportive of the institutes for facilitating it.

⁵ Peter Schmidt, "AAUP Rebukes Colleges for Chinese Institutes and Censures Northeastern Illinois," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 15 2014, <http://chronicle.com/article/AAUP-Rebukes-Colleges-for/147153/> (consulted 10 August 2014). It is possible, hopefully, that the arrogance of PRC functionaries is finally catching the public eye. See, "Beijing's Propaganda Lessons," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 7, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/beijings-propaganda-lessons-1407430440> (viewed 10 August 2014). Rather than accede to Hanban demands for greater control, the Lyons (France) Confucius Institute was shut down in Fall 2013.

⁶ Marshall Sahlins, "China U.," *The Nation*, November 18, 2013, <http://www.thenation.com/article/176888/china-u#> (viewed 10 August 2014)

⁷ Naïve and sometimes self-serving arguments that the Confucius Institutes are under the Hanban which answers to the Ministry of Education disguise the importance of the reach of the Central Propaganda Bureau into all state organs, including Party think-tanks, and especially education. For a discussion, see, David Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy," *The China Journal*, No. 57 (January 2007): 25-58. See also, Anne-Marie Brady,

Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

⁸ World system analysts such as Immanuel Wallerstein and the late Giovanni Arrighi long have been interested in the question of hegemonic transition. The most thorough discussion I am aware of is Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the 21st Century* (London: Verso, 2009).

⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, "The Gethering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3(2010): 381-396, pp. 387-388. Mearsheimer is absolutely correct that the PRC search for hegemony has learned a great deal from the previous US experience. We might add that over the last three decades, the PRC has persistently mimicked the US in its pursuit of power and development.

¹⁰ For a brief English version, see, Tingyang Zhao, "Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia,)," *Social Identities*, 12.1(2006): 29-41. The idea has found favor among some US international relations experts such as David Kang at the University of Southern California. For critical discussions, see, William A. Callahan, "Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-Hegemonic or a New Hegemony?" *International Studies Review*, 10(2008): 740-761; Xu Bijun, "Is Zhao's Tianxia System Misunderstood?" *Tsinghua China Law Review*, Vol. 6(January 29, 2014): 95-108; Christopher R. Hughes, "Reclassifying Chinese nationalism: the geopolitik turn," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 20(71)(2011): 601-20; and, Zhang Feng, "The Tianxia System: World Order in a Chinese Utopia," *China Heritage Quarterly*, No. 21 (March 2010), http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/tienhsia.php?searchterm=021_utopia.inc&issue=021 (consulted 31 July 2014). Works like Zhao's are part of an ongoing effort to construct an "IR theory with Chinese characteristics," corresponding to the PRC's global stature. For a historically sensitive account of the concept, see, Wang Mingming, "All under heaven (tianxia): Cosmological perspectives and political ontologies in pre-modern China," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2(1)(2012): 337-383. For a reminder that the tributary system might not be welcome to modern nations with their claims on sovereignty, see, Amitav Acharya, "Will Asia's Past Be Its Future," *International Security*, 28.3(Winter 2003/04): 149-164. Others, most notably pan-Islamists, have their own vision of a new world order that, similarly to *tianxia*, seek to transcend the nation-based order overseen by "the West." See, Behlul Ozkan, "Turkey, Davutoglu, and the Idea of Pan-Islamism," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 56.4(2014): 119-141, published online, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2014.941570>. I am grateful to Prof. Tugrul Keskin for bringing this article to my attention.

¹¹ Gao Wenbing, "Rongtong gujin Zhongwai jiangou 'Zhongguo huoyu xitong'" (Meld old and new, Chinese and foreign; construct a 'Chinese system of discourse'), *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), July 23, 2014, http://www.qstheory.cn/zhuanku/zywz/2014-07/23/c_1111749353.htm (consulted 2 August 2014).

¹² For a detailed discussion, see, Arif Dirlik, "The Discourse of 'Chinese Marxism.'" In *Modern Chinese Religion: 1850-Present, Value Systems in Transformation*, ed. Vincent Goossaert, Jan Kiely, and John Lagerwey (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming).

- ¹³ Kejin Zhao, "China's Rise and Its Discursive Power Strategy" (2011?), http://apsapolcommunication.weebly.com/uploads/6/2/0/6/6206314/chinas_rise_and_its_discursive_power_strategy_english1.doc. (Viewed 2 August 2014). Zhao is a resident scholar at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center and deputy director of Tsinghua's center for U.S.-China relations.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1

¹⁵ Ibid., p.2

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 31

¹⁷ Ibid., p.28

¹⁸ For a forthcoming project, see, Jennifer Hubbert, "The Anthropology of Confucius Institutes," *Anthropology News*, 1 May 2014, <http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2014/05/01/the-anthropology-of-confucius-institutes/> (consulted 6 August 2014)

¹⁹ One may surmise that Confucius Institutes (and PRC students) are recruited to serve as the "eyes and ears" of officials who seem also to watch closely what happens in communities. When a US citizen of Taiwanese descent decided to have a mural on Tibet painted on a building he owned in the small town of Corvallis that is home to Oregon State University, officials from the PRC Consulate in San Francisco were dispatched to warn the mayor of consequences if the "transgression" was not stopped. See, China asks city in Oregon to scrub mural for Tibetan, Taiwanese independence," NBC News, Wednesday, September 12, 2012, http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/09/12/13833952-china-asks-city-in-oregon-to-scrub-mural-for-tibetan-taiwanese-independence?lite (consulted 14 February 2014). PRC leaders are quick to take offense at outsiders' "interference" in "China's internal affairs," which does not stop them from interfering in the affairs of others. Most common is the retaliation for friendly gestures toward the Dalai Lama. The Xu Lin episode is only one more example, if an egregious one, of the export of censorship. See, Elizabeth Coates, "Chinese Communist Party-backed Tech Giants Bring Censorship to the Global Stage," *TechCrunch*, August 2, 2014, http://nuzzel.com/story/08022014/techcrunch/chinese_communist_partybacked_tech_giants_bring_censorship_to_the (consulted 7 August 2014). In spite of all this, and for all the complaints by PRC officials, the US State Department backed off from terminating the visas of "academics at university-based institutes...teaching at the elementary- and secondary-school levels" in violation of "the terms of their visas." See, Karin Fischer, "State Department Directive Could Disrupt Teaching Activities of Campus-Based Confucius Institutes," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 21, 2012, <http://chronicle.com/article/State-Department-Directive/131934/> (consulted 10 August 2014). According to the *Wall Street Journal* (see above, note 5), Confucius classrooms continue to spread in US primary and secondary schools in collusion with the administrators of the SAT.

²⁰ Tu Wei-ming, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center," in Tu Wei-ming(ed), *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 1-34, pp. 15-16

²¹ The editors of an English-language theoretical journal recently invited members of the editorial board (all foreign) to submit discussions of the "China Dream" for a special issue. Getting well-known foreign Marxist or socialist intellectuals involved in such a discussion is of obvious symbolic significance in centering the PRC, and President Xi as a theorist. Upon inquiring about criticism of internal and external developments under President Xi, the editor honestly informed me that, yes, that might be a bit of a problem. This does not mean that there aren't many socialists, among others, who think that the PRC's is a socialist road, choosing to ignore the authoritarian capitalism that drives the system, the colonial policies toward minority populations, and an income gap more severe than most capitalist countries where, according to a recent report, one percent owns one-third of the national wealth. See, Xinhua Network, "1 % of Chinese own one-third of national wealth: report," 26 July 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/sci/2014-07/26/c_133512308.htm (consulted 4 August 2014)

²² For further discussion, see, Arif Dirlik and Roxann Prazniak, "Social Justice, Democracy and the Politics of Development: The People's Republic of China in Global Perspective," *International Journal of China Studies*, 3.3(December 2012): 285-313

²³ The reference here is to President Xi's assertion that Chinese are genetically indisposed to aggression against others. See, "Xi: there is no gene for invasion in our blood," *China Daily*, 16 May 2014, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-05/16/content_17511170.htm (consulted 4 August 2014). Even if it is rhetorical, the racialization of the notion of "Chineseness" in this claim is noteworthy. Now that PRC historians once again have made Mongols into part of "Chinese" history, I wonder if this includes genes of the likes of Genghis Khan. What we call "China," of course is a product of colonization, mainly by the Han people from the north. William Callahan informs us that according to a study published by the Chinese Academy of Military Science, over three thousand years, imperial dynasties were engaged in 3756 wars, an average of 1.4 wars a year. William A. Callahan, *China Dreams: Twenty Visions of the Future*(Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 48. See also Callahan's study of "national humiliation" discourse, *The Pessimist Nation*(Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁴ "Marketing" of culture has been part of these discussions on discursive power. But like the other market, the Party-state does not hesitate to step in and determine its limits. The reference here is to a recent article published in the official Party journal, *Qiushi*(Seeking Truth, formerly the Red Flag), Yin Xia, "Jianli Zhongguo tese huoyu tixi ji xu sixiang jiede damianji juexing" (The establishment of discourse with Chinese characteristics urgently requires broad awakening of the intellectual world), *Qiushi theory network*, July 22, 2014, http://www.qstheory.cn/wp/2014-07/22/c_1111732295.htm

²⁵ Benjamin Carlson, "7things you can't talk about in China," *globalpost*, June 3, 2013, < <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/china/130529/censorship-chinese-communist-party>. For background in the new leadership's ideological plans, see, "Document D: A China File Translation," 11/08/13, <http://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation> (consulted 6 August 2014). The prohibition has been accompanied by criticism of the hypocrisy of the US government which exports "freedom" while betraying it at home. See, "Experts: the so-called 'press freedom' is just a 'beautifying tool,'" *Guangming online*, 30 October 2013, http://en.gmw.cn/2013-10/30/content_9332687.htm(consulted 7 August 2014), The experts included three academics, regulars on the IR scene, and often cited in the press: Shi Yinhong of Renmin University, Shen Dingli of Fudan University and Zhao Kejin, the author discussed above.

²⁶ Chris Buckley, "China Takes Aim at Western Ideas," *The New York Times*, August 19, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/20/world/asia/chinas-new-leadership-takes-hard-line-in-secret-memo.html?pagewanted=all>(viewed 28 August 2014)

²⁷ Sharon Tiezzi, "Top Chinese Think-tank Accused of 'Collusion' with 'Foreign Forces,'" *The Diplomat*, June 18, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/06/top-chinese-think-tank-accused-of-collusion-with-foreign-forces/>; Adrian Wan, "Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is 'infiltrated by foreign forces': anti-graft official," *South China Morning Post*, Tuesday, 15 June, 2013, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1533020/chinese-academy-social-sciences-infiltrated-foreign-forces-anti-graft>; and, Cary Huang, "Chill wind blows through Chinese Academy of Social Sciences," *South China Morning Post*, 2 August 2014, < <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1564502/chill-wind-blows-through-chinese-academy-social-sciences>.(consulted 6 August 2014)

²⁸ Yin Xia, “Jianli Zhongguo tese huoyu tixi ji xu sixiang jiede damianji juexing. “Chinese airs” was the term Mao Zedong used in 1940 his seminal essay, “On New Democracy,” which inaugurated “making Marxism Chinese.”

²⁹ Kim Arora, “Penguin to destroy copies of Wendy Doniger’s book, ‘The Hindus,’” *The Times of India*, Feb 11, 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Penguin-to-destroy-copies-of-Wendy-Donigers-book-The-Hindus/articleshow/30225387.cms?>; Ritu Sharma, “Man who got Wendy Doniger pulped is ‘must reading’ in Gujarat schools,” *The Indian Express*, July 25, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/man-who-got-wendy-doniger-pulped-is-made-must-reading-in-gujarat-schools/>; Pankti Dalal, “Gujarat model of using epics as facts in education,” *india.com*, Sunday, 27 July 2014, <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-gujarat-model-of-using-epics-as-facts-in-education-2005721>; “Interview: Ramayana, Mahabharata Are True Accounts of the Period...Not Myths,” July 21, 2014, <http://www.outlookindia.com/article/Ramayana-Mahabharata-Are-True-Accounts-Of-The-PeriodNot-Myths/291363>; and Romila Thapar, “History repeats itself,” *india today*, July 21, 2014, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/romila-thapar-smriti-irani-old-history-baiters-of-bjp/1/370799.html> (all consulted 5 August 2014). The *Outlook* interview is with Prof. Y.S. Rao, the new Chairman, who expresses his belief that “faith and reason can go together” in historical work. Romila Thapar, one of the most distinguished Indian historians, discusses the importance of evidence, but also comments on Rao’s hostility to Marxist historiography which has made seminal contributions to Indian historiography.

³⁰ For a recent example of such demands, see, Budd Hall and Rajesh Tandon, “No more enclosures: knowledge democracy and social transformation,” *Open Democracy*, 20 August 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/budd-hall-rajesh-tandon/no-more-enclosures-knowledge-democracy-and-social-transformat> (viewed, 20 August 2014)

³¹ Arif Dirlik, *Global Modernity: Modernity in an Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Press, 2007)

³² This recalls an anecdote the author was told by the late distinguished Pacific writer Epeli Hau’ofa, who was then head of the business school at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. We have to teach our students two kinds of English, he said, World Bank English and pidgin English, one for success in the world, the other for the conduct of everyday life. The question is global. It nevertheless has to be distinguished according to power relations. There is a big difference between the deployment of “native” knowledge for global hegemony, and its importance for the survival of a small fragile society. Ethical neutrality may only end up in complicity with power. See, Arif Dirlik, “The Past as Legacy and Project: Postcolonial Criticism in the Perspective of Indigenous Historicism,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 20.2(1996):1-31

³³ For “clash of civilizations,” see, Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72.3(Summer 1993): 22-49; “If not Civilizations, What? Paradigms of the Post-Cold War,” *Foreign Affairs* 72.5(Nov/Dec 1993): 186-195; and, “The West Unique, Not Universal,” *Foreign Affairs* 75.6(Nov/Dec 1996): 28-46. These various essays were compiled and expanded in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1996). The most thorough study of hybridity in historical perspective is Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London, UK: Routledge, 1995). A prominent Chinese scholar who advocates similar ideas is He Chuanqi. See, “China Modernization Report 2009: The Study of Cultural Modernization,” *China Development*

Gateway, http://en.chinagate.cn/dateorder/2009-02/24/content_17327414.htm. See, also, an influential advocate of “Confucianism,” Kang Xiaoguang, “Confucianization: A Future in the Tradition,” *Social Research*, 73.1 (Spring 2006): 77-120. See, also, David Ownby, “Kang Xiaoguang: Social Science, Civil Society, and Confucian Religion,” *China Perspectives*, #4(2009): 101-111. Kang views belief in democracy as a “superstition.”

³⁴ For further discussion, see, Arif Dirlik, “Bringing History Back In: Of Diasporas, Hybridities, Places and Histories,” *Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies*, 21.2(1999):95-131

³⁵ For the origins of multiculturalism in corporate managerial needs, see, Arif Dirlik, “The Postmodernization of Production and Its Organization: Flexible Production, Work and Culture,” In A. Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 186-219

³⁶ Susan Neiman, *Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown-up Idealists*, revised edition(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 12

³⁷ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. vii-viii.

³⁸ Kenan Malik, *Multiculturalism and Its Discontents*(London: Seagull Books, 2013), pp. 71-72. Indeed, any such criticism is met almost in knee-jerk fashion with charges of racism. The mutual tolerance in most cases is also less than mutual—as the example of the PRC, among others, illustrates.

³⁹ Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Theory from the South, Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving Toward Africa*(Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), p. 2. For the deployment of universalism in the service of Euro/American power, see, Immanuel Wallerstein, *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power*(New York: The New Press, 2006)

⁴⁰ There is, moreover, a fallacy to the kind of criticism offered by Comaroff and Comaroff in the work just cited. It seems as if they would like to eat their cake, and have it, too. Bringing other perspectives into theory should not present much of a problem, even if it has become a major concern only recently. The more fundamental issue is that of theory itself, and the disciplinary organization of learning, which casts a web over our ways of knowing. If the hegemony of Enlightenment knowledge is to be challenged, that means questioning the whole enterprise of theory and disciplinary division of intellectual labor. This, of course, is the position of radical critics such as Ashis Nandy and Vine DeLoria, Jr., as well as Islamic fundamentalists and radical advocates of national learning in Chinese societies.

⁴¹ Anthony Appiah has observed that “attacks on ‘Enlightenment humanism’ have been attacks not on the universality of Enlightenment pretensions but on the Eurocentrism of their real bases. The confounding of Enlightenment and Eurocentrism is a pervasive problem. See, Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 249-250

⁴² Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. by John Cumming((New York: The Seabury Press, 1944). This devastating critique of the Enlightenment’s complicity in the rising tide of despotism in the 1930s nevertheless ends with the conclusion that “Enlightenment which is in possession of itself and coming to power can break the bounds of enlightenment.”(p. 208)

⁴³ Darrow Schechter, *The Critique of Instrumental Reason: From Weber to Habermas*(New York: Continuum Books, 2010) for a comprehensive critical discussion.

⁴⁴ Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002)

⁴⁵ Neiman, *Moral Clarity*, p. 136

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" in Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, ed by Sylvere Lotringer (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), pp. 41-01, p. 42

⁴⁷ Judith Butler, "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," *Transversal* (May 2001), <http://eicpcp.net/transversal/0806/butler/en> (consulted 10 August 2014)

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. By Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 32-50, p. 32

⁴⁹ The disillusionment with "Western civilization" has antecedents. It was especially pronounced in the aftermath of World War I which to many represented the spiritual bankruptcy of the "West." See, Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), and, Dominic Sachsenmaier, "Alternative Visions of World Order in the Aftermath of World War I: Global Perspectives on Chinese Approaches," in Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier eds., *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s-1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Ironically, such disillusionment was also a reason for the attraction to socialist alternatives, suggesting a distinction between "Western" modernity and capitalism.

⁵⁰ Enlightenment (*qimeng*) has been an ongoing concern of Chinese intellectuals since the New Culture Movement of the 1910s-1920s. See, Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986); He Ganzhi, *Jindai Zhongguo qimeng yundong shi* (History of the Modern Chinese Enlightenment Movement) (Shanghai: no publisher, 1936); Gu Xin, *Zhongguo qimengde lishi tuijin* (Historical Prospects of the Chinese Enlightenment) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1992); and, Zhang Xudong, *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms Cultural Fever, Avant-garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997)

⁵¹ It is also important to note that this shift is anything but spontaneous. The surge in religion has been financed by states, and encouraged by Euro/American geopolitical interests, as in the case of Islam, with explicitly anti-revolutionary intentions. Organized activity also has played a major part, as in the case for example of the Gulen movement, whose impressive use of education in popularizing its goal of an Islamic capitalist modernity compare favorably with the censorial clumsiness of Confucius Institutes. For sympathetic studies, see, Helen Rose Ebaugh, *The Gulen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam* (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer, 2010), and, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gulen Movement*, ed. By M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003)

⁵² The dismissal of the Amerindian scholar Ward Churchill from the University of Colorado for negative comments about 9/11 has been followed by ongoing efforts to restrict speech on a variety of issues, most egregiously in the US, Israel. The most recent case is that of Steven Salaita who has been "unhired" by the University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana on the grounds of "uncivil" language in tweets that were critical of Israel. The chilling effect on criticism of a vague charge that potentially covers a broad range of speech and behavior is imaginable. See, David Palumbo-liu, "Why the 'Unhiring' of Steven Salaita Is a Threat to Academic Freedom," *The Nation*, August 27, 2014, <http://www.thenation.com/article/181406/>

[why-unhiring-steven-salaita-threat-academic-freedom](#) (viewed 28 August, 2014). Ironically, Salaita is also a scholar of Amerindian Studies, with an interest in settler colonialism. Settler colonialism as the experience both of Amerindians and Palestinians has received increased attention among Amerindian scholars in recent years.

⁵³ Immanuel Kant, “*An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*” (1784), in Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, tr. by Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983), pp. 41-48, pp. 41-42. Emphases in the original.

⁵⁴ Noam Chomsky, “What is the Common Good?” Dewey Lecture at Columbia University, December 6, 2013, adapted for publication in *Truthout*, 07 January 2014, <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/21070-noam-chomsky-what-is-the-common-good> (consulted 27 April 2014). See, also, Jacques Ranciere for a view of anarchy as the condition for democracy: “Democracy first of all means this: anarchic ‘government’, one based on nothing other than the absence of every title to govern.” Ranciere, *Hatred of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 41. In his many works, the Japanese social philosopher Kojin Karatani also has elaborated on the links between Kantian notions of Enlightenment and anarchism, especially the anarchism of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. See, Kojin Karatani, *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange*, tr. by Michael K. Bourdaghs (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014)

⁵⁵ For a sustained philosophical argument that is as down to earth as it is analytically sharp, see, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *On Reason: Rationality in a World of Cultural Conflict and Racism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). We may also recall here an observation by Ernesto Laclau on “a dimension of the relationship particularism/universalism which has generally been disregarded. The basic point is this: I cannot assert a differential identity without distinguishing it from a context, and, in the process of making the distinction, I am asserting the context at the same time. And the opposite is also true: I cannot destroy a context without destroying at the same time the identity of the particular subject who carries out the destruction.” Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London and New York: Verso, 1996), Chap. 2, “Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity,” p. 27. The “ontological differences” is with reference to the work of Ahmet Davutoglu, *Alternative Paradigms: The Impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), p. 195, where the author describes the “Islamic paradigm” as “absolutely alternative to the Western.” Davutoglu is currently the foreign minister (and soon-to-be prime minister) of Turkey. He is an advocate of Pan-Islamic expansionism, with Turkey at the center, and for all his insistence on “ontological difference,” draws heavily on Euro/American geopolitical ideas, especially German notions of *lebensraum* from the early 20th century. See, Ozkan, “Turkey, Davutoglu, and the Idea of Pan-Islamism,” op.cit., fn. 10

⁵⁶ Eze, *On Reason*, p. 183

⁵⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, tr. by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 188

⁵⁸ Soonyi Lee, “Culture and Politics in Interwar China: The Two Zhangs and Chinese Socialism,” Ph.D. dissertation, Department of East Asian Studies, New York University (2014), p. 27