

Ronaldo Munck and Denis O'Hearn (eds.) *Critical Development Theory: Contributions to a New Paradigm* London and New York: Zed Books, 1999. \$55 cloth, \$22.50 paper
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The book: *Critical Development Theory: Contributions to a New Paradigm*, edited by Munck and O'Hearn has revisited an old debate about the creation of the knowledge concerning development. The interpretations presented in the book interrogate Europe's influence in the development trends, theories, and practices in other parts of the world. The book consists of ten chapters; nine of which are divided evenly into three sections.

For several decades, development scholars and practitioners have been wrestling with the ideas and practices of building the human environment and by so doing, transforming it in order to meet human needs. In the effort to transform the world, European ideas have predominated the scholarly debate and the transformations of the rest of the world have been influenced by European ideas and vision. The accumulation of European infrastructures and some western technological skills in the developing world are clear indications of such influence. The contributors to this volume attempt to examine the contributions of European-centered perspective to the development dialogue.

The first chapter, entitled: "The Myth of Development: A Critique of a Eurocentric Discourse" by Vincent Tucker, provides a strong argument about the flaws of Eurocentric development paradigm. Tucker thinks that development dialogue has provided false hope and that a thorough examination of the world portrays a dismal failure of development programs. He contends that people of the developing world are worse off because of the inability of the programs established by Western nations to improve their lives.

Tucker sees development as intrusion in the lives of the people of the developing world by the industrialized "north". He makes an abrasive observation of the relationships which exist between the developed and developing countries when he asserts:

Development is a process whereby other peoples are dominated and their destinies are shaped according to an essentially Western way of conceiving and perceiving the world. The development discourse is part of an imperial process whereby other peoples are appropriated and turned into objects. It is an essential part of the process whereby the 'developed' countries manage, control, and even create the Third World economically, politically, sociologically, and culturally. (p. 2)

Tucker does not see any tangible contribution of a north driven development program in the stability and improvement of the countries of the south. This chapter presents a serious interrogation of European-centered development ideas. It is argued that development cannot be seen as a natural process and the author wonders what the role of cultural dimension is in the development process. Eurocentric development paradigm presents interesting discussion about the modernization of the emerging countries of the world without a careful understanding of the role of culture in the development of the “emerging” countries. By imposing Western development ideas on the peoples of the developing world, mistakes are made in the process by those from advanced nations as well as those from the host countries because there is a “vacuum” in the understanding of the development concept and because the concepts have no significant validity for the indigenous peoples of the Third world. Vincent Tucker=s interrogation of Western development paradigm poses questions such as these:

1. Must they (Third World countries) develop or perish?
2. Is civilization as we (Western world) know it, compulsory?

In attempting to answer these questions, Tucker provides the reader with reason why the developing world sometimes resists Western development styles and ideas. Development, when accelerated, financed, and engineered by outsiders seems to come under the guise of progress and civilization. The development effort is based on the assumption that people of the developing world need progress and ought to be civilized and the net results are biological racism and cultural racism. These problems are highlighted in this chapter. Tucker disagrees completely with the notion that development theory should be elevated to the status of a natural phenomenon.

The remaining nine chapters of the book are evenly divided into three sections. The three parts deal with: critical perspectives, political economy, and polemical perspectives of development theory.

Chapter 2, On Oppositional Postmodernism by Bonaventure de Sousa Santos is the first chapter in the first section of the book. Sousa Santos claims:

The most puzzling problem that the social sciences face today can be formulated like this: if at the close of the century we live in a world where there is so much to be criticized, why has it become so difficult to produce a critical theory?, by critical theory I mean the theory that does not reduce reality to what exists (p. 30).

Critical theory is advanced as considering reality to consist of a field of possibilities. Thus the author thinks that critical theory is confronted with the vexing question of defining and assessing the degrees of variation which live at the periphery of what is empirically considered as given. The author of this chapter attempts to

identify the factors which make the construction of critical theory difficult. The author's analysis of the principle of social transformation has merits within the context of domination and oppression. The results of domination and oppression can be seen from the perspectives of international and domestic dominations. One can also discuss the implications of domination and oppression which occur in communities, societies, and countries. Certainly the rebellion of ethnic groups or women groups in developing countries of the world bear testimonies to the points that the author makes in this chapter. It should be pointed out, however, that the author's discussion of post-modernism and modernism is a little confusing to this reviewer.

The third chapter in the third section delves into the topic of "Development and the Locations of Eurocentrism". Here, Ziauddin Sardar argues that the West's power lies in its ability to define the parameters of development and the world and not in its technological and economic resources. This chapter reminds the reader of the presence of the West in the past, present, and future global dialogue on development. The centrality of the West in global affairs could be examined in how the world is defined by standards established by the West. For example, knowledge is produced by the West. In making this argument Sardar notes:

The time dimension of the West is thus not limited to the past and the present: the West is also the future. The West was not just in history; it is remade in the present and reconstructed in the futures. At each stage, it is internalized more and more and becomes an integral part of the global consciousness. As such, the future has been colonized by West. (p. 47)

It is quite evident that Western ideas and views of managing global resources predominate, and the processes for analyzing policies and resolving crucial global issues are heavily influenced by Western leadership. Western ideas are gradually engulfing the world. Eurocentrism advances the notion that technology and progress are necessary. The transformations of the developing areas of the world clearly proves the point that the image of the world is being determined by the West. Sardar argues that the Eurocentric idea of nation-state has accelerated and in some cases caused the destabilization of non-Western societies. He points out the idea that although Islam is an intrinsically universal creed and world view, its fundamentalist position is derived from the internalization of the modernist, Western idea of the nation-state (p. 48). Thus, Islam (a religion) has the equivalent status of a state and the state has absolute power through religion.

Probably the most interesting contribution of this chapter is in the discussions of the influences of the disciplines as advanced by Eurocentrism. During the formulation of European world-view, the social science disciplines were taking shape and fostering

the goals of Western society. It is asserted that Eurocentrism is embedded in how these disciplines' pedagogies are handled. The major canons, the ideas they promote, key concepts they advance, and their foci are Western perspectives. Sardar argues that "progress" as defined by the disciplines promotes European ideals. Modernism and post-modern have refined the definition of progress in order to perpetuate European interests. This argument finds support in the neocolonialism, which prevails in many parts of the world. Modernity as seen in many developing parts of the world certainly represents a very sophisticated form of Eurocentrism. Overall, this chapter is well-written, and it is full of good examples which buttress the theoretical underpinnings presented in the chapter.

In the fourth chapter entitled, "Critical Holism and the Tao of Development", Jan Nederveen Pieterse examines the breadth of development processes. Pieterse contends that development processes transcend physical ecological, social, emotional mental, political, historical, moral, and semantic boundaries of our world. Because of the limitations of development theories, which are parochial in scope, it is impossible for development theories, as currently advanced, to provide answers to global development. Because of the many ways of examining development, it is highly difficult to provide a comprehensive approach to deal with development issues. The fragmented nature of development must be taken into account when addressing ideas governing the processes of development. One must understand that fragmentation connotes the idea that there is apparent existence of "wholeness" determined by boundaries. Pieterse's paper interrogates this connotation. This chapter is greatly informed by Vincent Tucker's work on critical holism. Pieterse's paper is a strong theoretical work which allows the reader to imagine fragmentation from the standpoint of subset within a set and argues that the subset needs to be "named" in order to figure out its new relationship within the set.

Systems approach to solving environmental or societal problems have been defended by many scientists and engineers but Sardar argues that there are some limitations imposed by this approach. He observes:

"One problem of systems approaches is that they imply a closure of the field; they achieve understanding (and manipulability) by enframing the field, and even reflexivity may not remedy this." (p.67)

Sardar attempts to distinguish between wholeness and holism. He insists that although both perspectives are related, they also have separate lineages. For example, "wholeness refers to an original comprehensive field; holism is the systemic or scientific recombination of fragments in a new totality" (p. 67).

The strength of this chapter lies in its examination and exposure of the contradictions of some Eurocentric paradigms. By discussing other world views, such as; expounded by non-Western authors, Sardar allows the reader to delve into other

"truths" which are opposites of Western "truths". By reading this chapter, one appreciates the difficulties and reasons why it is cumbersome to arrive at a common overarching development theory. The one weakness in this chapter is that in this attempt to discuss many ideas in social science that have implications for development theory, Sardar fails to provide the depth and explanation necessary for the reader to see the linkages in his arguments. Nonetheless, this is a minor problem which does not take away from the significant contribution that this chapter provides to the dialogue on development theory.

Chapter five "Reintegrating Production and Consumption, or Why Political Economy Still Matters" written by Diane Perron, is in many ways a welcome addition to the debate on the role of culture in the development of postmodernism. Cultural and social factors have, in many ways, shaped development; but their discussion in the literature have been very limited. It is also accurate to claim that the roles of indigenous institutions in promoting and shaping current and future development strategies have not been properly analyzed and synthesized. Among many other questions raised in the chapter is the issue of whether there is a need for a fundamental shift in the conceptual framework of political economy so as to address how social relations and economic practices are initiated, reproduced, and sustained through the power relations of capitalists and patriarchal societies (p. 91). In her attempt to address this matter, Perron's chapter is divided in four sections. The first section, attempts to outline a role for academic inquiry; the second attempts to debunk the claim that the approaches of political economy are basically reductivist. Included in this section is a sincere attempt to re-emphasize the main thrusts of the historical materialist methodology. In the third section, the author is suspicious of the re-emergence of the consumption attitude in the modern and post-modern world. Case studies are used in the last section of the chapter to substantiate the arguments made in this chapter. This chapter refers to many works that have been done by other scholars to advance the production and consumption debate. At times, the chapter is confusing because of a lack of focus. Nonetheless, it is a good addition to the general debate in political economy.

Development efforts that include technological, innovative, and growth dimensions are often suspected as being Eurocentric in perspective. Denis O'Hearn, in his chapter, "Tigers and Transnational Corporations: Pathways from the Periphery?" makes this argument very succinctly. He submits: "A critical political economy of development remains vital today" (p. 113). He goes on to argue that despite their eurocentricity, ideas related to productivity and innovation have a significant niche to fill in the attempts by man to invent new types of communities that can continue to evolve and improve culturally and raise/improve standard of living as measured by material acquired. However, the author is forced to examine the unequal control of key economic activities and innovations. As long as these key elements are contributed by developed countries, their agendas will predominate. The truth of the matter is that the core capital nations have grown more powerful because of globalization. They have the communication and technological "know-how" of how to distribute their products and

hence perpetuate Western dominance. O'Hearn observes: "The rise of supranational global institutions and market-oriented global networks has increased the power of the core capitals to subjugate peripheral regions in the age of "postmodernism" and "postdevelopmentalism" (p. 114).

The Image of development has been made more attractive by the globalization debate. The Asian model of successful development brought about by globalization is a good example that Western development experts often point to when providing the evidence for why and how development has helped emerging nations. One must realize that the Asian countries had development successful because of stringent government controls and policies. Asian countries did not really depend on free markets and trade liberalization. Globalization has repackaged old development ideas into new ways of envisioning the direction of global affairs. The author of this chapter has raised sufficient question to warrant the readers to examine further the idea of globalization. The fact that a lot of countries compete for the limited foreign investment means that only a few countries eventually obtain investment: which encourage fast economic growth and only a few countries actually experience the upward mobility as described under globalization. It is quite possible that the sustainability of development in the Asian Tigers is only possible because only a few countries continue to receive investment from foreigners.

In chapter seven, Bob Sutcliffe examines The Place of Development in Theories of Imperialism and Globalization. He argues that the three ideas: development, imperialism, and globalization were designed to interpret and transform the world. International issues are frequently involving these ideas. This chapter seeks meaning to what the three ideas have in common and how they influence one another. The author uses metaphors in examining relationships between the ideas. Sutcliffe argues that the dominant and devastating criticism of development paradigms is that nations which start from the same place (for example, the developing nations of the South or European countries of the fourteenth century) belong to the same group. Sutcliffe contends that labor is transformed from agriculture (low productivity) to an industrial base of high productivity and a modernized service base. The problem associated with development are many, but one very important one is the ecological immortality of development. The author attempts to shed some light on this subject without really addressing the details of the ecological concerns often associated with the problems of development.

When discussing imperialism, the author focuses on the fact that imperialism is often associated with "the idea that the world contains an undesirable hierarchy of nations in which some oppress or exploit others" (p. 139). International economic relations have grown more than the expansion of production on the domestic front. This is due to globalization. This chapter explains why this has been the case by compiling the works of writers who have hypothesized about globalization.

Chapter eight: “Is it Possible to Build a Sustainable World?” by Richard Douthwaite is an interesting one. The author notes that there are many definitions for sustainability and the definitions vary according to disciplines. Natural and social sciences define it differently and economists have their set of parameters for gauging sustainability. However, the author provides a new definition: “in a sustainable world, and the processes which things are produced, once established, would be capable of being carried on unchanged for an indefinite period without causing a progressive deterioration in any factor: human or environmental, that they affected or on which they relied” (p. 157). The author concludes that because of the negative impacts of the processes on the environment, and the demands made on the world’s resources, it is impossible to build a sustainable world with the current standards of use and waste without a careful reflection on efficiency.

Chapter nine, “Cultural Politics and (post) Development Paradigm(s)” by Gilt Fagan provides some reflections on the development conversation. This is a somewhat disappointing chapter, not because of its quality for it is a good piece of discussion; but this reviewer does not see how it fits in with the other chapters.

The tenth chapter, “Deconstructing Development Discourses of Impasses, Alternatives and Politics” by Ronald Munck provides a brief discussion as to how post-modernism is a way to reintroduce politics into the development dialogue.

Overall, this work is a very good compilation of chapters on the theory of development which graduate students in development studies should read. It is certainly recommended for development scholars. Although some of the chapters tend to deviate from the central issue, the book is a “must” read.

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