

Alternative Discourses in Southeast Asia

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ABSTRAK

Makalah ini memperhatikan soal wacana-wacana pengganti dalam ilmu-ilmu kemasyarakatan. Wacana pengganti adalah karya yang mencuba menghapuskan gagasan-gagasan yang kuat tertanam dalam ilmu-ilmu kemasyarakatan, sebahagiannya akibat daripada penjajahan dan Eropasentrisme yang berterusan. Dalam konteks Asia Tenggara dan sebahagian besar daripada dunia bukan-Barat, wacana-wacana pengganti bermaksud juga ilmu kemasyarakatan anti Eropasentrik. Rencana ini membincangkan kemunculan wacana-wacana pengganti di Asia Tenggara, takrif wacana pengganti dan masa depan wacana di rantau ini.

Kata kunci: wacana alternatif, Eurocentrisme, Orientalisme, membentuk semula

ABSTRACT

This article brings into focus the question of alternative discourses in the social sciences. Alternative discourses are works that attempt to debunk ideas that have become entrenched in the social sciences, partly as a result of colonialism and the continuing Eurocentrism in the social sciences. In the context of Southeast Asia as well as much of the non-Western world, alternative discourses in the social sciences could also be referred to collectively as counter-Eurocentric social science. This paper discusses the emergence of alternative discourses in Southeast Asia, the definition of alternative discourse, and the future of these discourses in our region.

Keywords: alternative discourse, Eurocentrism, Orientalism, reconstruction

INTRODUCTION

This essay brings into focus the question of alternative discourses in the social sciences. Alternative discourses are works that attempt to debunk ideas that have become entrenched in the social sciences, partly as a result of colonialism and the continuing Eurocentrism in the social sciences. There is no attempt here to claim that the entirety of problems associated with the social sciences in

Southeast Asia and elsewhere are the result of colonialism and Eurocentrism. Nevertheless, the focus of this volume is on the idea of alternative discourses, an idea that is a logical consequence of political and intellectual decolonisation. In the context of Southeast Asia as well as much of the non-Western world, alternative discourses in the social sciences could also be referred to collectively as counter-Eurocentric social science. The chronic lack of creativity and originality in the social sciences has been felt to be a general problem of knowledge in many non-Western academic communities. This problem of originality is partly due to the fact that the social sciences were introduced and, sometimes, imposed from without. As a result, there was no continuity between the European tradition of knowledge and indigenous systems of ideas (Watanuki 1984: 283) and no organic relationship with the cultural history of the colony (Kyi 1984: 94).

It would not be accurate to say that there was no social or political thought or anything approximating theory prior to the introduction of the social sciences from Europe and America during and after the colonial period. In fact, non-European precursors of the social sciences have frequently been identified, a notable example being that of the Arab historical sociologist ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun (733-808/1332-1406) (Ibn Khaldun 1377/1981). It is nevertheless remarkable that no indigenous schools or traditions in sociology or any other social science discipline ever came into being autochthonously in non-European societies. Even an intellectually lively area such as the Arab world generally failed to produce Khaldunian social science. For example, questions such as the nature of the state, state-society relations, secularism and religious fundamentalism have all not been worked upon as material for a distinctly Khaldunian brand of social or political theory in terms of ideas and problem-raising. Neither have Arabs or others reinterpreted or reworked the theories of Marx, Weber or Durkheim against the backdrop of Arab historical experiences and cultural practices, or attempted to integrate modern Western theories with those of ibn Khaldun.

The budget of under- or nonachievements can be expanded to cover the rest of Asia during the last two centuries when the social sciences began to be established in these societies. This is not a condition peculiar to the Arabs. It is a general problem of knowledge in the Third World, even in countries like India, Egypt, Turkey, Iran and the Philippines where the social sciences are relatively more developed. In Korea in the 1970s, for example, scholars were “awakened” to the need to establish a more creative Korean sociology (Shin 1994). For all the justifiable attacks against the Eurocentrism of Western scholarship, we cannot speak of a modern Khaldunian, Gandhian or Confucian school in, say, sociological theory. It is not surprising, therefore, that many scholars since the nineteenth century have questioned the relevance and validity of truth claims of the social sciences for the countries of Asia and Africa.

We may itemise the problems that beset the social sciences in Southeast Asia and elsewhere as follows:

1. There is a Eurocentric bias in that ideas, models, problem selection, methodologies, techniques and even research priorities continue to originate from American, British, and to some extent, French and German works.
2. There is little generation of original ideas in terms of new theoretical perspectives or schools of thought or innovations in research methods.
3. There is a general neglect of local literary and philosophical traditions. This is not to say that there are no studies on local literature or philosophy. The point is that these traditions remain as objects of study and are not considered as sources of concepts in the social sciences. Furthermore, they are rarely studied by social scientists.
4. The above problems exist within the context of intellectual imperialism, that is, the intellectual domination of the Third World by the social science powers (United States, Britain, France and Germany).

SOUTHEAST ASIAN DIAGNOSES OF THE PROBLEM

It is obvious, therefore, that there are problems concerning the state of the social sciences in Southeast Asia that arise from their having been implanted from without in an imitative and uncritical manner. Southeast Asia has contributed its share of critical literature that addresses the state of the social sciences in non-Western societies, critiquing Eurocentrism and the wholesale adoption of American and European social sciences. Many of these works have come out of Singapore itself. Examples are the writings of Syed Hussein Alatas (1956 1969, 1972, 1974), Blake (1991), Syed Farid Alatas (1993b, 1995a, 1995b, 1998a, 1998b), and Sinha (1997, 1998). Also important is the growing interest in feminist alternatives to mainstream discourses in Singapore sociology (see, for example, Chung 1989; PuruShotam 1992, 1993, forthcoming; Sinha 1999; Wee 1988; Wee, Heyzer & Kwa 1995).

Nevertheless, diagnoses on the state of knowledge on Southeast Asia began as early as the nineteenth century and were made by both Southeast Asians as well as Europeans. A very early critic of the state of knowledge in Southeast Asia was the Filipino thinker and reformer, Jose Rizal (1861-1896). This can be found in his annotated reedition of Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* which first appeared in 1609. Prior to producing this work Morga served eight years in the Philippines as Lieutenant Governor General and Captain General as well as a justice of the Supreme Court of Manila (Audiencia Real de Manila) (Morga 1890/1991: xxxv). Rizal believed that Spanish colonization had virtually wiped out the pre-colonial past from the memory of Filipinos and presented his annotated reedition in order to correct false reports and slan-

derous statements to be found in most Spanish works on the Philippines (Rizal 1890/1962: vii). This includes the destruction of pre-Spanish records such as artefacts that would have thrown light on the nature of pre-colonial society (Zaide 1993: 5). Rizal found Morga's work an apt choice as it was, according to Ocampo, the only civil history of the Philippines written during the Spanish colonial period, other works being mainly ecclesiastical histories (Ocampo 1998: 192). The problem with ecclesiastical histories, apart from the falsifications and slander, was that they abound in stories of devils, miracles, apparitions, etc., these forming the bulk of the voluminous histories of the Philippines (de Morga 1890/1962: 291). For Rizal, therefore, existing histories of the Philippines were both false and biased as well as unscientific and irrational.

While in the Philippines it was a Filipino who first raised the problem, similar problems were raised in Indonesia at first, not by Indonesians themselves, but by Dutch scholars. One of the first among the Dutch in particular, and Europeans in general, to challenge Eurocentrism in the social sciences was Jacob Cornelis van Leur, a scholar who tragically died at a young age in the Battle of the Java Sea against the Japanese (1937, 1940a, 1940b). Van Leur was critical of Eurocentric tendencies in Dutch scholarship on the Netherlands Indies. He wrote in Dutch but several of his essays were translated into English (van Leur 1955). Van Leur is well-known for having written against a perspective arrived at from "the deck of the ship, the ramparts of the fortress, the high gallery of the trading house" (1955: 261), although he himself had not achieved such a level of objectivity in his assessment of, for example, the Islamization of Indonesia (Alatas 1962: 225-226). For example, he questioned the appropriateness of the eighteenth century as a category in the history of the Netherlands Indies, as it was a category borrowed from Western history (1940a). Later on Indonesians themselves began to write on the problem of Eurocentrism and other biases in the writing of Indonesian history (for example, Pané 1951). Soedjatmoko was critical, among other things, of the one-sided India-centric view of the history of the Hinduization of Java as it failed to yield any understanding of the nature of the Indonesian society which absorbed Hindu elements (Soedjatmoko 1960: 13).

Attention was also brought to the question of intellectual imperialism and related ideas. In the 1950s, Syed Hussein Alatas from Malaysia referred to the "wholesale importation of ideas from the Western world to eastern societies" without due consideration of their socio-historical context, as a fundamental problem of colonialism (Alatas 1956). It was further suggested that the mode of thinking of colonised peoples paralleled political and economic imperialism. Hence, the expression academic imperialism (Alatas 1969). In the Philippines about the same time, Catapusan lamented that while sociology as a discipline existed and empirical studies carried out, a distinctive Filipino cultural perspective had yet to emerge (Catapusan 1957). Tham Seong Chee, writing from Singapore, described such colonial thinking or the colonial mentality as being informed by "a false consciousness about values, person and goals. It is a mode

of seeing one's society – its workings and the direction of its movement – by super-imposing on it another reality, that is to say, the reality of a foreign society” (Tham 1971: 39). The idea of the colonial mentality was developed by Syed Hussein Alatas in the form of the concept of the captive mind (1972, 1974).

The captive mind merely extends the application of the American and European social sciences to its own setting without the appropriate adaptation of the imported ideas and techniques to the Asian setting, an indication of continuing intellectual domination. There is a high demand for knowledge from the West among Asian scholars due to the need to maintain self-esteem independent of the objective utility of such knowledge (Alatas 1972: 9-10). The global spread of the social sciences, because it “takes the form of an uncritical demonstration effect, introduces many defects and shortcomings” (Alatas 1972: 11). The uncritical imitation of Western social science pervades all the levels of the scientific enterprise including problem-setting, analysis, abstraction, generalization, conceptualization, description, explanation, and interpretation (Alatas 1972: 11-12). Such defects in the social sciences include the prevalence of redundant propositions, highly abstract and general statements, inadequate familiarity with local facts, and the neglect of pertinent problems (Alatas 1972). Such are the manifestations of the captive mind. Dominated by Western thought in a mimetic and uncritical way, the captive mind lacks creativity and the ability to raise original problems, is characterized by a fragmented outlook, is alienated both from major societal issues as well as its own national tradition, and is a consequence of Western dominance over the rest of the world (Alatas 1974: 691). One dimension of this Western dominance is academic imperialism which was first discussed by Syed Hussein Alatas some thirty years ago as well as more recently (Alatas 1969; 2000).

Academic imperialism can be said to exist within the context of the structure of academic dependency, a notion elaborated on by Syed Farid Alatas writing out of Singapore. The idea of academic dependency links Western and Third World social scientists in ties that bind unevenly and unequally. Third World social scientists are dependent on their counterparts in the West for concepts and theories, research funds, technologies of teaching and research, and the prestige value attached to publishing in Western journals (Alatas 1995a, 1995b). Nevertheless, not all the woes of the social sciences can be blamed on academic dependency. There is a transnational flow of social science in the global market place of ideas. Within the structures of academic dependency lies a market of theories and concepts that gain currency in Asia partly due to their marketability, which in turn is determined by successful rhetorical programmes that permeate the social sciences. For example, the proliferation of a new set of vocabulary and terminology accompanying the rise of a new perspective in sociology may be complicit in successfully peddling ‘novel’ ideas (Alatas 1995b, 1998b). The result of the mental captivity and academic dependency is the perpetuation of what Shamsul Amri Baharuddin refers to as colonial knowledge. Using the ex-

ample of Malay ethnicity, Shamsul demonstrates how colonial knowledge continues to be the most powerful form of knowledge in post-colonial societies, having been responsible for inventing the ethnic category 'Malay' which had since become internalized by Malaysians themselves (Shamsul 1999).

Shamsul focuses on yet another dimension of the problem of the social sciences in Malaysia (and Indonesia), that is, the 'kratonization' of the social sciences. By this he understands to mean the fragmentation of the social sciences into "government versus academic versus private sector types of social science" (Shamsul 1995: 108). When priorities are dictated by extra-academic considerations, then research agenda and writing tend to be dominated by "policy-oriented matters or profit-motivated business issues" (Shamsul 1995: 101). This is an important issue that poses a challenge to the social sciences from within a nation's borders while the problems of academic dependency and academic imperialism originates from without.

THE CALL FOR ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In the preceding section various diagnoses of the state of the social sciences were described. In addition to such works that carried out assessments of the state of knowledge, there have also been prescriptions of one variety or another of alternative discourses to serve as correctives to the type of social sciences that had been introduced during colonial times. Singapore has had a tradition of producing alternative discourses since the 1970s. Examples include the historical sociological research on colonial ideology that had been carried out by Syed Hussein Alatas with a focus on (1) the political philosophy of Raffles (Alatas 1971) and (2) the myth of Malay, Javanese and Filipino laziness (Alatas 1977), and his call for an autonomous social science tradition in Asia (1979, 1981), as well as other works by Shaharuddin Maaruf (1984, 1989, 1992) and Sharifah Maznah Syed Omar (1993). A further example includes the call Wang Gungwu for Asian perspectives in the social sciences (Wang 2001). Also along these lines is an essay by Vineeta Sinha which critically assesses the project *Open the Social Sciences* which is itself aimed at rethinking and restructuring the social sciences (Sinha 2001).

The call for alternative modes of thinking in the past had generally fallen on deaf years. Therefore, it is in the interests of historical accuracy and out of the moral responsibility to acknowledge the contributions of our predecessors that mention must be made of a few early pioneers of alternative discourses. A first in the region, although in a non-academic mode, is probably Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi (1796-1854). Among his several works is the *Kesah Pelayaran Abdullah* of 1838. Abdullah was a keen observer of the problem of Malay backwardness in his time, which he attributed to the prevailing feudal order. Abdullah was in favour of utilising the Malay language as a means of developing the

consciousness of the Malays. While he was certainly not against the art of Qur'anic recitation, he regarded as irrational the study of the Qur'an without understanding its contents (1838/1965: 15). He lamented that the Malay elite did not play a leading role in patronising learning among the Malays in order that the Malays would be able to produce works in the various branches of knowledge (1838/1965: 15-16). Abdullah goes on to assess the impact of feudalism on the Malay mind which he saw as opposing Islamic values. His is the first critical account of feudalism to emerge in Malaya and offered a perspective that broke with both the prevailing feudal and colonial viewpoints.

Another interesting early figure was José Rizal. Rizal pioneered the notion of an International Association of Philippinists, the object of which was to study the Philippines from the 'historic and scientific point of view' (Rizal-Blumentritt 1992: 229). Ocampo has noted that while Rizal is often referred to as rewriting Philippine history, he was in fact the first to write that history from the viewpoint of the colonized (Ocampo 1998: 106). The task of such a history was to correct the biases of the Spanish historical works on the Philippines, to establish which sources were reliable and, thereby, present an *Indio* point of view of Philippine history. Such an attempt was made by Rizal in his annotation of Morga's history, which was referred to above. For this, a more than casual acquaintance with the conditions of the inhabitants of the Philippines was necessary. Rizal was critical of a work on the Philippines by the friar Casal. He regarded Casal as not being knowledgeable about the Philippines as he "is a happy man and he has only mingled with the happy and powerful" (Rizal-Blumentritt 1992: 234). This suggests that the point of view of the oppressed was also a feature of the new *Indio* history as Rizal saw it.

In Indonesia, there were lively discussions among the Dutch as well as Indonesians on alternatives in the study of Indonesian history. While the notion of *Indocentric* history remains vague as a concept and appears to be 'more successful in conception than in execution' (Kartodirdjo 1982: 30), it is possible to itemise its various forms. One is the call for new categories. In the preceding section, mention was made of van Leur's questioning of the appropriateness of the eighteenth century as a category in the history of Indonesia. This account on van Leur is taken from Hall (1959: 7-8) who discusses van Leur's review (1940a) of Stapel (1938-1940). The eighteenth century is a category borrowed from Western history signifying aspects specific to the West. Furthermore, it was not legitimate to consider the history of Indonesia as the history of the Dutch East India Company. Moreover, historians had made the error of assuming that 'Oriental' states were in decay in the eighteenth century as was the case in Europe prior in the early days of the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, what was needed was a new system of categories which could only be generated as a result of familiarity with Indonesian history as a history in its own right and not as a history of the Dutch overseas.

In 1951, the Indonesian scholar Armijn Pané published an essay containing an outline for an Indocentric history of Indonesia. This does not involve setting aside foreign works or sources but rather recasting them in the light of Asian and Southeast Asian rather than European history (Pané 1951). Indocentrism can be understood as correcting the history of Indonesia as a mere extension of the history of the Dutch overseas, by focusing on Indonesians as playing a role in history. The implications of this include attention to regional and local histories. Such microhistories in turn would call for a more multidimensional approach not found in the more conventional approaches to history (Kartodirdjo 1982: 38-39). While the need for this would seem obvious much of Southeast Asian history has yet to be rewritten in this spirit. In the 1960s there were several discussions for and against the possibility of a Southeast Asian point of view in the writing of history. The discussions were characterised by the two extremes of subjectivism and objectivism. John Bastin regarded the possibility of a new type of Southeast Asian history written from a Southeast Asian point of view as bleak. He noted that the type of Asian and Southeast Asian history that was written by Asians themselves was history in the Western tradition and that much of what was passed off as history from an Asian point of view turned out to be propagandistic history (Bastin 1959: 12). Bastin was suggesting that neither the Western nor Asian historian could write history from an Asian point of view as neither could escape the conditioning of Western thought patterns and cultural influences (1959: 10, 11). Adding to the problem is the fact that the bulk of source materials for Asian history are to be found in Western languages, which can only be comprehended within a Western historical framework (1959: 10-11). As noted by Syed Hussein Alatas, the possibility of what Collingwood calls 'emphatic understanding' or what Windelband, Dilthey, Rickert and Weber call *verstehen* as a means by which history could be understood from a Southeast Asian point of view was not entertained by Bastin (Alatas 1964: 250-1).

In criticizing Bastin, Smail goes to the other extreme to say that there is only one thought-world and, as a result, "whatever the modern Asian historian can achieve in the way of an Asia-centric perspective can equally be achieved by the Western historian" (Smail 1961: 75-76). Southeast Asia has come within the fold of a single world civilization with a single universal history and all that is meant by Asian-centric history is a history in which the "Asian, as a host in his house, should stand in the foreground..." (Smail 1961: 76, 78). For Smail, the notion of an Asian-centric history is not a philosophical problem but rather a practical one (Smail 1961: 76). Little significance is attached to Western cultural hegemony over the 'single world culture' that he posits. Nevertheless, the more dominant view in these debates was in favour of a Southeast Asian point of view in the writing of history and called for the reconstruction of history. An example is the work of Syed Hussein Alatas which aims to establish proposals for the reconstruction of the history of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago that pertain to methodology and the philosophy of history (Alatas 1962: 221; 1964).

He raised the problem of the 13th to 16th century in Malay-Indonesian history, noting that this was a neglected period in the study of Southeast Asian history in that it was not treated as a subject in its own right (Alatas 1962: 219). Alatas suggests that this period should be treated as an Islamic period with an individuality of its own as it was a period of intensive proselytization, and raises a number of historiographical problems such as periodization, unit of analysis, and historical viewpoint (Alatas 1962: 224).

Another early work on reconstruction is that of Syed Naguib Al-Attas (1969), followed by another work along similar lines in Malay (1972). This work provides a general theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago grounded on the history of ideas. Al-Attas accomplishes this by examining the ‘changing concepts of key terms in the Malay language’ in the 16th and 17th centuries. The evidence that forms the basis for this general theory was derived from literary primary sources in Malay, Arabic and Persian, and the methods employed are those of ‘critical, commentative, interpretation’ of texts as well as the methodological concepts and approach of modern semantic analysis” (Al-Attas 1969: 1-2). Also of importance with regard to the study of Islam in the Malay World of Southeast Asia is Al-Attas’ *The Correct Date of the Trengganu Inscription* (Al-Attas 1970), which was the first serious attempt to settle the controversy surrounding the authenticity of the famous Trengganu stone inscription of the eighth Muslim century.

Other critical works of Al-Attas that assess and correct Orientalist constructions include his writings on the origin of the Malay *syair* and on Sufism in the Malay World (Al-Attas 1968, 1971, 1975). It is not only in the field of history that prescriptions for alternative discourses in Southeast Asia emerged. There have also been calls for the indigenization of the social sciences, most notably in the Philippines. The problems of such calls are well illustrated in the Philippine case. As noted by Pertierra, the attempt to separate the various social science disciplines from their imperial foundations often ends up in their being reattached to the interests of the post-colonial nation-state at the expense of civil society or local/regional interests (Pertierra 1994). In the Philippines as well as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, the call for indigenisation has often been heard¹² but attempts to conceptualise indigenisation are rare. One exception is Sinha who suggests a research agenda for those wishing to begin the process of indigenising the social sciences rather than simply talk about it (Sinha 1997: 176-178). This is as follows:

1. to question the epistemological status of social science concepts, including those of ‘indigenous’, ‘native’, ‘West’, and ‘non-West’.
2. to ground social theory in socio-cultural and political conditions of a locality, without necessarily rejecting Western social science.
3. to theorise the global politics of academia with a view to uncovering its role in the perpetuation of a world division of labour in the social sciences,

whereby non-Western scholars are the collectors of empirical data and Western scholars the theorists.

4. to recognise multiple centres and sources of social theory, that is, to regard all civilizations as potential sources of social science theorizing.

Many more items could be added to this agenda which should be seriously pursued in order that the social sciences is to constitute a more relevant discourse to its surroundings. These works all provide alternative readings of Southeast Asian history and society, and call for revision and reconstruction which in turn necessitates reconceptualization and the innovative use of methods of the social sciences. The earlier works of Dutch, British, Indonesian and Malaysian scholars cited above as well as many others not cited here were pioneering attempts at alternative discourses and it is unfortunate that little attention is paid to them today. While they come under different names, what they have in common is the concerted effort to counter the Eurocentrism and Orientalism that inform the social and historical sciences. The label 'alternative discourses', therefore, is appropriate because they set themselves in opposition to what they understand as constituting the mainstream, which are largely Euroamerican-oriented discourses that continue to dominate the arts and social sciences of Southeast Asia.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSES

The whole discourse on the state of the social sciences in Southeast Asia does not arise from an intellectual movement but rather from a diverse group of scholars, European and Southeast Asian, from the various disciplines of the social sciences. Prescriptions range from calls for endogenous intellectual creativity and an autonomous social science tradition (Alatas 1979, 1981), to decolonization (Zawiah 1994), and the indigenization of the social sciences (Enriquez 1994; Sinha 1997). The general concern has been with the problems of the Eurocentrism and irrelevancy of mainstream discourses and the need for alternative traditions.

The term 'alternative discourses', therefore, is one that we are introducing and which should be understood as a descriptive and collective term referring to that set of discourses that had emerged in opposition to what they understand to be mainstream, Euroamerican social science. Alternative discourses constitute a revolt against 'intellectual imperialism'. Pertierra recognises the role of indigenised social sciences as a weapon in neo-colonial struggles as long as the social sciences 'act as the counter-point between the state and society' as opposed to becoming an 'instrument of the state's colonization of civil life' (Pertierra 1997: 10, 20). Sinha views the call for indigenisation as arising out of the need to " 'purge' the social sciences of Eurocentrism and thus register a crucial break from the hegemony of a colonial past..." (Sinha 1998: 16). As a

preliminary statement on the nature of alternative discourses, we may itemise some of their features as follows:

1. their starting point is the critique of Eurocentrism and Orientalism in the social sciences.
2. they raise methodological and epistemological problems relating to the study of society, historiography or the philosophy of history.
3. they are implicitly or explicitly, concerned with the analysis of the problems presented by the world division of labour in the social sciences in which Southeast Asian social science finds itself to be in a state of conformity, imitation and unoriginality.
4. they are committed to the reconstruction of social and historical discourses which involve the development of concepts, categories and research agenda that are relevant to local/regional conditions.
5. they are committed to raising original problems in social and historical studies.
6. they recognise all civilizations and cultural practices as sources of ideas for the social sciences.
7. they are not in favour of the rejection of Western social science *in toto*.

We could then formulate a definition of alternative discourses as those which are informed by local/regional historical experiences and cultural practices in the same way that the Western social sciences are. Being alternative requires the turn to philosophies, epistemologies, histories, and the arts other than those of the Western tradition. These are all to be considered as potential sources of social science theories and concepts, and reliance on them would decrease academic dependence on the world social science powers. It then becomes clear, therefore, that the emergence and augmentation of alternative discourses is identical to the process of universalising and internationalising the social sciences. It should also be clear that alternative discourses refer to good social science because they are more conscious of the need for relevance to the surroundings, of the problem of the discursive wielding of power by the social sciences, and for the need for the development of new ideas. What is being defined as alternative is that which is relevant to its surroundings, creative, non-imitative and original, non-essentialist, counter-Eurocentric, autonomous from the state, and autonomous from other national or transnational groupings. As such, alternative discourses could be advocated for Western social science itself.

The search for alternative discourses is a contribution to the universalization of the social sciences to the extent that alternative civilizational voices are added to the ensemble of ideas and works. But there are varying degrees of alternateness (and all the things this entails such as creativity, originality, non-essentialism, autonomy, and relevance to the surroundings) and, therefore, uni-

versality. At the lowest level, good social science in the Third World would insist on a cautious application of Western theory to the local situation. Here we cannot yet speak of alternative discourse. At a higher level of alternateness and, therefore, universality, both local and Western theories are applied to the local context. At yet another level of alternateness and universality, local, Western and other indigenous theories and concepts (that is, indigenous to other non-Western societies) are applied to the local setting. I have in mind as an example, the application of the Khaldunian theory of state formation to the Mongol conquest of China. The highest level of alternateness and universality refers to the application of locally-derived theories from within and without one's own society to areas outside of one's own area. Whatever the level of universality, there is in principle a commitment to the universal source of theories, concepts and ideas in general, although the extent to which ideas from without the locality are brought in and domesticated varies from one level to another.

All, therefore, must be for the project of alternative discourses, however they may want to label the project. What is being advocated here is not a school of thought nor a particular theoretical or metatheoretical perspective, but simply good social science.

THE PROBLEM OF ORIENTALISM IN REVERSE AND NATIVISM

At times, reactions to the problems of academic dependency and mental captivity had taken the form of a high degree of intolerance towards the Western social sciences. This attitude can be captured under the notion of Orientalism in reverse or nativism. The idea of Orientalism in reverse was developed by the Syrian philosopher, Sadiq Jalal al-'Azm. He quotes from the work of a fellow Syrian, Georges Saddikni, on the notion of man (*Ar. insan*) which runs thus:

The philosophy of Hobbes is based on his famous saying that "every man is a wolf unto other men", while, on the contrary, the inner philosophy implicit in the word *insan* preaches that "every man is a brother unto other men" (Saddikni, cited in al-'Azm, 1984: 368).

Al-'Azm then assesses the above statement as follows:

I submit that this piece of so-called analysis and comparison contains, in a highly condensed form, the entire apparatus of metaphysical abstractions and ideological mystifications so characteristic of Ontological Orientalism and so deftly and justly denounced in Said's book. The only new element is the fact that the Orientalist essentialist ontology has been reversed to favour one specific people of the Orient (al-'Azm, 1984: 368).

Orientalism in reverse is founded on an essentialist approach to both 'Oriental' and 'Occidental' civilizations and is, therefore, a form of auto-Orientalism.

An illustration of Orientalism in reverse comes from the Japanese case. The *nihonjinron* (theories of Japanese people) tradition in Japanese sociology is grounded in essentialised views on Japanese society, with the stress on cultural homogeneity and historical continuity. This remains in the tradition of Western Orientalist scholarship on Japan with the difference that the knowing subjects this time are the Japanese themselves. Hence the term auto-Orientalism as discussed by Lie (1996: 5). The logical consequence of Orientalism in reverse and auto-Orientalism is nativism. This refers to the trend of going native among Western and local scholars alike, in which the native's point of view is elevated to the status of the criterion by which descriptions and analyses are to be judged. This entails a near total rejection of Western knowledge.

Needless to say, it has to be stressed that the various prescriptions for alternative discourses discussed above as well as in the rest of this volume are decidedly opposed to nativistic approaches to knowledge.

PROSPECTS FOR ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The social science communities in Southeast Asia each has a different set of problems to contend with. Due to space constraints, it is therefore not possible to discuss many of the obstacles to the development of alternative discourses in the region. It is, however, possible to touch on a couple of obstacles that are of a more universal nature. The first concerns the problem of academic dependency. Academic dependency is perpetuated by the relative abundance of Euroamerican funding for research and training, the high levels of prestige attached to publishing in American and British scholarly journals, the greater value attached to a Western university education, as well as other factors. The intellectual dependency on ideas exists within this context. Such a context, therefore, is not conducive to the cultivation of alternative discourses.

But what are the possibilities of academic dependency reversal? One practice that would auger well for the emergence of alternative discourses is to lessen reliance on European or American standards that may not be appropriate and at the same time work towards the upgrading of local publication capabilities. Emphasis on the development of local publications such as journals, working paper and monograph series must have high priority. This would also free academics from being tied to themes and research agenda that are determined by the contents of American and European publications. But this can only work if as much credit is given for locally published works by evaluators, and promotion and tenure committees as it is for international publications. It is not a problem to produce local journals and other publication series. What is more difficult is to attach sufficient value and rewards to these publications such that they would attract higher quality works, tasks that requires a great deal of will.

The other obstacle has to do with the cultural environment of intellectual discourse. Even if some headway can be made towards lessening intellectual dependency, ultimately what must change is the intellectual culture in Asian societies. This can only be brought about through a process of conscientizing. This in turn can only take place through the various media of intellectual socialization, including the schools, universities and other institutions of higher learning. It is necessary that there be an active minority of social scientists in each of the major universities in Southeast Asia who are concerned with some of the problems that have been raised above, who are interested in revisiting the diagnostic and prescriptive literature of the past, and who have the interest and will to generate new concepts, categories, methods and techniques, and research agenda.

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