

Unthinking White Mythologies

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Review article

Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms

by Immanuel Wallerstein

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The nineteenth century formation, institutionalisation and professionalisation of modernism's disciplines and organisations have become an object of embarrassment and a source of discontent. From various perspectives and societal sectors, this is the case with the university system as such. With the rise of the polytechnic and technikon—mainly due to their links with market related forces, sectorally focused skills development and promises of employment—the university and its disciplines have to honestly confront the challenges the current juncture in South African tertiary education transformation poses. But, there is a more pressing reason.

With the epochmaking potential of the world-historical events of the 1990s, the criticism of imperial and colonial practices has become a rising tide also within the university's disciplines and social formations. As such, these criticisms threaten to explode the disciplines from within. And as universities continue to fail to deliver on legitimate expectations—given the challenge in South Africa to transform to a democratic, and equal opportunity state beyond or different from the race, class and gender biases entrenched in its institutional organisation—this may be quite daunting.

That the real timespace complexities involved in this scenario has not been addressed adequately in South African academia is an understatement. Indeed, academia is so close to the pressing transformation challenges that it leaves many powerless, unmotivated, apathetic if not blind. Why? One reason may be that one does not know one's way around the labyrinth of power relations in flux, deformation and formation but then deformation again. Another may be that the mere notion of transforming existing disciplines to different ones and in the process close departments and discontinue faculties or form new ones, send shivers through the academic spine. This means that one's life's work within one disciplinary complex

may be regarded as irrelevant, un-productive and not contributing to training and educating a workforce necessary for the new global economy and its local tentacles. Given this general condition, some take on the challenge, transform to different, usually interdisciplinary configurations; some remain with their focus of study but switch the traditional disciplinary theorising and methodologising for that of another existing discipline; others muster local or international organisations in support to retain disciplines in which not much is changed; yet others, especially in South Africa, scramble to link up and get published in some similarly outdated international publishing consortiums or opt out of the system. Within the humanities—arguably the hardest hit—this state of affairs needs direction.

Even though the most pressing challenge is to seriously engage the actual problematics of our current juncture, this article aims to make a contribution to the historical decision making processes which may eventually lead to the direction referred to. I have chosen Wallerstein's book above for review because I think that there are important views and dialogues related to the issues it raises which need to be addressed. Its greatest importance is that it represents a tertiary disciplinary paradigm different from the nineteenth century splitting of the 'social sciences' into economics, political science, sociology and anthropology.

The article is organised in seven sections. The first deals with the title followed by a brief overview of each of the book's sections. Finally, I provide a few suggestions.

I

Derrida's 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy' (1982:207ff) derives from Anatole France's 'Aristos and Polyphilos on the Language of Metaphysics' from *The Garden of Epicurus* (1924). In response to Ariste's question as to where Polyphilos's reflection on the 'verbal form' of metaphysical propositions have lead him, he replies with a metaphor. Similar to a knife-grinder who chooses to grind coins and medals and not knives—effacing the image and date from them and in the process both frees them from time and space and for universal consumption—the metaphysician universalises rationality while concealing the universal's own contingency (see Harrison 1999:505-507). In language, the case in point is metaphor itself because reason is supposed to function logically and rationally and not access or employ metaphor. This is 'white mythology'. It constitutes an originary excess which is not accounted for. This can be called 'whitewashing' systems and practices and derives from the French where 'white' also has the cognates 'to bleach', 'whitewash', 'exonerate' (see Harrison 1999:507).

The same insight is captured in Derrida's October 26 1990 to January 21 1991 'Mémoires d'aveugle: L'autoportrait et autres ruines' (Memoirs of the Blind: Self-portrait and other ruins') guest-curation of an exhibition of drawings at the Louvre's Napoleon Hall from its own collection. For the exhibition, Derrida (see Rubinstein 1991:47-53) included one drawing on ruins, 'Ruins of the Coliseum in Rome' (1587) by Francois Stella. Exploring the relationship between drawing and

blindness—the abyss of difference which opens up between ‘the thing drawn and the drawn line’—at the moment of the pen or pencil stroke, the single drawing on ruins was to be a metonymy or counterpoint of the theme of the whole exhibition (Rubinstein 1991:47). It was to capture the deconstructive insight that the self-portrait is not only a ruin because the subject ages immediately after but that ‘the image is a ruin “from the first glance” ... [w]ith no hope of restoration’. Even so, this “dimension of ruinous simulacra” does not stand in the ‘way of creation, of the “emergence of the work”’ (Rubinstein 1991:49). Even so, the moment of creation is already a blindness, a ruin.

One final perspective on the title comes from the oracle in the book Ezekiel in the Bible (Ezekiel 13:10-15). The oracle comprises a prophetic critique of fellow prophets claiming peace while there is none, metaphorically whitewashing recently built unstable walls in the face of brewing metaphorical storms. As such, one may argue that the suspended metaphor here too, is that of the ruin at origin.

In her exposition of ‘myth’ in structuralist perspective, Sontag (1986) points to the structuralist revolutionary finding that the subject is not free but determined by a multiplicity of languages; and that it also unmasks that from which the subject is not free—in the face of ‘ahistorical and apsychological’ structural description/ thinking. These two complementary effects of structuralist thinking—to reveal both *that* the subject is not free as well as *that from which* the subject is not free—confronted western knowledge systems (whether popular or academic) with the reality that these systems or languages are *myths*. ‘Myths’, here, does not mean that these languages are false but that it is the myths themselves which function as ‘explanatory models for fundamental states of affairs’ or that they ‘produce social cohesion’. As such, structuralist thinking itself functions as ‘explanatory model’ or creating its own ‘myths’ and ‘social cohesions’ (cf. Sontag 1986:xixf). To various degrees, the same is true of those languages or models of description/ thinking which developed in the wake of structuralism or which—similar to structuralism—likewise arose out of a disenchantment with western knowledge(s).

Wallerstein confronts this broader context of the disenchantment with western knowledge—both within western institutions as well as in the erstwhile colonies—quite creatively. His proposal of ‘unthinking’ and not ‘rethinking’ the social sciences, exposes the mistaken assumptions central to the social sciences—the nomothetic/ idiographic binary (or event-focused historical description and chronologising, and universalising social theory); expectations related to [third world] ‘development’; the presumption that geographical and chronological studies within the social sciences are ‘physical invariants’ and hence ‘exogenous variables’; and that Marx as articulated with party-political ideology has been fully appropriated by academe. In this context, ‘unthinking’ wishes to capture both a moving to a different set of grounding assumptions for the nineteenth century social science paradigm and the ‘thinking’ of the whitewashing mythologies proper. It is only when they are arrested in their partiality that different assumptions can be developed.

II

Unthinking Social Science contains a number of essays which Immanuel Wallerstein had published elsewhere previously—i.e. through 1982—1991. These have been collated under six subject headings: ‘The Social Sciences: From Genesis to Bifurcation’; ‘The Concept of Development’; ‘Concepts of Time and Space’; ‘Revisiting Marx’; ‘Revisiting Braudel’; and ‘World-Systems Analysis as Unthinking’.

In his four page ‘Introduction’, Wallerstein makes a case for his choice of ‘unthinking’ against ‘rethinking’. He reasons that ‘rethinking’ implies the natural academic tendency of changing premises in the face of new evidence calling for a change of theory and prediction/ hypothesis. The assumption is that this practice alone does not clear the way towards a new paradigm. ‘Unthinking’, however, calls for the debunking of the ‘misleading’ and ‘constrictive’—also labeled ‘highly dubious and narrow-minded’—‘presumptions’ still operative in the social sciences. It is this well-defined ‘forest’ of ‘methodological assumptions’ which is cause of academic blockage to ‘our vision’. He says,

[t]hese presumptions, once considered liberating of the spirit, serve today as the central intellectual barrier to useful analysis of the social world [and] that those who criticize the existing dominant epistemology, even when their criticisms are serious and pertinent, often remain nonetheless less than fully liberated from the *Weltanschauung* they renounce. I feel I am not exempt from this backsliding myself (p. 1).

In his overview of *the social sciences from genesis to bifurcation*, Wallerstein treats the social history of the epistemology of the social sciences as deriving from a presumption of progressively developing through different stages, e.g. that the French Revolution is that juncture at which the rising bourgeoisie overthrew the *ancien régime* (p. 7). This progressive dialectical view rests on the assumption that ‘change is normal’ and is shared by nineteenth century European conservatism, liberalism and Marxism (pp. 16-18,20). Due to the refraction of scholarly thinking into ‘ideology’, ‘social science’ and ‘the movements’, this provided the basis on which the human sciences became institutionalised in universities since 1789 (pp. 21f,18f). From scientific perspective and the belief that it should be possible to comprehensively and rationally order the totality of human existence, this refraction became fully focused in the chunking of human community into the categories of mind; society; business; government; ethics and international relations with their accompanying disciplines (p 31f). A different point of departure for an alternative system would be—following Prigogine’s physics—notions of ‘non-equilibrium’; ‘interactions’; the introduction of a plurality of times or turbulence; that all science is human science and that the scientist cannot stand outside science; and a working with both micro- and macroscopic stochasticity or indeterminacy (pp. 32-

35). As such, new conceptual categories have to be developed in the social sciences—ones which at different levels of abstraction, articulate this new centre (p. 37).

Wallerstein's critique of the notion of *development*—prevalent in social science theorising since 1945 and especially focused on the 'Third World'—turns on the mistaken assumptions related to the 'industrial revolution' in Europe (pp. 47-49). Even though it is partially correct when dealing with Europe, it is not so in the colonies where it effects guilt—'for its inability to match the West's economic living standards unless they are ready to assimilate assiduously Western culture' as well as 'intellectually and politically ... false expectations' (p. 43,49,2). Since most historiography but also all the varieties of nomothetic analysis turns on this mistaken assumption, it needs a different framework (p. 2). If this view is accepted, then it problematises all current economic theories (pp. 51-63)—which have mainly been built around organising myths—and notions of societal development (pp. 64-79).

The main problem with the first is that it works with the modern state as unit of analysis; that the bourgeois/ proletarian distinction does not bring anything new to analysis and that aristocrat and bourgeois as well as proletarian and peasant are not so different as assumed within the development notion of history; and that feudalism came to a fall with the squeeze the peasantry put on its surplus (p. 57f). Moreover, the 'structural crisis' in which the present historical system finds itself in at present, has arisen due to the 'historical disparities of development' exemplified in the polarization of surplus distribution between 'the capitalist world-economy as a whole and not within individual nation-states'; and that capitalism's success and not failure will bring about its downfall. The main reason for the latter is that enterprise, trade and the factors of production were always only partially free (p. 59f). This begs the question of a new metahistory of more comprehensive theorising of large-scale and long-term socio-economic changes, which, with greater historical depth (see the example, pp. 60-62) may inform current practical decisions (p. 51,60,63).

The fundamental problem of the second is that both the notions of 'society' or *Gesellschaft* and development or *Entwicklung* have not had 'very adequate conceptual tools' developed over the last one and a half centuries (p. 67). The society-state split, the definition of the citizens of a state and the question of what precisely constitutes 'the popular will' on the one hand and the modeling of development after biological evolution on the other, are fundamental to this hiatus (p. 66-68). When these two notions are combined—in 'societal development'—it appears as if one deals with an entity which had pristine beginnings and progressively developed. This understanding, however, is equally flawed (see Wallerstein's examples from Germany and Puerto Rico, pp. 68-74). On the one hand, the 'world system' and not separate 'societies' have been 'developing'—meaning that one has to accept in principle the fluidity of the social bond and its politicised boundary; on the other, rather than a moving from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, or *Gemeinschaft*

'dying out', the capitalist world economy, due to a new 'cultural rebellion', has been creating new *Gemeinschaften*—fundamentalisms, hedonisms of withdrawal and the hedonisms of total self-interestedness, the multiple "countercultures", etc. (p. 75).

They represent screams of pain against the irrationality that oppresses in the name of a universal rationalizing logic. Had we really been moving from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, all this would not be occurring. We should instead be bathing in the rational waters of an Enlightenment world (p.76).

Despite this situation, 'signs of malaise', 'the cultural pessimism' and 'the myriad antisystemic movements that have begun to develop momentum and get out of hand' (p. 77) there is hope. This, however, is to be found in the contradictions of the economic and political structures of the last century and a half, the historical choices we are faced with in the light of these contradictions and the reenchantment of the world by science (p. 77). What is clear, however, is that the liberal-Marxist consensus does not provide an adequate framework for the social sciences (p. 76). Rather, a radically different conceptual apparatus has to be developed (p. 78).

Nobel Prize winner for Economics, Gunnar Myrdal, has devoted his whole academic career to expose the 'closed models' of 'conventional economic theory' to ever more variables; the mistaken assumptions informing the 'superficiality and logical inconsistency' of modern welfare theory; the fallacy of economist's adoption of the moral philosophy of utilitarianism since the early nineteenth century; the narrow professionalism of contemporary establishment economics; the development of theory and offering of practical solutions for racism and underdevelopment in contemporary social reality (pp. 81ff,93f). His whole career was also inspired by his own views on 'value in social theory' and 'objectivity in social research'. Since one's position on the latter two issues impacts on whether one's research leads to practical conclusions or not, Myrdal's emphasis that it should, derives from his premise that social science is essentially a 'political' science and that one should, therefore, assert explicit value premises. If one hides behind pseudo-scientific policy and arguments purported to be objective, they will fall apart at the moment of application or where they have to be implemented in practical action—especially in a democratic setting (p. 82). Within the ambit of these views, Myrdal's legacy hinges on 'the negative social realities constituted by racism and underdevelopment' and 'the role of the social scientist in relation to these realities'.

Racism and underdevelopment manifest in processes 'which keep people out while keeping others in' (p. 83). Racism has its origins in the ethnic dimensions of society and underdevelopment (poverty) in class dimensions (p. 84f). In each social organisation, people and groups are socially ranked in terms of these dimensions. In the world system, it can further be proved that the lowest ethnic ranking overlaps not only with the lowest class ranking in that particular society but also determines who has more and who less political rights. Those with the least rights are those at the bottom, the 'class-ethnic understratum' (p.86). It is a legacy of

the capitalist modern world system that this ethnic-class linkage is so endemic that people from the underclass who ethnically belong to a higher ethnic social category, are treated in society as you would someone who belong to the class-ethnic understratum (p. 86f). [The inverse of this view is just as relevant and may be proven especially in South Africa—given our racist past: people from the lowest ethnic category who economically belong to a higher class, are treated in society as you would someone who belong to the class-ethnic understratum.] In any case, this is the source of the capitalist world system's moral dilemma (p. 86). And if South Africa succeeds in moving to different and more just social and economic formations, it will also its moral dilemma as it relates to Africa north of the Limpopo. The reason for this state of affairs and its accompanying moral dilemma is that,

[i]f one has an inegalitarian historical system, and the capitalist world-economy is an inegalitarian system, then it follows by definition that there must be understrata (p. 86).

In this context, both defenders and critics accept that capitalism is an inegalitarian system by definition (p. 83); and further, that, despite statements to the contrary, both racism and underdevelopment are therefore constitutive of capitalism. The moral dilemma for the capitalist world system, therefore, is that it will remain incapacitated of 'developing' to such a level that it meets up with the moral ideals of 'radical political democracy' and of 'equality of opportunity'.

Available possibilities will also not deliver—meritocracy, education, nationalism, conservatism, liberalism and the 'revolutionary approach'.

Meritocracy—desireable as it is in this unequal system—will not provide the answer, because as much as there is upward social mobility of those with 'talent' and not born into the highest classes (or castes—p. 86) there is just as much downward social mobility (pp. 86f). Neither will education bring about the desired 'development' in the 'Third World' for example, because it is something which is always futurist.

The third World must learn the skills, and even more, absorb the underlying values, of the industrialized world, and they will then 'catch up'. The industrialized countries must learn to shelve their prejudices, and aid their brethren to catch up. Today we educate. Tomorrow we shall be equal. But tomorrow, for the dilemma of underdevelopment as for the dilemma of racism, remains a long time (p. 90).

Nor will 'nationalism' provide help. Precisely because it organises people to struggle against the inequalities of the world system, it remains its victims. Moreover, because it positions itself as victim, it continues to socialise its nationalist adherents into positions of subservience (p. 90f). Conservatism will not deliver because it denies this dilemma; liberalism with its policy changes and ameliorative politics will

not either, despite the real advances it did achieve; nor will revolutionary politics because it aims at acquiring state power and, once acquired, becomes entangled in the same world capitalist system (p. 91f).

Racism, however, is the main component which 'keeps people in and others out'. Wallerstein only notes that capitalism's racist processes work as such by keeping people disempowered politically and economically to draw on labour on an ad hoc basis (p. 89f). What needs to be added is that this 'labour' does not only include unionised labour but also informal labour, that it is mostly 'illiterate', 'innumerate', 'unskilled', and most fundamentally, without access to systems. The most crucial is that people grow up in house-hold systems—if at all—bereft of any intellectual and skills learning. The class-ethnic substratum is only systemically organised in what can be labeled 'survival systems'—those of the traditional authorities and independent social formations which split off from modern colonial hegemonic systems due to discontent. In the South Africa of today (as for post-independent Africa), I therefore claim that, despite the current drive (and those of the last forty-odd years in Africa) towards literacy, numeracy and skills training—which still leaves much to be desired—this is not the major hurdle in the way of (South) Africa's hopes of advance. It is 1) the scarcity of systems; and 2) the scarcity of people devoted to create systems which will not only give people access to resources but also co-operatively facilitate the production of resources.

Following his exposition, Wallerstein claims racism and underdevelopment not only to be a moral dilemma—as Myrdal did—but in fact are

constitutive of the capitalist world economy as a historical system. They are the primary conditions and essential manifestations of the unequal distribution of surplus-value. They make possible the ceaseless accumulation of capital, the *raison d'être* of historical capitalism. They organize the process occupationally and legitimate it politically. It is impossible to conceptualize a capitalist world-economy which did not have them From the perspective of those who hold power in the capitalist world-economy, solving or not solving the 'dilemmas' of racism or underdevelopment are 'equally unpleasant alternatives'. The system cannot operate without them, and in the long run the system cannot operate with them. It is more than a difficult choice; it is an impossible one (p. 92).

In view of Myrdal's asserting of *the role of the social scientist* and contextualised within Wallerstein's exposition, the latter argues that Myrdal's primary fallacy is that his blinkered focus on 'establishment economics' is a *reductio ad absurdum* and that he did not see the wider problem not only of this kind of economics but of the 'historical social sciences'. This latter expression comprises of a number of facets and premises. Firstly, despite the fact that what came to be known as the social sciences had many forerunners—especially in philosophy—it was mainly the French Revolution which,

produced an institutional shock to the world-system which resulted in a whole series of cultural transformations. One was the emergence of social science as a specialized activity what had been a single domain of intellectual discourse with rather vague boundaries became differentiated, primarily between 1848 and 1914, into a series of so-called disciplines, each with a name, often a neologism history, geography, economics, sociology, political science, anthropology, and ... Orientalism (p. 95).

National associations bearing these names existed by 1914 and international ones with their scholarly journals, by 1960. This development sprang from four premises. The *first* was the initial modern distinction between 'the public sphere of the exercise of power, the semi-public sphere of production and the private sphere of everyday life. To confound these sphere was "medieval"; to separate them, divine' (p. 96). The *second* derived from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic—that 'change was normal', that 'we live in a progressively evolutionary world' and that progress marks the industrializing, capitalist world. It is this assumption which had scholars assert that Africa has no history. The *third* premise derived from nature. It was the utilitarian perspective on human psychology—founded on 'human nature' and emulated in successful entrepreneurs' social habits. This allowed for the mapping of social reality in terms of the Newtonian model. *Fourthly* was the self-evident superiority of (Christian) Western civilization and empirically verifiable from Europe's technological and military advances during the nineteenth century. From these premises, history primarily focused on Europe's political past; ethnography, the study of the 'exotic people in the process of being conquered'; and Orientalism the world's exotic cultures which once had 'high' civilization. In the process, alternative critical formations such as *Staatswissenschaft*, were eliminated, primarily because this new disciplinary social refraction through the *Methodenstreit* diverted scholarly focus away from 'the real issues' (p. 97). This refraction had its origins in the distinction between nomothetic and idiographic disciplines or those focused on 'the uniqueness of each specific human/ social phenomenon' and describing unique European and non-European pasts and presents; and those focused on 'universal laws that were to be objective of research'. In the universities, this lead to the distinction between the faculties of the humanities and social sciences (p. 97f). The main problem with this distinction manifested in its procedures as well as its inability to answer questions related to the 'real issues'. The procedure of nomothetic disciplines was to work through quantification in its 'search for formulae which are linked to theorems'. As championed by Ranke, the idiographic disciplines focused on archival research—archives kept by state functionaries. Due to their foci and procedures, these disciplines failed to explain the 'real issues' of racism and underdevelopment as well as their persistence.

We could not even explain how and why the states came into existence, nor why we have assumed implicitly that every state has a 'society' and every

'society' a state. And a world of knowledge that cannot explain such central phenomena is bound to run into great difficulties. The real world is bound to catch up with it (98f).

For Wallerstein, 1968 constitutes not only 'an antisystemic revolutionary moment' but also a 'revolution against the antisystemic movements themselves' who had come into power since 1945—the Social-Democrats in the West, the Communists in the East and the liberation movements in the South (p. 99f). Within the universities, 1968 set a process in motion through which the dividing line between the historical/ humanistic sciences and social scientific studies could be crossed. This has resulted in the still continuing flux in which the disciplines find themselves. Even so, it also indicates the challenge to truly break away from the Newtonian linear dynamics and equilibrium-seeking research to one which seeks to explain complexity a la Prigogine (p. 101).

In the face of the failure of the world capitalist historical system to explain racism and underdevelopment, the question which arises is that of economic development. Especially since 1945, Wallerstein argues, no government in the world would not have this ideal as a top priority. The ideal is the same, the policies differ. He therefore sets out to review the history of the capitalist world-economy in order to address the questions of 1) what is developed in development? 2) who or what has in fact developed? 3) what underlies the demand for development? 4) how such development can indeed come about and 5) what the political implications are of the answers to the first four questions.

In his brief overview, Wallerstein argues that development can mean either 'growth' modeled after that of biological organisms or simply 'more' as in accumulation. The problem in both models, however, is that they do not account for decay and death.

Addressing the question as to who or what has in fact developed, Wallerstein argues that, especially during the twentieth century when popular forces came to occupy state power, there was some development in industry, consumer goods, etc. The main explosion, however, happened since 1945. Even so, the central question on the agenda currently, is that

Each type of [popular/ initially anti-systemic movement now in power] has come under internal criticism from within their countries, and often even from within the movements in power, for their failures to achieve, or to achieve to a significant degree, these goals—economic growth and greater internal equality ... [a] source of disillusionment (p. 115).

So, what underlies the demand for development? The ideals of transformation towards greater internal social equality and economic growth as a 'catching up' with more affluent powers (p. 115). The problem with these twin goals, however, is that governments have usually given priority to the latter while they were

split on the importance of the first. Whereas this contradiction is held together in antisystemic movements prior to their coming to power, once in power, political choices are required and these choices normally go towards 'catching up' (p. 116f).

The question then of how such 'catching up' development can indeed come about can be answered if one looks at 'national development' in history. Contrary to the usual view that development progressively expanded in ever more national countries between 1750 and 1950—the 'export-oriented model'—Wallerstein does not hold to the premises of the 'de-linking model' which calls for a total rupture with the system. He sees this 'development' as 'the story of the secular expansion of the world-economy' rather, and that this expansion has reached its zenith. On the one hand, since new nationalist countries were added to the world economy 'to create low-cost, surplus-creating but not surplus-retaining segments of the worldwide commodity chain', the core grew. This means that these countries did not 'achieve' development but 'had it thrust upon them'. On the other hand, if ever more countries are added to the world economic system, it means that some countries will fall out of it (pp. 118f). So, because 'catching up' means competition, some countries may advance in the world economy, but it will be at others' expense.

Against this background, the question as to what needs to be done or what the political implications of this analysis are is, 1) that national development is not the answer; 2) that, in the face of the world's unequally allocated created surplus, the ideal remains a truly 'egalitarian, democratic world and not simply a reversal of fortunes inside our present inegalitarian, undemocratic world-system' (pp. 119f); 3) that, whereas the route to this objective was via 'nationally organized working class movements' prior to 1945 and following it, via 'popularly organized national movements', now it is also not via the state. The main reason is that, since the state will have to retain surplus as much as possible, governance and bureaucracy will out of necessity gravitate towards the 'catching up pole' and not the equality pole.

As long as solutions are framed and sought at the national level, the dilemma will remain, and states governed by erstwhile antisystemic movements will remain repressive of their own popular strata and at best only partial winners of the catching-up game, to the primary benefit of the cadres (p. 120).

In this scenario, and apart from the notion of a true world-wide revolution—which is in any case not realistically achievable, at least for now—Wallerstein suggests that the only option open for the so-called developing countries is to struggle to retain most of the surplus created at production level, i.e. to increase either the price of sale or the price of labour as part of political struggle (p. 121f). This, he argues, is precisely what capitalists do—'they spend a considerable amount of their worldwide political energy on the politics of pricing'—or 'relocate the locus of their capital' as evident from the OPEC crises. Even so, the movements

cannot afford their close links to the states, even to the regimes they have struggled to bring to power. Their concern must be how at each point on very long commodity chains a greater percentage of the surplus can be retained. Such a strategy would tend to over time 'overload' the system, reducing global rates of profit significantly and evening out distribution.

The assumptions for this strategy is that 1) global rates of profit are quite open to 'political attack at a local level'; 2) it will 'force the pace of secular trends of the capitalist world-economy'—what capitalists fear most; and 3) it is both 'politically mobilising and economically redistributive—keeping the twin ideals of democracy/liberty and equality together and not separating them off; 4) the antisystemic movements [including those who came to power] must become aware of their ambivalence on the issue of these two ideals and organise themselves as suggested above. This, however, cannot be done by the state—because it is implicated in the 'catching up' game and will always be. It is for the anti-systemic movements to achieve (p. 122-124).

III

For the reconceptualising of *time and space*, Wallerstein draws on Braudel's distinction between *l'histoire événementielle* (episodic time), *l'histoire conjoncturelle* (cyclical time), the *longue durée*—*l'histoire structurelle* (structural time) or 'the time of the sages'—and articulates these with space to form distinct timespace loci (p. 136). Connected to space, the proposed timespaces are those of episodic geopolitical timespace; cyclico-ideological timespace; structural and eternal but also transformational timespace. From the perspective of the world historical system, the most significant is that the *geopolitical* articulates the political and historical judgements which configure the brief, event-like decisions in history where, for instance, nations' boundaries are drawn in particular ways and not others. The *ideological* link to the longer cyclical time captures 'middle time' or timespans longer than events—the 'times of the alternating rhythms'. The distinction between East and West since 1945—the cold war era—is a case in point. The 'too long' structural time or 'time of the sages' has *structural space* as corresponding spatial marker. The beginning and end—of which neither can be identified with absolute certainty—of the capitalist world economy is an example. The real time of the sages is the time of universal and eternal validity of which nomothetic social science with its theorems is a good example. Again, as earlier, nomothetic and idiographic historians come under critique. Wallerstein says:

The TimeSpace of our nomothetic social scientists seems an irrelevant illusion. The TimeSpace of our idiographic historians—events in immediate geopolitical space—seems a series of self-interested inventions about which there will never be agreement as long as political discord exists in the world (p. 144). [And I may add, this will be a very long time.]

This scheme of time-space configurations raise many questions on the complexities in the world system beyond too easy Enlightenment distinctions (p. 145)—questions which will still take a long time to answer (pp. 139-148). Even so, Wallerstein borrows the theological notion of *kairos*—the decision in qualitative time or the ‘fundamental moral choice’—to articulate its secularised version of the ‘intermeshed connection of “crisis” and “transition”’. It is precisely the choices for order within chaos which makes up this *kairos*—the choices in ‘transformational time’. These choices are not free nor unfree. And, they bring about orders for good or ill (p. 147).

Part of this complex of timespace nexuses, however, is how to position Africa and for that matter every other country—India is an example. For *Africa*, he does not see it contributing to this discourse in a major way, mainly because it is so caught up in the capitalist world economy’s doublebind. If it would, it would do so in a different terrain together with all other countries and continents, focused on the questions ‘what is science and what scientific knowledge?’; and ‘what systemic options do we have? If the modern world system is in crisis, what alternatives present themselves’ (p. 129). In his discourse on India, he points to the fact that all history is always written from the present (p. 131). This means that whatever the exigencies of present econo-political, politico-social or religio-political realities, it will always be possible to develop a history for that quest. This general insight is true of all countries. On the historical specificity of a country—the ultimate aim of all historical interpretation of the concrete—however, this only reveals the ‘ever-changing, very fluid’ phenomena the theoretician of the world system deals with (p. 134).

IV

Part four turns to Marx to uncover that from Marx’s notion of political economy which political formations have failed to incorporate. Wallerstein positions Marx’s theory and history within the same Enlightenment tradition as ‘bourgeois liberalism’ (p. 151f) and that both come under the same critique he has mustered earlier against racism and underdevelopment—even though differently developed, both complexes believed in progress. He then abstracts and discusses three messages which the socialist movements incorporated from Marx and Engels (pp. 152-160). These are 1) that only the industrial proletariat produced surplus value; 2) that only advanced countries progress, that they did so due to the rise of the proletariat and because this happened in Europe, this is also the arena in which the first successful socialist revolutions can be expected from; 3) the distinction between merchant and industrial capital (p. 152). Drawing then on Marx’s work itself, Wallerstein shows how this incorporation into political formations was not only slanted but that it ignored vital insights from Marx and Engels themselves (pp. 153-160). For the purposes of this article, I shall not go into these. Suffice it to say that these oversights or white mythologies constitute vital elements within Communist/ socialist formations.

In order to account for the history of the world system of the last one hundred and fifty if not four hundred years, Wallerstein draws forth six major theses

from Marx which 'indicate both the hopeful possibilities and the great dangers of the immediate future' (p. 161).

1) Social reality is a process of ceaseless contradictions, which can only be apprehended dialectically. 2) Capitalism is a process of ceaseless accumulation of capital, which distinguishes it from pre-capitalist modes of production. 3) Capitalism as a historical system involves the transformation of the productive processes such that they create surplus value which is appropriated by the bourgeois in order to accumulate capital. 4) Capitalism over time polarizes the social organization of life such that more and more persons are grouped as either bourgeois or proletarians and that the proletariat suffers immiserization. 5) In a capitalist world, the state is an instrument of capitalist oppression; socialism involves the withering away of the state. 6) The transition from capitalism to socialism cannot be evolutionary; it can only be revolutionary. To believe otherwise is utopian in the negative sense (p. 161).

These theses account for 'underdevelopment' not as anomalies but as constitutive of capitalism—'non-wage labor forms of market production, marginalization and squatting, a distended tertiary sector, the emergence of the social role of the housewife, ethnicity, clientelism, corrupt and oppressive state-machineries, etc.' (p. 161). If they are taken to explain that the world system's 'development' has as corroborative, 'underdevelopment' and that development is based on underdevelopment, 'they are not only valid, but they are revolutionary as well' (p. 161; cf. further Wallerstein's too brief account of the development of the world system together with its constitutive contradictions—also that of the antisystemic movements, since late Medieval times—pp. 162-169).

What he does advocate in this context, is not passivity but:

active intelligence and active organizing energy that is simultaneously reflexive and moral, in the class struggle of the majority against the minority, of those who are exploited against the exploiters, of those who are deprived of the surplus-value they create against those who seize this surplus-value and live off it (p. 169).

As explanation of the world system, Wallerstein's dialogue with the notion of utopia engages Thomas More, Friedrich Engels, and Karl Mannheim. From his perspective, he then outlines three Marxian eras—Marx's himself (1840s—1883); the orthodox Marxism of the parties (circa 1880-1920; 1900-1950); and Marxism exploded (1950s-). Underlying Marxism as well as liberalism, however, are a number of assumptions which Wallerstein calls the social sciences to debunk (p. 182). This must be done in favour of a choice for 'social science as interpretation process' (p. 182). As such, this social science is

looking for a truly efficacious utopia—a social science that is neither moral instruction nor value free, a social science that is truly efficacious in its ability to enable us to ‘adjust’ the world. It is a social science engaged in a ‘search for a method’ (p. 182).

What is needed in this search is to radically scrutinise the second era, to not dispense with the ideological notion of utopia—because that will mean dispensing with rational will—but to be direct about it and, I surmise, be open and honest about assumptions (p. 183). Further, keys to social science thinking will be contradiction: the explanation of social reality, but also the acceptance of its inescapable endurance: the ‘eradicating’ of ‘the vulgar, brutal, unnecessary consequences of material inequality’. In this way, utopia must be seen as always in process but also that it needs to be ‘brought to fruition [not] by some (a few) on behalf of others (the many). That can only be done by the many on behalf of themselves’ (p. 184).

V

In order to make a contribution to his call for the social sciences to reconceptualise and reconfigure themselves, Wallerstein accesses Braudel. His main argument is that Braudel has provided some important incentives which must be developed further.

After a brief biography of Braudel—ultimately, biography and actual scholarly engagement can never be separated—Wallerstein discusses European social science history in terms of structural and cyclical time as derived from and framed by the history of the *Annales* school itself (p. 190-201). I shall not elaborate on this here. Suffice it to say that one of Wallerstein’s main arguments is that *Annales* undeservedly became unpopular—perceived as part of the establishment since 1968 (p. 190,200). This is followed by a brief detour of Braudel’s understanding of the relationship between market and capitalism—how the market may become (i.e. in future) not the sign of capitalism but ‘world socialism’ (p. 202-206); as well as Braudel’s critical unpacking of the two assumptions which both classical liberalism and classical Marxism shared—1) that capitalism involves the establishing of a ‘free, competitive market’; and 2) that capitalism’s success derives from specialisation.

Wallerstein then shows how Braudel argued that capitalism was and still is not free and competitive—and that the state functions as ‘guarantor of monopoly’ (p. 207-211). For the second, Braudel’s argument was that capitalism does not exist and has not survived due to specialisation but its ‘unlimited flexibility’. ‘The real capitalist always resisted specialization, and thus being trapped in one arena by past investment, past networks, past skills’ (p. 213). This view—if accepted—impacts on the historiographical agenda; harbours an implicit critique of Enlightenment theories of progress; and has a ‘different policy message to the contemporary world’ (pp. 214-217). In view of the many assumptions about nineteenth century social science (cf. the summary on p. 219) and pointers to different one’s, Wallerstein believes that one of the principal pointers to a new social science is that of working within the timespace of the *longue durée* (p. 223) but to also go beyond *Annales* (p. 225).

VI

In his concluding section, 'World-Systems Analysis as Unthinking', Wallerstein recaps his theorising of ten years and condenses insights. These condensations centre around seeing 'historical systems as complex systems'—'the more complex the structure, the more crucial its history'; and issues for debate in the paradigm to be fashioned for 'world-systems analysis' (pp. 229-236; and 237-256). Even further condensed, and forming the basic outlines of a methodology, these issues are: 1) to specify and justify the unit of analysis; 2) to distinguish between cycles and trends; 3) to identify and specify the contradictions inherent in the specific structures of a specific type of historical system; 4) to carefully distinguish between a shift in *conjuncture* and a historical transition; 5) to specify and justify the chronosophy or the relations between past, present and future that underlies the theorizing; 6) to not distinguish between distinctively economic phenomena different from political and social ones—'the whole is a seamless skein' (pp. 257-265).

VII

Wallerstein's major contribution is that of arguments for the reconfiguration of the social sciences in terms of a larger paradigm of the 'historical social sciences' and his outlines for the basic strands of its methodology. The major framework within this paradigm is to think in terms of the 'world system' and of capitalism—even more challenging now that it has gone virtual—as of a particular development within this system in the *longue durée*. His unearthing of the common progressive assumptions in terms of which both racism and development have configured their own particular discourses within classical liberalism and Marxism has unmasked much of what, in post-independent Africa has and currently in South Africa is driving discourses of development—presumably separated off from 'racism'. Amongst others, important views are also his linking of 'complexity'—and that the social sciences will have to deal with it constructively—to Prigogine's theorisings. So too is his informative discussions of Myrdal's legacy, those elements within Marx and Engels' writings which have not been incorporated into party formations—because they go against the grain of Enlightenment idealism—and that of Braudel.

As South African academia embarks on its transformation of tertiary education, takes historical decisions, and starts to operationalise its transformed curricula and institutionalised structures, Wallerstein's framing and reframing—or in his parlance, (thinking and) 'unthinking'—of the social sciences, may prove important. Especially his exposure of mistaken assumptions underlying the modern world system—if taken as 'white mythology'—may prove vital if South African academia desires to radically break with the racist foundations of its scholarship. As many curricula are changed to incorporate notions of 'development', Wallerstein's warning that 'development' in the current paradigm cannot be de-linked from its racism, scholars need to carefully think about their curricula and their 'outcomes'. Moreover, if it is true—especially in the South Africa of the 1990s—that political developments have outrun scholarly research and informed reflection—which also

include institutional transformation—then it is of the utmost importance that academia seriously engage research on all the variegated issues Wallerstein has raised and pointed to above.

On the question of what kind of research, I think Wallerstein already provides the answer (read especially pp. 268-272 but many other suggestions are also in his book not mentioned above—cf. p. 61 amongst others). Most important, however, is that, apart from some activity in the field of historical social sciences, either under apartheid and colonialism's exigencies, as part of the anti-systemic movements or as practices related to an other, the work which needs to be done has not even started. This is even more true for post-independent Africa. If the problem is that our current world historical system is one which has been fashioned in the nineteenth century and is indelibly infused with this century's racist morality, then it follows that the only way to 'think' this—or 'think *that*', if you will—is to fully study its resources. These resources—whether of a social, economic, political, or anthropological nature—are all in our archives if not still in our libraries both here and in Europe. Moreover, they are all 'literature' in its broadest definition. And who are the best qualified to study them? I believe those who have the best reading, writing, interpretation, research but especially world systems analytical skills—our scholars of literature. Among others, I believe that had (literature) scholars of post-independent Africa focused their research and publishing in this area, these states would have had systemic resources which would have enabled them to bring out informed critique of the capitalist world system, to fashion/ negotiate others, develop systems which could have benefited the fledgling 'nationalisms' and prevented the syphoning out of colonial capital and destruction of industry. Most important of all, African scholars could have contributed towards groundbreakingly developing a new world system different from cowering before the West's racism and waiting/ hoping for aid.

The quest, however, will remain for the slanted French Revolution ideal—liberté, égalité, fraternité (cf. pp. 22,79 but also all Wallerstein's arguments on why 'development' has not delivered and will never)—now in the world system, and for the collective moral will to make the needed moral decisions.

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