Globalisation: Its Philosophical and Sociological Presuppositions

MOHD. HAZIM SHAH

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the relationship between modernisation, industrialisation, and globalisation. Globalisation is viewed as a consequence of modernisation, where modernisation is construed in both physical and intellectual terms. The intellectual and philosophical foundations of modernity is then explicated with reference to three major movements of thought in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century, namely the Enlightenment, Hegelianism, and Logical Positivism. The article shows that a common thread running through these movements of thought was their emphasis on Rationality and Science, and how this has a levelling effect towards cultural convergence. The final part of the article looks at recent developments in postmodernist thought and discusses their possible implications for the 'epistemology of globalisation'. The article maintains that the postmodernist wholesale critique of modernist epistemology is unfounded, or needs qualification, and in its stark form could derail the project of globalisation through its derailment of the project of modernity.

Keywords: Globalisation, modernisation, culture, rationality, epistemology

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini membincangkan hubungan di antara modenisasi, industrialisasi, dan globalisasi. Globalisasi boleh dilihat sebagai akibat daripada modenisasi, di mana modenisasi dilihat dari kedua-dua aspek fizikal dan pemikiran. Asas intelektual dan falsafah yang mendasari zaman moden kemudian dihuraikan dengan merujuk kepada tiga aliran pemikiran di abad ke 18, 19 dan 20, iaitu Enlightenment, *falsafah Hegel, dan Positivisme Logikal. Penjelasan diberi tentang ciri yang dikongsi bersama oleh aliran-aliran pemikiran tersebut, yakni penekanan mereka terhadap Rasionaliti dan Sains, dan bagaimana ia mendatangkan kesan ke arah kesamaan budaya. Akhir sekali artikel ini melihat beberapa perkembangan terkini di dalam pemikiran pascamodenis, dan membincangkan tentang implikasinya terhadap 'epistemologi globalisasi'. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahawa kritikan pascamodenis adalah tidak berasas, atau perlu diletakkan syarat, dan dalam bentuknya yang asli*

boleh mengakibatkan tergendalanya projek globalisasi melalui kritikan mereka terhadap projek modenisasi.

Kata kunci: Globalisasi, modenisasi, budaya, rasionaliti, epistemologi

WHAT IS GLOBALISATION?

The term 'globalisation' has been used differently in different contexts and in different academic disciplines so much so that it is perhaps not possible to find a single definition of the term which satisfies or covers all the different uses to which it has been put. From the point of view of disciplinary approach, we may agree with writers such as Roland Robertson (1990:18) who proposed that globalisation be best treated in an interdisciplinary manner:

> I maintain that what has come to be called globalisation is, in spite of differing conceptions of that theme, best understood as indicating the problem of *the form* in terms of which the world becomes 'united', but by no means integrated in naïve functionalist mode... . Globalisation as a topic, is in other words, a conceptual entry to the problem of world order in the most general sense–but, nevertheless, an entry which has no cognitive purchase without considerable discussion of historical and comparative matters. It is, moreover, a phenomenon which clearly requires what is conventionally called interdisciplinary treatment...

Globalisation is basically a post- Cold War discourse prompted by the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, followed by the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the emergence of a so-called 'unipolar' world led by the United States. This is not to suggest however, that it was not discussed before that period, but only to suggest that its intensity increased with the end of the Cold War. Previously it had been alluded to under various guises such as 'modernisation', 'convergence', and 'internationalisation', by those who saw similarities emerging due to the move towards industrialisation and modernisation by the different nation-states of the world. However, what held them back from conceiving the process as 'globalisation', is the ideological and political barrier which divides the two different economic systems, namely the Capitalist and the Communist. With the removal of that barrier, there seems little else which divides the world and prevents it from moving towards 'homogenisation'. In fact this thesis came out strongly in Fukuyama's 1992 book entitled *The End of History and the Last Man*. Whatever else it might mean, it cannot be denied that globalisation is closely connected to modernisation and industrialisation, key processes which have become the common goals of all nations in the world today. Again quoting Robertson (1990: 20), who wrote:

> I deal with globalisation as a relatively recent phenomenon. In fact I argue that it is intimately related to modernity and modernisation, as well as to postmodernity and 'postmodernisation'...

Globalisation can be viewed essentially as the spread of modernisation, where every nation strives towards modernisation as its ideal or as Giddens (1991) put it, globalisation is a consequence of modernity. Modernisation in turn, can be viewed largely in terms of Rationalisation, a sociological concept which was developed by Max Weber, and taken up by theorists of modernity after Weber, such as Jurgen Habermas. Underlying the movement towards modernisation are a complex of factors which include aspects of both *interests* and *ideals*. Western modernisation, though influenced by interests, are also motivated by ideals, especially as expressed by Enlightenment thinkers in France, Britain and Germany in the 18th century. Such a vision of human progress and emancipation, made possible and realisable by scientific and technological power, then became a shared vision of the rest of the world, so much so that it prompted Marx to remark that "in Europe, Asia sees the image of its own future". As critics of cultural essentialism would have it, there is nothing quintessentially 'western' about modernisation, save as a matter of historical contingency. This is because, historically 'the Modern' as a period in European history is to be contrasted from, and involved a rejection of, previous ideals and periods, namely the 'ancient' and especially the 'medieval'. Thus its potential for 'universalisation' is there from the start–despite its historical contingency–because its conception of man and progress is not Eurocentric in any historical or essential sense, but largely *humanistic* and capable of being shared by humanity at large. In fact the historian Herbert Butterfield (1957, ch. 10) argued that what characterised Western civilisation since the 17th century, is no longer Christianity or its Graeco-Roman heritage, but rather modern science and technology, that is equally disruptive to Asian cultures as it was to the medieval West.

Although the modernisation process in the West developed as a matter of social, cultural and economic evolution, its adoption in the non-Western world is largely the result of colonisation. Thus the non-Western world adopted modernisation not so much on grounds of idealism but more due to political and national interests. It is largely a response to colonialism and imperialism, where nations which do not modernise become prey to more powerful modernised states, thus losing their national sovereignty.

Whatever the motivations for modernisation might be, its pursuit by both East and West, North and South, has no doubt been responsible for the phenomenon now known as globalisation.

WESTERNISATION, MODERNISATION, AND INDUSTRIALISATION

Before we embark on an examination of the modernisation-westernisation distinction, it is necessary for us to make a prior enquiry into the modernisation-industrialisation distinction. Such a distinction is necessary and relevant

because it bears on the question of selective assimilation of Western civilisation, and of globalisation.

Industrialisation is largely an economic process, a stage of economic development arrived at through the introduction of machinery in the factory system of production, which has resulted in the expansion of productive capacity. According to economic historians, the process first took place in England during the second half of the 18th century, and referred to as the Industrial Revolution. According to David Landes (1970:1) "...industrial revolution...usually refer to that complex of technological innovations which, by substituting machines for human skill and inanimate power for human and animal force, brings about a shift from handicraft to manufacture and, in so doing, gives birth to a modern economy." Although initially science contributes little to the technological innovations during the First Industrial Revolution, the Second Industrial Revolution saw a major contribution by science to industrialisation, notably in the power, telecommunications, automobile, and chemical industries in Britain, Germany, France, and the United States. Modernisation, on the other hand, although it includes industrialisation, possess other attributes which are not only confined to the physical or economic. It also includes, for example, features such as attitudes, value-systems, and work ethic, that is, mental qualities which are equally vital to the process of social and economic transformation. To quote David Landes (1970: 6-7) on the relationship between industrialisation and modernisation:

Industrialisation in turn is at the heart of a larger, more complex process often designated as *modernisation*. This is that combination of changes–in the mode of production and government, in the social and institutional order, *in the corpus of knowledge and in attitudes and values*–that makes it possible for a society to hold its own in the twentieth century; that is, to compete on even terms in the generation of material and cultural wealth, to sustain its independence, and to promote and accommodate to further change. Modernisation comprises such developments as urbanisation (the concentration of the population in cities that serve as nodes of industrial production, administration, and intellectual and artistic activity); a sharp reduction in both death rates and birth rates from traditional levels; the establishment of an effective, fairly centralised bureaucratic government; the creation of an educational system capable of training and socialising the children of the society to a level compatible with their capacities and best contemporary knowledge; and of course, the acquisition of the ability and means to use an up-to-date technology... . The one element of modernisation that is just about indispensable is technological maturity and the industrialisation that goes with it; otherwise one has the trappings without the substance, the pretence without the reality." (Italics added)

The acknowledgement by the Malaysian elite of the importance of these mentalistic aspects in modernisation can be seen through the publication of *Revolusi Mental* (in Senu Abdul Rahman 1971), which saw the leadership taking the initiative to bring about a mental or attitudinal change among the Malays in order to prepare them for economic modernisation. Certain value changes were

advocated, such as the need to be aggressive instead of servile, to hold commerce in high regard, and to put a monetary value to things. In other words, the values now encouraged are those which are consonant with life in a modern, urban and commercial environment, instead of those suited to an agragrian, rural, and feudal context. The rise of corporate culture among the Malays in the 1990s and the ambivalent responses to it, can be seen as a consequence of those initiatives taken earlier.

Thus modernisation is a broader concept as compared to industrialisation and encompasses non-material attributes such as beliefs and attitudes. When the Malaysian elite talk about a policy of selective assimilation or "development according to our own mould," they are essentially advocating bringing about the process of industrialisation *within a Malaysian value-system*. Here the crisis of globalisation immediately becomes apparent since industrialisation as it had occurred in the West cannot be divorced from its own historical processes and mental transformations which include episodes such as the Scientific Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment. This is not to suggest however, that industrialisation *cannot* occur except via those stages which European civilisation had undergone. The transformation of Russia and China under the aegis of the Communist Revolution suggests that an alternative route for industrialisation exists as a matter of historical fact. This opens up the possibility of other routes and forms of industrialisation different from the Western or the Communist. However, the collapse of the Communist system in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and the move towards economic liberalisation in China, raise doubts as to the sustainability of an industrial society within a Communist framework. For one thing, an industrial society is not compatible with a closed society and the post-industrial era with its exploitation of cyber-space further breaks down the walls of communication between nations. Also, the industrial economic system requires market globalisation, which implies contacts and interactions between nations. In fact, the previous bi-polar world order can be seen as the result of two industrial systems lodged within two different political systems, and seeking to sustain themselves by influencing a bigger share of the world market. The Vietnam War, which in effect was a proxy war between the United States and the Communist powers, provides evidence for such a thesis.

The existence of a so-called 'unipolar' world should not blind us, however, of sharp differences between human cultures, civilisations, and nations, still existing in our world order today. The decoupling of economy from ideology does not in itself lead to convergence or globalisation. Other configurations could exist or emerge, which in fact favour pluralism. In fact, an international Sociological Conference held in Tel Aviv in 1999, has for its theme, "Multiple Modernities". What exactly is common in modernity, and what differences could exist within *different modernities*, is perhaps a question which we should look into more closely. To take two different examples of modernity, Britain and

Singapore, we see that economically and industrially, both enjoy high levels of performance and prosperity. Yet in terms of civil liberties, they are vastly different. So is modernity a matter of economics and the social organisation required for the maintenance of the economic system, or does it include civil liberties and political rights as well? This is perhaps related to the historical circumstances under which modernisation took place. For in the case of Britain and most Western countries, industrialisation occurred "from below" in a *laissez-faire* mode, while in most other developing countries it is state-driven. Thus it could be argued that political clout was necessary in the case of the latter, in order for industrialisation to take off and be sustained. But on the other hand, like the case of industrialisation under Communism, it could be questioned to what extent such modernisations which suppress civil liberties could be considered stable in the long run.

MODERNITY AND ITS PHILOSOPHICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

Though we do not mean to suggest that modernization is a direct outcome of philosophical thought, we do acknowledge that profound differences exist between thought characteristic of previous historical periods such as the ancient and the medieval, and that which we normally associate with the so-called "modern" period beginning in Europe in the 17th century.

Whether ideas are instrumental towards the genesis of modernity, whether they play a supportive role in sustaining the modernisation process, or whether they exist at the conscious or subconscious level, are questions which are open for debate. Whatever the relationship between ideas and modernisation might be, our task here is limited to explicating those ideas which are considered as characteristic of modernity. Though it is impossible to explicate every single philosophical strand that acts as tributaries that flow into the mainstream of modernity, it is possible to identify and select those strands which are considered as either influential or expressive of the spirit of modernity. Philosophers are often the most articulate spokesmen of their age, capturing the essence, spirit, and thought of their times, and formulating them as philosophies. These ideas then impact back into society and reinforce or redirect certain trends that are already present.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The Enlightenment of the 18th century brought forth a new conception of Man, fostered a different approach towards Life and the natural world, and adopted an optimistic attitude towards the future. The philosophy of the Enlightenment contrasts sharply with the medieval outlook with its attachment to the past, acceptance of Scripture as the basis of truth and authority, the subordination of

Reason and observation to religious authority, and generally advocating restraint rather than exploration or innovation. The medieval outlook, to be sure, was not transformed overnight in the 18th century. In fact, the Renaissance and the Reformation of the 16th century, and the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century had eroded Medieval Christian authority to a considerable extent, thus preparing the way for 18th century Enlightenment. The change in mental outlook was brought about not only by internal or intellectual factors. Other factors such as the Commercial Revolution, the increase in trade and navigation, the Protestant Reformation, and the rise of Italian humanism, also contributed towards the change. In other words, though our focus is on *intellectual* change, it cannot be denied that both 'internal' as well as 'external' factors were inextricably linked in the actual transformation.

It was in the 18th century that thinkers from various different European states, such as England, Scotland, France and Germany, began to reflect in a self-conscious manner on their own society, culture, and values, and began to seek clarification and justification for the foundations of their own social and cultural existence. In their self-conscious reflection, the past began to be seen as something troubling; either to be modified or rejected. In its place, they tried to replace it with something else which they thought had a more secure foundation, and would lead to human salvation on earth, here and now. This is indeed a far cry from the religious medieval emphasis on the Hereafter, where abstinence and restraint were necessary for its pursuit.

This great cultural project requires for its fulfillment, the examination of fundamentals on which social and cultural life is based. Since knowledge has been so central a feature of European social and cultural existence, the examination must therefore turn on the very characteristics of knowledge itself, and the reliability of the apparatus with which humans are equipped for its acquisition. It is in this regard that *epistemology*, or the theory of knowledge, became a central philosophical concern and came into its own in the 18th century with the efforts of philosophers such as John Locke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. The successes of science had proven that reason and the evidence of the senses, are reliable sources of knowledge and could be set up as rival and alternative to the religious world-view. The task of 18th century epistemologists, therefore, consisted in examining the nature of Reason, its scope and limits, and the uses to which it could or could not be put. If humanity, now deprived of direct access to the Divine through 'revealed knowledge', is to reconstruct itself on the foundations of Rationalism and Empiricism, it must assure itself that such foundations are secure so that human culture can rest assure that it is indeed marching forward on a sure footing. Thus the nature of epistemology as it developed in the 17th and 18th centuries in the hands of Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant, were concerned mainly with the *foundations* of human knowledge, the attempt to justify such foundations, and to show the credibility of knowledge built on such foundations. This pre-occupation with 'found-

ationalism' in the epistemology of the time, showed how Reason became the vehicle by which humanity sought to reconstruct itself in the 18th century. In a way, it is a 'coming of age of man', for now man, left to his own devices, without the intermediary of prophets, have to decide on their own course of action. This is more true of the West than of the East in any case, for the process of secularisation that was occurring in the West in those centuries, had not been especially felt in the Eastern world. This effort, however, was not carried out by totally severing relations with religion. Apart from atheists such as Hume, and some of the French *philosophes*, philosophers such as Locke, Leibniz, and Kant, subscribed to some form of Deism, which believed that the path to the knowledge of God need not necessarily be through revelation but could also be achieved through the use of the rational intellect. By regarding the rational mind as God's endowment, they thereby seek to preserve links with the religious past, though clearly distancing themselves with what they considered as human and institutional corruption of religion by the medieval Catholic Church.

As opposed to the profound efforts of thinkers such as Locke, Hume, and Kant, there exists a group of French thinkers such as Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, Holbach, and Condorcet, known as the *philosophes*, who functioned more as spokesmen and popularisers of Enlightenment ideals. They are the equivalent of today's public intellectuals, although this in no way detracts from the valuable contributions which they made. Precisely because they are popularisers of Enlightenment ideals, their advocacy of those ideals were made in a direct, zealous, forthright, uncompromising and unapologetic manner. The lack of Reformation zeal in France, unlike in England, Holland or Germany, seemed to have been more than compensated by the voice of the *philosophes*, who indeed incurred the wrath of the French Catholic establishment. The *philosophes* basically saw religion as the obstacle to human progress and perfection, and the Catholic Church as a basically corrupt institution. For them the Church's demand for conformity to biblical teachings is a thinly veiled attempt to perpetuate ecclesiastical power and authority over its subjects. Thus they advocate a new conception of knowledge, one that is based on Rationalism and Empiricism, in which Reason and the evidence of the senses reign supreme, and in which science is the perfect exemplar. The shift in epistemological foundations from reliance on Scripture to reliance on reason and empirical evidence, has as its corollary a consequent shift in the locus of power from religious to secular authority. The *philosophes* sought to concretise their proposal on knowledge through two major publications, namely the *Encyclopedia* (1751) edited by Diderot and D'Alembert, and the *Dictionary* (1764) by Voltaire. Here they tried to provide a compendium of human knowledge thus far achieved, in which knowledge arrived at through rational and empirical means such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology, were laid out as paradigms of human knowledge, capable of delivering men from the superstition of the past.

As for the epistemological works of Locke, Hume, and Kant, they had more depth, and in the case of Locke and Kant, did not succumb to the easy materialism and atheism of the French *philosophes*. All three of them recognised the impending power of science, not so much as a means of achieving technological progress, but more as a system of thought and knowledge, and the challenge it presented to the Western cultural and intellectual tradition. Kant saw the problem as that of reconciling the moral law and the natural laws of science, of human free will versus scientific determinism, and of how to reconcile the moral dictates of religion with the discoveries of modern science. In this, Kant made a profound anticipation of the problem of Western culture; that while humanity needs science, it is itself devoid of ethical or moral answers because of its very neutrality and objectivity, whereas humanity with its moral concerns and emotions require guidance which perhaps religion could provide. Hume, in his *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739) tried to use the scientific method of reasoning in his analysis of moral and ethical issues affecting man. But Hume's approach failed on two counts. Firstly, as Hume himself realised, there exists a disparity between the *intellect* and *human will*. The conclusions achieved through intellectual reasoning, need not necessarily be put into action, save by the effort or intervention of the human will, which is non-cognitive. Thus moral behaviour seems to be independent of intellectual reasoning, requiring as it does a 'non-intellectual' factor in its practise. Secondly, Hume's analysis of causation led him into a conundrum, if not a blind alley, since there seem to be nothing solid or secure binding what are commonly perceived to be 'causally related' events, save habit, custom or 'psychological association'. This second problem not only raise doubts as to the applicability of the scientific method to the analysis of peculiarly human problems, but it also posed a challenge to the objective foundations of scientific knowledge, a challenge which Kant later famously took up.

All in all, the Enlightenment thinkers saw the need to replace the old with something new. Their efforts range from the naïve optimism or even brash arrogance of the French *philosophes* to the more sober and considered judgements of philosophers such as Locke, Hume and Kant. With Hume, we see an outright rejection of religion in his atheism, but with Locke and Kant we see a serious attempt at trying to interpret religion within 'the bounds of reason'. Whatever else the age of Enlightenment might represent, the pre-occupation with Reason, is indisputably its main concern.

HEGEL'S METAPHYSICS OF RATIONALITY

Although Hegel's philosophical ideas have its own intrinsic value, and merit attention on that account, our selection of Hegel in this paper on globalisation is also influenced by Hegel's emphasis on Rationality and the fact that Fukuyama seized on that point in developing his thesis in *The End of History and the Last*

Man (1992) Hegel had influenced Marx among others, especially in the idea of the *dialectic*, and just as he was about to be forgotten by Marx's downfall, Fukuyama revived Hegel in his influential book by showing the relevance of Hegelian ideas in understanding the development of world history. Despite the fact that Fukuyama's invocation of Hegel is flawed in several important ways, the emphasis on 'the march towards a rational world order', is something worth exploring despite its weaknesses and deficiencies. In sociology, the idea of the 'rational' again becomes prominent through the works of the German sociologist Max Weber, who explored the concept of Rationalisation in society, culture, and religion. In view of the pervasive influence of Hegel's philosophy in 19th century German universities, it is not surprising that Weber, like Marx, was influenced by Hegel to some extent. But while Hegel raised 'Rationality' to a metaphysical level by associating it with what he called *Geist*–an abstract and metaphysical entity in Hegel's philosophy possessed of god-like characteristics–Weber tried to locate and demonstrate its presence in society and social dynamics. This in some ways conforms to the Hegelian ideal, where for Hegel, human history is the stage on which *Geist* manifests itself. Weber, however, stripped *Geist* of its metaphysical associations, showing only the presence of rationality in society.

Betrand Russell once said of Hegel's philosophy that it is an intellectual expression of mystical ideas. The psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung once described Hegel as a man who tried to talk himself out of a cage of words. In other words, Hegel has been different things to different people. There is no doubt that Hegel's writings are sometimes obscure, prolix and even verbose. But even though the same could be said of Kant, philosophers are generally agreed that Kant had something important to say. In the case of Hegel, it is not clear whether the same pronouncement could be made. Whatever the shortcomings of Hegel's philosophy might be, let us focus on one aspect of his thought which deserves attention. This is his idea of Rationality, elevated to a metaphysical level to be sure, and its connection with dialectics. For Hegel, the Supreme Being or the Supreme Reality is what he calls *Geist*, a German word which could perhaps be translated into English as *Mind or Spirit*. It is like Plato's Universal Soul, except that it is a Rational Mind, perhaps akin to what the Greeks called *Logos*. This Rational Mind does not reveal itself all at once to humanity, unlike for example through the medium of prophets as in religion. Instead, it reveals itself through the dialectical processes in human history, and through the intellectual grasp of individuals such as Hegel, who could understand them as such. Each conflict is seen by Hegel as the confrontation of two polar opposites, namely the thesis and antithesis, where the one potentially contains the other. This concept is not unlike the mystical idea found in the Taoist philosophy of *Yin* and *Yang*, or in the Islamic belief of *Ar-Rahman* and *Ar-Rahim* conceived as dualistic expressions of an essential unity. Such conflicts, according to Hegel, results in a new synthesis, which is a higher-order resolution of previous contradictions, and

hence leads to a higher form or expression of the Rational. The progression of human history is seen by Hegel as the continuous development of the Rational through the dialectical process, which is a way in which *Geist* himself comes to have self-knowledge. In this way, Hegel connects the abstract metaphysical world of *Geist* with its earthly presence, and wakes itself up from its own unconscious dream-world into the daylight of articulated and manifest consciousness. Hegel's ideas might have remained buried as speculative philosophy had it not been applied as an explanatory framework for understanding world events and world history. In fact, Hegel himself attempted to write a history based on such a metaphysical outlook. Marx, despite his social realism, saw it fitting to refer to Hegel, although he 'turned Hegel on his head' by making Consciousness a by-product of economic relations. Fukuyama has recently lent credence to Hegelian ideas about the rational by similarly viewing the developments in recent world history in terms of Hegel's metaphysical theory of rationality.

However, these developments could be equally understood in terms of Weber's concept of Rationalisation, where there is no need to postulate the existence of a metaphysical *Geist*. In fact it has been said by Rorty (1979) for instance, that 'Hegelianism is Protestantism by other means'. In other words, it is an attempt to 'divinise the profane', although the effect is largely that of 'secularising the sacred', because of its intellectualisation of the god-head. By raising Rationality to a metaphysical level, and describing human history in terms of it, Hegel and his followers not only *explain* history, but simultaneously normativise and legitimise it by calling it 'rational'. This has the effect of either calling for a 'rational world order', or to justify human atrocities in the name of resolution towards a higher form of rationality. Both options are certainly unpalatable.

THE LOGICAL POSITIVISTS

Although the Logical Positivists have expounded rigorous epistemological theories, *qua* philosophers, their philosophy is not unconnected with their wider political and cultural agenda. However, we are not thereby suggesting that Logical Positivism lacks credibility because of its 'ideological' orientation. Nevertheless, I Logical Positivism can be regarded as a philosophy which is consistent with the wider aims of the Positivists and help promote their political and cultural cause. From hindsight, these causes can be seen as the pre-empting of cultural globalisation, at least in terms of its ideational content. What are these causes and how does the epistemological theory developed by the Logical Positivists help to promote or advance them?

Although the Positivists were careful not to reveal their 'ideological' position in their epistemological writings, one of their pamphlets, entitled "The Vienna Circle Manifesto", did reveal their broader political and cultural outlook. Also, the book *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1971), written by the British

positivist A.J.Ayer in 1936, did to some extent reveal similar aims. Basically, their view of culture concerns the problem of knowledge and its legitimacy. For the authenticity of any culture is highly dependent on the knowledge-claims which it makes. This is especially so in the age of 'rationalisation', where intellectual justification serves as the foundation of legitimation. To debunk the knowledge-claims of a culture would thereby undermine the legitimate basis of a cultural position, and set the stage for its replacement by a universal cultural order founded on the image of science. Seen in this light, we are in a better position to appreciate some of the major tenets of the epistemology of Logical Positivism. These are: (1) the rejection of metaphysics in both its philosophical as well as its religious forms; (2) the establishment of a cognitive criterion based on logic and empiricism; (3) linguistic analysis as the key to conceptual clarification and the establishment of meaning; (4) the elevation of the status of science as the paradigm or model of human knowledge. The upshot of the Positivists' enquiry into epistemology or the theory of knowledge is that only scientific knowledge, or knowledge possessing the epistemological characteristics of science has a valid claim to knowledge in the cognitive sense. The rest are either meaningless or serve non-cognitive functions such as the aesthetic or the emotive. Their claim to validity and legitimacy in giving us truths about the natural and the human world, is thereby impugned.

The 'hidden' agenda or motivation behind this approach, is not necessarily evil, but in some cases motivated by a genuine desire for 'human unity'. In fact the theme of unity – albeit the 'unity of knowledge' – appeared in a major publication by a group of Logical Positivists, entitled *Encyclopedia of Unified Science* published in two volumes in 1938. How is this 'human unity' supposed to be achieved, and in what way is positivistic epistemology instrumental towards its achievement? The common belief is that different human cultures are informed by different belief-systems, metaphysics and world-views. What prevents them from reaching a consensus is partly the different orientations towards the world and towards action, resulting from their different metaphysics. If metaphysics can be shown to be invalid, as a form of knowledge, by the lights of Positivistic epistemology, then at least an important barrier in human communication would have been dismantled. Instead, the Positivists propose logical reasoning and empirical evidence as the only genuine foundation for human knowledge, thereby setting a new framework for human discourse and communication. Like the earlier Enlightenment thinkers, they believe in the innate uniformity and universality of human cognitive faculties, which in principle could reach agreement if based on the foundations of logic and empiricism. The human race, under this conception, could *march as a whole*, based on meritocracy, instead of squabbling over differences motivated by differences in metaphysics and world-views. Politically, the Positivists who included Jews among them, were under pressure in the late 1920s and early

1930s with the rise of fascism in Germany, and the insistence on superiority based on race.

The scientific enterprise served as an ideal model for this new view of the human communicative framework, because the institution of science is one of those rare and unique institutions which transcend ethnic, racial, or religious boundaries. The norms governing scientific practice, which implicitly include the twin pillars of positivistic epistemology, namely acceptance of propositions based on logical proof and empirical evidence, was seen as something capable of being extended and generalised to other spheres of human discourse and interaction. In fact, in their project of Unified Science, they strove to show the epistemological and methodological unity of the natural and social sciences (which include the humanities), again hoping to pave the way towards cultural unity in the image of science.

In the field of architecture, the Positivists advocated the *Bauhaus* form of architectural design, with its geometric shapes and a marked lack of ornamental design. Like their epistemological theory which insists on simple facts as being the building blocks out of which knowledge is built, in architecture they advocated simple geometrical shapes (such as squares, rectangles and triangles) as the units out of which building designs are made. The 'modernism' of their architectural design and philosophy was in fact influential. Architectural design around the world today are largely modelled on such concepts, thus creating an atmosphere of uniformity in world architecture, and thereby contributing towards the globalisation process. Their rejection of ornamental designs, like their rejection of metaphysics – where both tend to be 'culture-specific' – are similarly aimed towards 'cultural levelling'.

The desire to put human beings on a common cultural footing can also be seen in the efforts of the positivist Otto Neurath (1938), who tried to develop and promote the use of 'iconic language' long before it became a common feature in our public spaces and amenities. Today we find iconic symbols being used in public places such as public toilets, airports, public parks, etc., with signs such as 'No Smoking', and 'Males/Females'. Iconic language has the advantage of being easily understood by all, despite differences in linguistic or cultural backgrounds. It provides a common medium for human communication and interaction, and the fact that Neurath took an interest in it again shows the common spirit that drove both his epistemological and linguistic efforts.

If globalisation is largely characterised by the tendency towards uniformity or consensus, including our conception of what constitutes authentic knowledge, then the philosophical efforts of the Logical Positivists can be looked upon as laying the epistemological basis for such a uniformity, since its eschews cultural idiosyncrasy in knowledge-claims, by making universal science as the epistemological candidate for universal human knowledge. Although Logical Positivism, as an intellectual enterprise, is now generally considered dead, its demise also tells a story which is not purely philosophical,

but also 'ideological'. Even though it is true that it collapsed under the weight of mighty criticisms, especially from Popper, Quine, and Kuhn, the rise of postmodernism with its emphasis on pluralism and its negation of universalism and 'metanarratives', also contributed to its eventual downfall.

THE POSTMODERNIST CHALLENGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBALISATION

In this section we will look at several versions of postmodernist thought and suggest their possible implications for globalisation. This will be divided into three main groups, namely (1) the Pragmatists, (2) the Deconstructionists, and (iii) the Social Consructivists, and will be discussed in that order. Admittedly, there is some overlapping between their ideas, but their differences are nevertheless discernible.

The pragmatists, of whom Richard Rorty will be taken as a major representative, differ from Deconstructionists such as Foucault and Derrida in that Rorty incorporates elements of Pragmatism drawn from the American Pragmatists such as C.S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, while Foucault and Derrida drew their inspiration from the Greek and Continental philosophical tradition. The Social Constructivists such as Bruno Latour, Steve Woolger, Steven Shapin, and Simon Schaffer, on the other hand, are mainly historians and philosophers of science whose attack on modernist thought centre chiefly on their critiques of scientific rationality.

THE PRAGMATISTS

Pragmatists such as Rorty, like other postmodernist thinkers, refuse to grant epistemological privilege to scientific thought and method. Rorty also insisted that there is no unity of method between the natural and the social sciences or humanities, and that conceptions of truth, objectivity, and rationality associated with the natural sciences cannot be legitimately extended and applied to the study of man (Rorty 1979). Rorty sought to re-define terms such as 'rationality', 'truth', and 'objectivity', in pragmatic terms, so as to deprive them of any ontological or epistemological privilege. The view once prevalent amongst modernists and realist philosophers of science that science captures the essential truth about the world, is criticised by Rorty. Like other pragmatists before him, Rorty instead develops an epistemological conception of science that emphasises science as a 'way of doing things', involving action and the interaction between an organism and its environment, through the intermediary of concepts and instruments. As such, there is no 'mirroring' relationship between scientific concepts, theories or statements, and the so-called 'objective world out there'. Instead, the results of scientific enquiry reflect our efforts at

'coping with the world'. 'Truth', under this construal, is not so much a semantic relationship between fact and statement, but more of the extent to which our ideas have allowed us to deal and negotiate with the world successfully. The pragmatist's conception of epistemology and ontology cuts through both the scientific and the religious world-view equally deeply, itself being ensconced in a humanist perspective of the world. It rejects the religious world-view through its rejection of revealed knowledge, since it denies the existence of 'absolute truth out there' which privileged minds have access to. It rejects the classical scientific world-view in that it does not believe that science is a mirror-image of an objective reality, either in intention or in achievement. Instead, scientific theories are regarded as a function of our physical and intellectual apparatus and means of 'accessing reality' – a view which in a way is neo-Kantian. The idea that truth is partly 'man-made' is important for the pragmatist and humanist alike, since it brings man back into the epistemological picture, allowing him some degree of freedom in determining in his own destiny, rather than leaving it to the power of God, or the dictates of nature. Thus it is not surprising that, for instance, Rorty's redefinition of terms such as 'rationality', 'truth', and 'objectivity', blurs the fact-value distinction so beloved of the Positivists and Modernists, and builds ethics into epistemology by insisting that values play a role in those concepts. For example, concerning objectivity and truth, Rorty (1991: 22-23) wrote:

... those who wish to reduce objectivity to solidarity – call them "pragmatists" – do not require either a metaphysics or an epistemology. They view truth as, in William James' phrase, what is good for <u>us</u> to believe. So they do not need an account of a relation between beliefs and objects called "correspondence", not an account of human cognitive abilities which ensures that our species is capable of entering into that relation... . For pragmatists the desire for objectivity is not the desire to escape the limitations of one's community, but simply the desire for as much intersubjective agreement as possible, the desire to extend the reference of 'us' as far as we can.

On rationality, he wrote:

In one sense...to be rational is to be methodical: that is, to have criteria for success laid down in advance... . If to be rational means to be able to lay down criteria in advance, then it is plausible to take natural science as the paradigm of rationality... . Another meaning for 'rational' is, in fact, available. In this sense, the word means something like 'sane' or 'reasonable' rather than 'methodical'. It names a set of moral virtues: tole-rance, respect for the opinion of those around one, willingness to listen, reliance on persuasion rather than force... . In this sense of 'rational', the word means something like 'civilized' rather than 'methodical'... . On this construction, to be rational is simply to discuss any topic – religious, literary, or scientific – in a way which eschews dogmatism, defensiveness, and righteous indignation (Rorty 1991: 36-37).

THE DECONSTRUCTIONISTS

Deconstructionists such as Foucault and Derrida, on the other hand, have a slightly different agenda, although Rorty did imbibe some of their views. They reject any sort of 'metanarratives', 'foundational philosophies', or 'justificationism', seeking instead to uncover the hidden or political motives behind any 'constructed belief'. They have a precursor in the 19th century German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, whose combination of Nihilism with politics and history, comes close to their brand of philosophy. Deconstructionists are highly sceptical of values and virtues, seeing these as bases of legitimation for groups seeking political power. This is reminiscent of Nietzsche's view of morality, which saw moral values as intimately connected to political power. Thus 'truth', 'objectivity', and 'rationality' for instance, would be regarded as rhetorical devices invoked by groups contesting power in society. Like Rorty, deconstructionists have disengaged language from nature and sought instead to locate its basis in human interests.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISTS

The Social Constructivists similarly share the basic premises of the Pragmatists and the Deconstructionists, while focussing their attack mainly on scientific knowledge, since science has been commonly regarded as the paradigm and embodiment of modernity. In their classic piece, *Leviathan and The Air Pump*, Simon and Schaffer for instance tried to show how political motives shaped the construction of scientific knowledge in 17th century England. Among other things, this they tried to demonstrate by showing Hobbes' double involvement in both political and scientific debates and how considerations in the one field of discourse influenced the other. Generally speaking, the efforts of the social constructivists are commonly aimed towards 'demystifying' scientific knowledge by showing the extent to which human interests are involved and built into its very construction. Thus science does not set ultimate standards as to what constitutes 'truth', 'objectivity', and 'rationality', and could not offer a model for the other branches of human knowledge (including Economics and Development "Science") to emulate. If previously science's success and progress in offering us knowledge about the natural world is taken as an indication of its sure grasp of the notion and practice of 'truth', 'rationality', and 'objectivity', the works of the social constructivists sought to debunk this image of science, seeking instead to explain its success in terms which distance it from nature and connect it instead to human interests. Simon Schaffer, for instance, has tried to argue for a demolition of the distinction between the 'natural' and the 'social'.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF POSTMODERNIST THOUGHT
FOR CONTEMPORARY GLOBALISATION

Considered as a whole, the general tenor of postmodernist thought have gene-
rally been aimed towards a critique of values and epistemology associated with
modernity and embodied in science. It is admittedly, a *reaction* and a *response*
to a prevailing view, much in the same way that Romanticism was a reaction to
18th century Enlightenment. Postmodernist critique has the effect of eroding the
moral and epistemological consensus of modernity, and forcing a re-examination
of the premises on which modernity is based. For the western world, especially
those espousing liberal democracy, such philosophies and attitudes need not
necessarily endanger the institutional foundations of society. If anything, it
tends to strengthen it since the migration of non-European peoples into the
western world, have seen a much more pluralistic society which requires more
cultural tolerance for its survival. Modernity, like it or not, with its attendant
value-system, has been traditionally linked to the civilisation of the White Man.
Post-modernity, with its critique of modernity, can therefore be seen as an open-
ing of the epistemological space which pre-empts the opening of the cultural
space. It allows also for the retention of native cultural beliefs and values, through
its non-privileging of science–a far cry indeed from the 'imperialistic' attitudes
of a Frazer or a Malinowski. But a distinction has to be made between the so-
called 'modernist concepts' as applied to nature and as applied to man. Critics of
modernity often conflate the two and see an idealised version of 'truth', 'objec-
tivity', and 'rationality' as applied to the natural order as having implications for
the social order. To be fair, they are not entirely to be blamed for this as philoso-
phers of modernity such as the Logical Positivists and Karl Popper have them-
selves tried to make the connection. But to attack such notions as applied to the
natural order simply because of its possible implications on the social order
seems to do injustice to our philosophical conception of the natural world.
Furthermore, globalisation not only requires universal tolerance which post-
modernism encourages, but also requires a 'touchstone of reality' at least with
regard to the natural world, in order for there to be meaningful communication
between nations increasingly enmeshed in a common economic and technologi-
cal framework. To insist together with the deconstructionists that everything is
a mere construction, or that everything is a 'text', would be to deny knowledge,
especially scientific and technological knowledge, of its proven efficacy and as
a candidate at least for a consensual framework at the level of the natural order.
True, one could further contextualise this and locate it within the framework of
technocracy. But contextualisation could be viewed as a *contingent* relation-
ship, one in which we are presented with options for the possible ways of
utilising technology. It need not neces-sarily be viewed as usurping the episte-
mological basis on which the scientific-technological order is built. Like the
Logical Positivists I believe that scientific knowledge has a contribution to make

towards the advancement and the coming together of the human race, though not in the sense of levelling all cultures to a common scientific and technological base. It would be all the more difficult for science and technology to make this global cultural contribution if postmodernism hold sway. Perhaps a balance needs to be struck between a universal acceptance of modern science and technology, and a recognition of the uniqueness of the human and cultural order.

Our suggestion is that we should distinguish the way we think about nature from the way we think about man, and stop thinking of 'man as being of a piece with nature' or that the epistemology and ontology of the natural order must perforce be carried over to the human or social order. This is a mistake which prompted Rorty among others, to attack the correspondence theory of truth with regard to our knowledge of nature, in order to make room for the human world of beliefs and values. Similarly, phenomenologists such as Husserl and Heidegger have embarked on a strenuous attempt to locate an objective world of mental contents for fear that the mental be dismissed as subjective and unreal when compared to the more rigorous analyses of the natural scientists. On the other hand, modernist thinkers such as Gellner have insisted that our understanding of nature must constrain, if not determine, our conception of the human and the social. Although I agree that an understanding of the former, should in some sense constrain our conception of the latter, in both methodological and substantive terms, I remain committed to the view that an understanding of the natural world in the classical modernist modes of 'truth', 'objectivity', and 'rationality' is possible without detracting from a somewhat cultural pluralistic or even relativistic view of the human, social, and cultural world. That optimism perhaps requires a separate treatment or chapter for its justification.

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Associate Professor Dr. Mohd. Hazim Shah
Dept. of Science & Technology Studies
Faculty of Science
University of Malaya
50603 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia