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Liberating Critical Theory: Eurocentrism, Normativity, and Capitalism: Symposium on Amy Allen's *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Columbia University Press, 2016

The Contemporary Frankfurt School's Eurocentrism Unveiled: The Contribution of Amy Allen

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In her latest book, *The End of Progress*, Amy Allen embarks on an ambitious and much needed project: to decolonize contemporary Frankfurt School critical theory. As with all of her books, this is an exceptionally well-written and well-argued book. Allen strives to avoid making assertions without backing them up via close and careful textual reading of the thinkers she engages with. In what follows I will state why this book makes a central contribution to contemporary critical theory (in the wider sense), after which I pose a few questions. These questions are not meant to prove that there are any serious problems with her argumentation. Rather, they are meant in the spirit of dialogue and to allow her to further elaborate her work for the audience.

Throughout the book, and in particular chapter one, Allen brings feminist post- and de-colonial theory in conversation with contemporary

Frankfurt School thinkers. Here she exposes the lack of engagement with such literature by contemporary Frankfurt School thinkers, in particular Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, and Rainer Forst and those scholars who (uncritically) draw on these thinkers. Her critique is important, because it exposes that the contemporary Frankfurt School's lack of attention to feminist post- and de-colonial theory does not make it equipped to adequately respond to the post- and neo-colonial world of today. Furthermore, and most importantly—which Allen so convincingly exposes in this excellent book—it does not allow Habermas, Honneth, and Forst to critically reflect upon their own Eurocentrism, particularly as it surfaces in their idea of progress.

In particular, she convincingly shows us that we find in Habermas's and Honneth's neo-Hegelian re-constructivist strategy, which grounds critical theory in the normative resources of the Enlightenment and European modernity, a backward-looking idea of progress, which views European modernity as developmentally more advanced than pre-modern and non-European cultures. And although Forst's neo-Kantian constructivist strategy aims to articulate a universal moral–political standard, the basic right to justification that is not grounded in a backward-looking story of historical progress but rather in an account of practical reason, his theoretical framework does not escape the charge of Euro-centrism.

What I find particularly important is that the project of decolonizing critical theory is undertaken by a thinker, Allen, who is herself firmly located within contemporary Frankfurt School critical theory, which allows her to challenge them with their own often abstract and inaccessible language, and which makes her critique particularly effective. Furthermore, although the contemporary Frankfurt School is in general not particularly open to and rarely engages with feminist thinkers, it does engage with the work of Allen, which is another reason why this book is so important—it promises that the thinkers she critiques might actually read her book and take up her suggestions on how to decolonize their theoretical frameworks to make critical theory relevant for the twenty-first century again.

In her second chapter on Habermas, Allen shows us that Habermas's recent response to challenges to his neo-Hegelian re-constructivist strategy for grounding normativity—his idea that there are "multiple modernities"—does not go far enough, because it remains committed to the progressive view of history that does not escape the charge of Eurocentrism. In her careful reconstruction of Habermas's theoretical framework she shows us that his view of the Euro-American participant in dialogue, "as developmentally superior to members of traditional or 'non-modern' cultures, is at odds with his professed desire for an intercultural dialogue in the global public sphere

in which we are open to being enlightened by others about our own blind spots" (73)[1]. Her critique on Habermas's idea of "multiple modernities" is central, because this concept has recently been taken up by other thinkers, such as Thomas McCarthy (2009).[2] As a result, McCarthy's own project that also aims to decolonize the contemporary Frankfurt School critical theory cannot escape the charge of Eurocentrism. Here the hope is that her critique will spark a more careful and self-reflective engagement with concepts coined by the contemporary Frankfurt School.

In chapter three, Allen takes on a careful reading of the work of Honneth. Here she shows us that Honneth's Hegelian contextualism, in which we find the ideal of "mutual recognition" as the normative goal that animates critical theory, also remains caught in the backward looking story of historical progress that takes the "us" as an outcome of a progressive learning process, in which Western societies appear as developmentally superior to "premodern" and "non-modern" past and present societies (83). What I found here especially illuminating is her challenge to Honneth's normative reconstruction of the realization of freedom in European modernity, in which he announces the cultural and legal recognition of homosexual relationships and the push for expansion of marriage rights to homosexuals as the culmination of a "progressive democratization" of romantic love that has taken place over the last two centuries (98). Allen exposes Honneth's claim that "the expansion of marriage rights within European and American contexts as implying progress for us, by our lights . . . also serves as evidence that 'our' late modern, European-American form of ethical life is superior to those forms of life that do not tolerate or accept gay marriage" (100). Furthermore, such a claim contributes to new forms of racisms towards people associated with such "other" forms of life that do not accept gay marriage, and furthermore delegitimizes forms of love associations that consider marriage as a hetero-normative and regressive form of union.

In her fourth chapter, Allen takes on Forst's theory of justification, in which normativity is not grounded in the idea of historical progress per se but in a "freestanding" account of practical reason. Again, in her careful reconstruction of Forst's theoretical framework, she shows us that his account of practical reason, which is based on the Kantian Enlightenment conception of practical reason, is not as freestanding as he suggests it is. Rather, she exposes that it remains vulnerable to postcolonial critique, insofar as Forst's "universal conception of practical reason is really a thick, particular, and Eurocentric notion in disguise" (15-16). I find this chapter particularly insightful, because it shows us how Forst's attempt to normatively ground critical theory in an idea of practical reason is, as Allen puts it, "deeply bound up with teleological progress narratives while disavowing this very connection," which explicitly

or implicitly excludes, represses, and dominates all those associated with the so-called Other of reason—in particular post-colonial subjects (155). Her critique of Forst is important, because his theoretical framework seems to become more and more the face of contemporary critical theory today. Insofar as Allen shows us that Forst's framework does not illuminate but rather obscures the ways in which reason and his space for justification is entangled with power relations her critique must make all those who draw on and work with Forst pause, and rethink their own theoretical premises.

In chapter five, which I take to be her core chapter, Allen brings an early Frankfurt School critical theorist, Theodor W. Adorno, into conversation with the French thinker Michael Foucault to build her own theoretical framework that allows us to ground critical theory in an idea of normativity that escapes the charge of Eurocentrism. Such conversation has several aims. First, it exposes the entanglement of claims of Enlightenment progress and reason with power relations that are soaked in the blood of its regressive tendencies, such as the National Socialist regime in Europe. Second, it shows us that a rigorous critique of the backward-looking notion of progress can remain committed to progress as a future-oriented moral–political goal that implies the hope for a better and less oppressive society. For this to happen, she argues, we must disentangle the backward-looking notion of progress from a forward-looking one, which allows us to live up to the normative inheritance of modernity (the ideas of freedom, inclusion, and equal moral respect), without viewing such inheritance as superior to pre-modern and non-European cultures.

Third, it allows us to critique history understood as the progressive realization of reason, without getting rid of enlightenment rationality altogether. Such rationality and reason does not strive towards totality, but rejects the unifying logic of modernity via the moment of non-identity in Adorno and the figure of unreason in Foucault that opens up and illuminates the gaps and fissures in our own historical a priori and generates a space for possible freedom and transformation. Fourth, it shows that critical theory must problematize its own point of view as a means to realize a central normative ideal of the Enlightenment—freedom. Such problematization makes us take a stance of modesty towards our own normative commitments, which is necessary to do justice to the Other.

I found this chapter particularly illuminating, because it opens up contemporary critical theory to the engagement with thinkers it largely eschews, that is, the works of the early Frankfurt School, in particular that of Adorno, but also that of French thought. Allen's previous work already contributed to open up the Contemporary Frankfurt School, by, for example, bringing Habermas in conversation with Foucault. However, this book goes in its

critical scope a step further. Whereas in her previous work, she retains the central premises and the theoretical frameworks of the contemporary Frankfurt School, in this new work she is more hesitant of such an enterprise, and suggests that we must look elsewhere to make critical theory critical again—namely, in feminist postcolonial and de-colonial theory, as well as in the first generation of Frankfurt School critical theory, in particular the work of Adorno that unfolds its critical potential when brought in conversation with Foucault.

However, I have a few questions. First, Allen argues that we can hold on to European enlightenment ideals if we "adopt a stance of modesty or humility, not one of superiority toward our own moral certainties" (33). This idea of humility towards our own normative and political commitments makes us aware of the limits and contingencies of our commitments, which also "facilitates a willingness to have one's own commitments destabilized in the encounter with other forms of life" (76). Such humility, moreover, will "suspend the assumption that my form of life is superior to those of the cultural Others with whom I am in dialogue" (76).

I appreciate and agree with her account of humility. However, the problem I see is that assumptions "about Cultural Others," especially about racial Others, are made on the unconscious or pre-conscious level and not so much on a discursive level in the daily interactions and dialogues between well-meaning liberal people, as Iris Marion Young (1990) elaborates.[3] I wonder if Allen's model of grounding normativity in the idea of humility would benefit from a psychoanalytic account of the unconscious, which shows us that even when attempting to consciously reflect on our normative commitments and be humble about them, we might still harbor the unconscious conviction that we are morally and politically superior to racial "Others," which is played out in dialogue in other ways, such as aversive physical reactions towards such Others. Here I would be interested to know if her more recent engagement with psychoanalytic theory could be helpful.

Second, Allen argues that the idea of historical progress as a distinctively modern concept, which implies the idea of a necessary, inevitable and unified process, found its clearest expression not only in Kant and Hegel but "even in Marx" (8), particularly in the ways in which he conceptualized the "development of the forces and relations of production, which sows the seeds for communist revolution," (8), as well as his idea of a "communist utopia" (8; see also p. 22). None of the contemporary Frankfurt School critical theorists makes, according to her, such strong claims as Marx, but rather they understand progress as contingent and always with the possibility of regression (9). However, she claims that Habermas remains stuck in a backward-looking idea of progress, because he turns to Marx in his early attempt to reconstruct

historical materialism (40-45). For her then, if we want to rethink the relationship between history and normativity "that is necessary if critical theory is to be decolonized, we are better off turning to Adorno and Foucault than to Marx" (25).

The problem is that Allen does not engage with or pursue a close textual reading of the texts of Marx, which is rather untypical for the rest of the book and her work in general. Her engagement with Marx mostly takes place via Habermas's one-sided reading of Marx in his early work. However, already in *A Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing*, Marx attacked any dogmatic prefiguring of the future and any notion of a communist utopia. Moreover, in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx makes clear that any idea of progress in capitalist societies is bound up with the violence of the colonial enterprise that exploit new markets, and the bourgeois-liberal project that reduces the rest of the world to an image of itself via its "civilizing mission." Furthermore, for Marx, the development of the forces of production does not imply an unchallenged notion of progress. Rather he attacks such development throughout his works since it only serves the capitalists, because it allows them to fully suck out the physical and mental powers of the workers as a means to augment their own power, wealth, and status in capitalist society—hence Marx's characterization of capitalism as a vampire in *Das Kapital I*.[4]

Also, Marx did not suggest that the historical development of the productive forces spurred by technical–scientific knowledge is the motor of "historical progress" as Allen suggests via Habermas (45). Rather, it allows the capitalist class to exploit the proletariat in ever more insidious ways with ever more sophisticated forms of technological rationalization (*Das Kapital I*). Furthermore, Marx did not propose an easy progress from capitalism to communism via revolutionary agency of the proletariat that does not allow for any contingency. Rather, Marx in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* made clear that the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat has many setbacks.

My core concern with Allen's suggestion that we must turn away from Marx is that she finds herself open to the critique that she herself abandons a rigorous critique of capitalism. Here Allen, rather than correcting the contemporary Frankfurt school's problematic tendency to abandon a rigorous critique of capitalism, which she herself notes as a problem (40), seems to reinforce that tendency. Furthermore, it covers over the ways in which Adorno's own radical impulses, which are mostly lost in the contemporary Frankfurt School critical theory with its eschewal of Marxist (as well as psychoanalytic thought), are indebted to his engagement with Marx. Furthermore, a turn away from Marx might not serve critical theory's opening to postcolonial theory, insofar as post and de-colonial theory has itself found central

resources in Marx to theorize colonial domination and the possibility to counter such domination. I suggest that Allen's own account of grounding critical theory in a more ambivalent notion of progress could gain from turning to Marx instead of away from him, and I am interested to hear what she thinks about that.

My third question concerns Allen's pursuit of an immanent critique in her book, which implies that her approach to critical theory is situated in the intellectual tradition of the Frankfurt School, and that she aims to draw on the resources of the Frankfurt School (mostly Adorno) to decolonize contemporary Frankfurt School critical theory (xiii). Although I am sympathetic to her project of bringing Foucault into conversation with Adorno to develop her alternative framework of grounding normativity, I am wondering if it would amount to a more radical transformation of Frankfurt School critical theory to draw on postcolonial theory itself to construct her alternative theoretical framework in chapter five.

Put somewhat differently, instead of drawing on two white, male European thinkers who have their own problems with Eurocentrism, which Allen also notes, what about if she had taken one or perhaps even two post- or de-colonial feminist theorists, to construct her alternative theoretical framework? Drawing on feminist post and de-colonial theory to provide her own account of grounding critical theory in an idea of normativity would have allowed Allen to include racialized Others into the "space of reason," which, as she outlines in the conclusion, is central to counter Eurocentrism, and which I suggest the Frankfurt School usually reserves for itself.

Also, there is perhaps a problem that Allen aims to hold on to the concept of "freedom" as the core concept for critical theory, insofar as this concept, as she herself exposes, is bound up with the European colonial project, which emerged as a vaunted ideal by Enlightenment thinkers at the time when Europe started its capitalist project of enslaving non-Europeans in their colonies (18). Furthermore, Marcuse (2002) shows us that (neo-) liberal capitalist elites continue to hammer this phrase into the minds of those they exploit to cover over their un-freedom in capitalist exploitation.[5] Could feminist post and de-colonial theory offer alternative and more promising concepts that are less bound up with the colonial capitalist project?

My fourth and last question is concerned with Allen's promise in the first chapter that her book not only aims to decolonize contemporary Frankfurt School critical theory, but to also show us how "post- and decolonial theory might be criticalized," which would allow such theory to effectively respond to the long-standing charge of relativism (6). Allen certainly does an excellent job with decolonizing critical theory. However, her attempt to criticalize post- and de-colonial theory appears only in the conclusion, on the last page

of the book. I was curious throughout reading the book what such a criticalizing might look like, especially without recolonizing post- and de-colonial theory that suggests "we" the critical theorists know better, and I am hoping that she can tell us more about this project.

Progress, Empire, and Social Theory: Comments on *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*

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It is a distinct honour to have this opportunity to contribute to this collective conversation about imperialism and Critical Theory, stemming from the wonderful work undertaken by Amy Allen in *The End of Progress.* In the critical spirit of her book, I will use my brief space here to raise some questions regarding the relationship between the two main objectives of this project.

As I understand it, the central aims of *The End of Progress* are, first, to develop an immanent critique of various important and representative contemporary Frankfurt School Critical Theorists with regard to their respective conceptions of progress and, second, to put this immanent critique to decolonial purposes. The most succinct way to put my remarks would be to say that I am largely convinced of the success of the project in relation to the first aim, but remain sceptical of the second. If I had to put my scepticism on the second front in a very truncated way, I would say that it is a concern about its underlying *idealism.* I think that the problem of "progress" here has been formulated as a matter of epistemology and moral philosophy (that is, as a problem about the structure of universal claims regarding normativity). I would like to invite consideration of the limitations of that approach, and explore the comparative difference it might make to view the matter instead from the standpoint of social theory.

Before elaborating on this idea, I must pause first to say how impressed I am by this book and what it accomplishes. Even if I am right to raise some concerns with respect to the effectiveness of the decolonial aspect of the project, it still would be no small feat to have accomplished an immanent

critique of Critical Theory's (sometimes explicit, oftentimes implicit) understanding of progress. That is already a much more ambitious task than I could take on, and it is masterfully done. What makes it so effective is precisely that this is an extremely carefully formulated *immanent* critique. That is, Allen deftly shows here that, despite frequent protestations to the contrary, many of contemporary Critical Theory's most important voices remain wedded to a specific notion of progress—which she characterizes as a "backward looking" idea of progress as "fact"—that is unsustainable on their own terms. All of this is unpacked in a painstakingly careful and judicious manner. In fact, I would say that this book is a model of hermeneutic generosity. Allen's critique works not against a "strawman" picture of these Critical Theory representatives (Habermas, Honneth, and Forst), but rather *with*, and only then *against*, a charitable reconstruction of their best insights. Since Claudia Leeb has done such a thorough job of reconstructing this aspect of the book in her own review, and because I am largely convinced by this immanent critique, I will not restate it here but will simply commend it to others. Instead, I want to scale out a bit and consider some of the background picture that undergirds the discussion between Allen and the Frankfurt School thinkers she engages.

I

As has been widely noted, as the Frankfurt School intellectual tradition was revamped and renovated by Habermas (in particular, although certainly not exclusively by him), it came to take on an increased preoccupation with problems of normative foundationalism. What are the ultimate normative standards of critique? How are we to arrive at such standards? Are they "produced" by the relevant agents and, if so, by what processes? Would it be better to say that normative standards are "discovered"? Etc. As Critical Theorists of various stripes have grappled with these questions, Allen argues, they have struggled to detach themselves from a particular notion of *progress* that has historically been tightly connected to this understanding of normativity. As she puts it,

> The problem, as I see it, arises from the particular role that ideas of historical progress, development, social evolution, and sociocultural learning play in justifying and grounding the normative perspective of critical theorists such as Habermas and Honneth. . . . Habermas and Honneth both rely on a broadly speaking left-Hegelian strategy for grounding or justifying the normativity of critical theory, in which the claim that our current communicative or recognitional practices represent the outcome of a cumulative and progressive learning process and therefore are deserving of our support and allegiance

> figures prominently. Thus, they are both deeply wedded to the idea that European, Enlightenment modernity—or at least certain aspects or features thereof, which remain to be spelled out—represents a developmental advance over premodern, nonmodern, or traditional forms of life, and, crucially, this idea plays an important role in grounding the normativity of critical theory for each thinker. (Allen, 3)

In Allen's account, this matters for two reasons. First, it is relevant because, although Critical Theorists rely upon this connection between normativity and progress, they cannot give a full account of it. This is largely an immanent critique because making it depends upon one first being committed to the ideal of a coherent, comprehensive, and self-reflexive mode of inquiry called "Critical Theory." The second reason is that this association of normativity and progress "remains committed to an imperialist metanarrative" (Allen, 4). This concern might be internal to Critical Theory (presumably Critical Theorists do not wish their work to be put to imperial ends), but it need not be (since we may *all* have reasons to be concerned about imperial ends, whether we are Critical Theorists in the narrow sense or not).

This is where I become somewhat more sceptical, however. I am sceptical, or at least would like to hear more, because I am not sure about the underlying picture of *imperialism* or *colonialism* that is at work here. Put overly simplistically, it seems to me that this picture sees the essence of imperialism as pertaining to a specific *epistemic stance*, especially one associated with making "universal claims" that are false, self-congratulatory, or both. I am genuinely uncertain, however, if this is a very convincing picture of anything that might actually conform to imperialism as a form of social and political domination. At any rate, this seems to me to be a problematically idealist portrait of imperialism. The interesting thing about this picture of imperialism as epistemic stance is that it is shared by both the Critical Theorists Allen surveys (albeit in a largely unacknowledged form) *and* many of the postcolonial theorists she cites (in a more explicit mode). Because this background picture of imperialism is shared by both groups, I think it goes largely without interrogation here. Let me explain.

II

The first page of *The End of Progress* cites Edward Said's famous condemnation of the Frankfurt School. Said frames this as a problem of a "blithe universalism" that, in Allen's reformulation, has

> played a crucial role in connecting (European) culture with (European) imperialism for centuries, for imperialism as a political project cannot sustain itself without the *idea of empire*, and the idea of empire, in turn, is nourished by a philosophical and cultural imaginary that justifies the political subjugation of distant territories and their native populations through claims that such peoples are less advanced, cognitively inferior, and therefore naturally subordinate. (Allen, 1)

In my view, the book rather quickly adopts this basically "Saidian" framework for thinking about imperialism, in which the essential features lie in a false universalism, which can be located at the level of epistemology (in the broadest sense: an account of knowledge). This universalism might be explicitly formulated (in the case of major philosophical texts), but it might also be hidden and subterranean, standing in need of some hermeneutic unmasking (as, for instance, in major cultural artefacts of an era). The point is that in this Saidian formulation, the central problem of imperialism is a set of explicitly or implicitly held propositions about the world, especially about the universality or superiority of one's own way of life. This framing of the problematic dovetails in unexpected ways with the later Frankfurt School thinkers with whom Allen grapples, since it is formulated from the standpoint of epistemology and/or moral philosophy: rooting out false claims that have normatively problematic consequences.

There is a lot to commend in this approach. I don't want to be taken to be saying that it is wholly wrong, or inherently problematic, or that we can entirely dispense with it. Not at all. But I do think it remains incomplete in a few very important respects, which distort and undermine the broader (laudable) objectives. Most obviously, this does not really grapple with imperialism as a problem of *social theory*, that is, a mode of thinking about imperialism as a complex set of social processes that one cannot in any straightforward sense be simply for or against like propositions. To get at the difference between the epistemology framework and the social theory one, I would say that, when we are talking about "imperialism" we are not so much concerned with the fact that certain European thinkers believed their way of life to be universal or normatively superior to all others (which is, at any rate, probably also true of a number of non-European thinkers with respect to their own societies), but rather that they thought this and *had the power to make good on such claims*. Their epistemic claims were interwoven with a set of processes that "realized" those claims in a qualitatively new way. Put differently, while Said was surely right that the "idea of empire" was necessary to the political project of European imperialism, it was surely not *sufficient*.

The person who provides us with some of the best tools for getting at the problem in these terms remains, in my view, Marx. In Marx's account of the

necessarily expansionist tendency of capital, through Lenin, to Luxembourg, and the whole constellation of contemporary postcolonial social theorists, including Wallerstein, world-systems theorists, dependency theorists, and many of the people who are named in passing in *The End of Progress* (e.g., Samir Amin and Gurminder Bhambra), I believe we have a distinct tradition of thinking about imperialism and progress. The point of course is not to endorse the specific claims of these thinkers (which at any rate would be impossible since they do not agree with one another). It is rather to highlight that they are taking up the question of "progress" in an entirely different frame. Notwithstanding the important differences between them, they are *social theorists*: they are attempting to analyze a set of social processes that are not reducible to the normative or epistemic claims held by the individuals within them.

Of course, Frankfurt School Critical Theorists are more cognizant than most of the need for social theory. Or they *should be.* One of the most important legacies of the Frankfurt School—especially its "first generation" thinkers—is that it bequeathed us a grand and as yet unrealized ambition: that of uniting empirical social analysis with critical philosophy. However, as Critical Theory has moved towards its current preoccupation with meta-normative commitments and ultimate epistemological grounding, the whole field of social theory has more or less dropped out. My concern is that this might be reproduced even in an immanent critique of Critical Theory, since it accepts the baseline premise that "progress" can and should be conceptualized in terms largely shaped by epistemology or moral philosophy, such that even a reversal of the claims to progress remains a reversal on this terrain.

III

Let us consider momentarily then what comparative difference it might make to view the question of imperialism and progress from the standpoint of social theory. At the most general level, the social processes with which we are concerned here involve the colonization of the vast majority of the earth by the great European powers and their satellite settler colonies. Social theories of imperialism have attempted to explain (at least) two aspects of these processes that are often elided by other accounts. They seek to explain (a) the underlying structural causes and (b) overall structural effects. For an example of the first, consider one of the most famous lines from the *Grundrisse*: "Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange—of the means of communication and transport—the annihilation of space by time—becomes an extraordinary necessity for it."[6] Marx is attempting

here to give an account of an expansionist tendency endemic to capitalism, which was later used as an explanatory device in a social theory of imperialism (by Marx himself in *Capital, Vol. 1, Part VIII*, but also by such thinkers as Luxemburg and Lenin).

For an example of the second claim, we can turn back to Said where, in *Culture and Imperialism*, he states,

> During the nineteenth century unprecedented power . . . was concentrated in Britain and France, and later in other Western counties (the United States especially). This century climaxed "the rise of the West," and Western power allowed the imperial metropolitan centres to acquire and accumulate territory and subjects on a truly astonishing scale. . . . As result . . . the world was united into a single interacting whole as never before.[7]

The important line (for my purposes at least) is the last sentence: "the world was united into a single interacting whole as never before." This is the most relevant claim because it speaks to a structural effect of imperialism. When we combine these two kinds of claims, we get an account of a set of social processes that have an inner logic of *expansion* and *integration.* It is an overly ambitious claim, but my sense is that much of the time that social theorists were reaching for the term "progress" they were trying to find a vocabulary for the "space-time" compression implied in this. In other words, "progress" was never a term that was used only to describe a regulative ideal on a strictly *temporal* axis (backward or forward looking), but was really about how to describe a process (or set of processes) that linked *time* and *space* in a novel way. If that's true, then "progress" was not merely about ranking societies on some normative scale; it was about explaining the processes that were bringing those societies into contact and transforming them into something qualitatively new, namely, a "single interacting whole." However, if it is right to point out that there is a process at work that operates through the "annihilation of space by time," then we will need something more than merely a moral denunciation of "progress" as normative ranking or imperial "metanarrative." We need, rather, an alternative social theory, one that has better explanatory power over these processes, their tendencies and contradictions.[8]

IV

I realize that, on the one hand, it is probably unfair to ask Allen to respond to any of these concerns. After all, these are not her central concerns. To take on the kinds of issues I raise here would probably be too ambitious and would

take the book too far afield of its theoretical core. On the other hand, however, I want to raise these questions because Allen does claim that her debunking of the normative foundations of recent Critical Theory is, in some important sense, an act of *decolonization.* If that is true, then it behooves us to uncover the sense of colonization at work here and, as I have been arguing, this cannot be simply the "idea of empire" held in the minds of a small group of German philosophers, lest the issue lose all worldly significance. Moreover, I think it is entirely fair to ask such questions of Critical Theorists themselves. As Allen rightly notes in her work, most contemporary Frankfurt School theorists situate their project within a broadly left-Hegelian trajectory, one that considers our current normative resources to derive from a set of historical processes. From their own standpoint then, I think it is entirely right and fitting that we should draw attention to the near total lack of any account of imperialism as an *historical process*, something which can only be done from the standpoint of social theory. Put differently, for some time now, Critical Theorists have been eager to denounce opponents for offering mere "empirical insights" mixed with "normative confusions." A moral denunciation of imperialism as a "metanarrative" or epistemic stance seems to simply invert the valence on this, proffering normative insights with empirical confusions.

Formally Decolonized but Still Neocolonial?

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The End of Progress takes as its starting point the critique of Eurocentrism as formulated by postcolonial theory. The book does a masterful job at showing how the principal thinkers of the third generation of the Frankfurt School rely on substantive notions of historical progress. Allen demonstrates that a normative conception of modernity as historical progress is central to the post-foundational reconstruction of Critical Theory in the post-war era, whether it is in the work of Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, or Rainer Forst. One of the strengths of the book is the careful and compelling way in which Allen reconstructs and deconstructs these works to show how, all disavowals to the contrary, each of them relies, in non-trivial ways, on the claim that modernity has

been an era of historical progress, development, social evolution, or sociocultural learning.

Frequently, postcolonial critics attribute to Critical Theory a kind of shallow and facile teleological and metaphysical conception of history. These kinds of critiques are easily deflected by critical theorists, because authors such as Habermas, Honneth, and Forst each reject foundationalist and metaphysical frameworks that regard history as necessary teleological development. Frankfurt School theorists tend to work with more sophisticated, pragmatic, postmetaphysical, and deflationary accounts of history that do not involve the sort of naïve teleological schemas that critics sometimes unfairly ascribe to them. What Allen's work shows, however, is that Habermas, Honneth, and Forst remain tacitly committed—at a *metanormative level*—to a problematic conception of modernity, problematic because it is understood as the outcome of a process of social and moral learning. The trouble with this view is that it positions European moral values as developmentally superior to others and makes a substantively egalitarian dialogue with non-modern and/or non-Western others impossible.

Allen rightly notes the paradox that critical theorists in the Frankfurt School tradition pursue topics such as global justice and human rights without reflecting on the colonial underpinnings of the concepts of historical progress and development. As postcolonial theorists have shown again and again, civilizational schemas that treat the Euro-Atlantic space as more developed than the rest of the world are inextricably entangled in colonial and racist logics. I share Allen's rejection of the teleology of progress and her critique of the conceit of the Enlightenment as an outcome of moral learning. That said, I wonder whether in the entirely appropriate critique of the Frankfurt School, *The End of Progress* ends up reproducing some of the longstanding shortcomings of certain strands of postcolonial theory and ultimately falls short of Allen's anticolonial objectives. Allen derives her concept of colonialism and her postcolonial critique of progress from major postcolonial theorists, most notably Edward Said, Robert Young, and Dipesh Chakrabarty. In doing so, she lets these authors set the terms of what counts as a critique of Eurocentrism and what "decolonized" normative foundations might look like.

As critics of mainstream postcolonial theory have repeatedly pointed out, there is a frequently disavowed trajectory of anticolonial thought that informed forms of anticolonial struggle and that goes back to Lenin, Mao, Che Guevara, Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Nkrumah, and Cabral, to mention just a few of its leading theorists. In most accounts of postcolonial theory, these authors play at best a minor role. Yet by disavowing this history of anticolonial struggle, postcolonial theory positions the contemporary problem of

colonialism in misleading terms, namely, as the cultural afterlife of colonialism, or to put in Allen's terms, a "formally decolonized but still neocolonial age" (xii). In doing so, postcolonial theory runs together the *cultural* and *symbolic* politics of representation that have come to dominate postcolonial debates in the humanities with the continued *economic, territorial*, and *military* struggles in colonial and neo-colonial contexts. In Benita Parry's words, "The postcolonial shift away from historical processes has meant that discursive or 'epistemic' violence has tended to take precedence in analysis over the institutional practices of the violent social system of colonialism."[9]

It is no accident that Dipesh Chakrabarty and Robert Young are most prominently and often cited among the various postcolonial theorists on whose work Allen relies. Both Chakrabarty and Young have made the Enlightenment central to their work and have emphasized the colonial dimensions of progress narratives. Yet Chakrabarty and Young are also both controversial figures in the broader field of postcolonial criticism, because of the ways in which their work glorifies and mystifies the alterity of the colonized and participates in the construction of a specious dualism between the ostensible rationalism, secularism, and humanism of European discourses and practices and the purported heterogeneity, incommensurability, and radical difference of the colonized.[10] At stake, in these debates, is whether the project of demonstrating the limits of the Enlightenment constitutes a practice of decolonization or an idealist conceit that substitutes for political struggle. While I don't think that one needs to come down on either side of this debate (surely, neither formulation is adequate), it is notable that these controversies do not find their way into *The End of Progress*.

There are important disagreements, within postcolonial theory, about the nature of colonialism, the role and place of knowledge and representation, and the problem of universalism. Much of what travels under the name of postcolonial theory has a series of well-known problems—the overreliance on an idealist conception of culture, of knowledge, and of discourse; the dematerialized understandings of colonialism that fail to account for capitalist expansion as one of the key drivers of the colonial era, the reluctance to address neocolonial power relations in the present, and so on. These issues could and should be targets of a "criticalization" of postcolonial studies. Put differently, critical theory has an important role to play in addressing these debates, yet in *The End of Progress*, Allen remains on the sidelines of these controversies and refuses to take positions against some of the more questionable claims that have come out of postcolonial theory. This seems to me a missed opportunity, for a more critical perspective on postcolonial theory would make the exchange with Frankfurt School critical theory more reciprocal than what Allen maps out.

One of the characteristics of postcolonial theory that has come under criticism is the tendency by authors such as Said and Chakrabarty to construe categories such as “the West” and “modernity” in dematerialized terms and hypostasize them into historical agents. By sidelining the material conditions of colonialism, the “West” is turned into a cultural site and “modernity” becomes a synonym of “Westernization.” This version of postcolonial criticism has a number of problems: it disregards the political economy of colonialism and sidelines divisions of class, race, religion, and gender. And because it fails to address capitalism as a key dynamic of modern colonialism and imperialism, it has a limited capacity to speak to neo-colonial formations in the present. As a result, it produces a fundamental ambiguity about our current moment: is the contemporary era of neoliberal globalization along with its various political formations best described as a colonial or post colonial moment?

I’m not sure where Allen comes down on this question. She defines the postcolonial age as “formally decolonized but still neocolonial” (xii), yet this formulation raises more questions than it answers. For one, unlike the meticulous philosophical analysis of the normative and metanormative issues, these terms are underdetermined. What is the nature of this neocolonial form of domination? Allen repeatedly refers to informal imperialism, but there is no attempt to conceptually deal with contemporary forms of colonial and neocolonial domination or specify the nature of informal imperialism. At one point, informal imperialism is equated with "cultural imperialism" (102), and in a footnote Allen quotes James Tully who defines informal imperialism as the rule over another people by means of military, economic, social, and cultural techniques (235n31). Yet the ambiguity of the terminology is, I think, a direct effect of the dematerialized and culturalist conception of colonialism that this book inherits from postcolonial theory.

Second, the "formally decolonized but still neocolonial" formulation brackets out ongoing colonialism, whether in non-self-governing territories (such as French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Gibraltar, and of the course the largest, in terms of population, Puerto Rico) or in settler colonial states such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel-Palestine. None of these conditions can be described as post colonial in the sense Allen uses the term. Incidentally, Palestine is the elephant in the room here in ways that deserve further attention. The Frankfurt School authors whose work Allen examines have all refused to take public positions on the occupation of Palestine. In fact, the only references to the Palestinian Occupied Territories or to Palestinians in the published works of Habermas, Honneth, and Forst are about terrorism.[11] The refusal to publicly engage with the question of the occupation is most explicit in an interview that Jürgen Habermas did with the

Israeli newspaper Haaretz. When asked to pronounce himself, in the abstract, on whether state boundaries should be adjusted in such a way as to ensure that each nation has its state, Habermas demurs and argues for maintaining multi-national and multi-ethnic states. Yet he quickly adds that he does not intend to question Israel's right to exist, and that "the political right of Israel's existence is, for the best available normative reasons, beyond doubt. Of course, the present situation and the policies of the present Israeli government require a different, political kind of evaluation—that's not the business of a private German citizen of my generation."[12]

This is not the place to evaluate Habermas's politics, and for the purpose of this discussion, I will simply take for granted that his failure to raise any normative concerns about Israel's displacement, dispossession, and domination of Palestinians is normatively objectionable. To be sure, the timidity of Frankfurt School authors in taking political positions on Palestine is mediated by German guilt, but to say that "the best available normative reasons" support Israel's existence and to simultaneously refuse to pronounce himself on the political conditions in Israel-Palestine on grounds of propriety raises the question of what price Palestinians must pay for the sanctimonious silence of a "private German citizen of [his] generation." Of course, Habermas speaks not just as a private German citizen, but as one of the most important political philosophers alive, and when he says that the "best available normative reasons" support Israel's political right to exist yet mentions no normative reasons for considering the human and political rights of Palestinians, we must ask how these reasons were derived and justified.

A project of decolonizing the normative foundations of Critical Theory ought to offer some critical purchase on this question. Can Allen's *The End of Progress* rise to the challenge? I'm not sure. Allen could respond that the problem of Habermas's "best available normative reasons" is that they rely on a metanormative procedure that is colonial and Eurocentric, insofar as it tacitly rests on a conception of modernity as a learning process and on a theory of social evolution as a process of differentiation between system and lifeworld. But does this critique have any teeth with regard to Habermas's nonchalant dismissal of the normative relevance of settler colonialism in his response to *Haaretz*? Is the problem of Habermas's silence on Palestine that his metanormative commitments position the "postmetaphysical and postsecular point of view as developmentally superior to traditional or religious points of view" (74)? I'm not convinced. That might be what is going on in an imaginary intercultural dialogue between a Habermasian and someone who defends a traditional or religious perspective. But when it comes to Palestine, Habermas collaborates in concealing the crimes of the Israeli state not because of insufficient epistemic or metanormative humility about non-Western culture or religion but

as a result of failures of moral and political judgment. The timidity, in Frankfurt, to take a firm stance on the question of Palestine shows that there is a different order of the postcolonial that Allen's book leaves unaddressed. And I think the reason that these issues are left unaddressed has to do with (1) the exclusive focus on the metanormative rather than the political aspects of the colonial presuppositions in the third generation of the Frankfurt School; and (2) the particular version of postcolonial theory on which Allen relies. Some central concerns of anti- or postcolonial criticism are irreducible to metanormative problems of justification and to the question of progress. They demand, rather, considerations on the level of politics, which no metanormative theory—however humble and open to alterity—can generate. Thus, despite the impressive philosophical armature Allen harnesses for her argument, I am ultimately unpersuaded by her wager that the commitment to historical progress "proves to be the biggest obstacle" to decolonizing critical theory (3).

"Decolonization," Normativity, and the Critique of Capitalism: Reply to Critics[13]

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First of all, I would like to thank Claudia Leeb, Robert Nichols, and Yves Winter for these terrific critical reviews of my book, *The End of Progress*. Their readings are generous in that they appreciate and take seriously what I was trying to accomplish in the book and engage it on its own terms, and yet their hermeneutical generosity does not prevent them from raising trenchant criticisms. Although their comments converge and dovetail in interesting ways, these three readers also seem to me to approach my book from different angles with a range of theoretical sympathies. That in itself is rewarding for me as an author because part of the aim of the book was to try to open up a different sort of conversation between contemporary Frankfurt School Critical Theory and critical theories (including anti-colonial theories) in the broader sense of that term. The fact that the book is being taken up from a

number of different directions suggests that it has been at least somewhat successful on that front. However, it also means that I will probably not be able to respond in a way that will satisfy everyone.

Rather than addressing the three reviews in turn I thought it might be more illuminating to try to synthesize their critical remarks into a few broad thematics and discuss those. I'd like to group these broad thematics under three headings: first, and perhaps most significantly, the precise meaning and potential limitations of my use of the terms "postcolonial," "decolonial," and "decolonizing"; second, concerns that arise from the book's focus on the abstract, metanormative question of the normative foundations for critique; and third, the status of Marx and the critique of capitalism in my project and in my vision of critical theory more broadly. Finally, in the conclusion, I will briefly take up Claudia Leeb's question about the limits of epistemic humility and the importance of theorizing the unconscious in relation to the "postcolonial," as this touches on issues that I am dealing with in my current research.

First, let me turn to the cluster of questions and criticisms in these reviews that take up my use of terms such as "decolonization," "postcolonial," and "decolonial." Related to these terminological questions are worries about what at least two reviewers regard as my rather uncritical reliance on a specific "culturalist" or "idealist" strand of postcolonial theory that is not only contested within the literature of post- and anti-colonial theory and studies but also may seem to have limited value for social and political theory. At issue here, as I see it, is the question of how my book is situated with respect to the vast, wide-ranging, interdisciplinary and internally contested theoretical landscapes of postcolonial theory and studies, decolonial theory, anti-colonial theories, and social and political theories of imperialism and colonialism.

These questions emerge in these reviews in different ways and with varying degrees of critical bite. On what I take to be the more sympathetic end of the spectrum, Leeb asks whether a more radical transformation of Frankfurt school critical theory could be accomplished by drawing on thinkers from outside of the Western theoretical canon. To the extent that the primary sources for my own positive, reconstructive project in chapter five of the book are Adorno and Foucault, am I not guilty of engaging in a problematically Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism? In posing this question, Leeb seems to have no objection to the way that I use the term "decolonization," though she does worry that I do not take this project far enough in order for it to succeed on its own terms.[14] The question of decolonization is at stake in a different way in Robert Nichols's review, where he worries that I rely on a specific, Saidian understanding of imperialism that

is overly culturalistic, epistemic, and idealistic. Although Nichols acknowledges that this conception of imperialism has its merits, he is concerned about the lack of a robust social theoretical analysis of colonialism and imperialism in my book, one that would understand these not only in normative-epistemic terms but also as forms of domination that were able to realize their own sense of superiority in the world precisely through colonial and imperial expansion. Finally, Yves Winter is perhaps least sympathetic to my engagement with postcolonial theory and least convinced by the appropriateness of my use of the term "decolonization." Like Nichols, he worries about the overly idealist and culturalist character of the strands of postcolonial theory upon which I rely. But he goes beyond Nichols to raise concerns about the problematic conception of colonial alterity that inhabits these strands of theory, a conception that he thinks I don't do enough to interrogate. In a way, Winter's criticism could be seen as the inverse of Leeb's. Whereas she suggests, in effect, that my approach is insufficiently decolonial, that a true "decolonization" of the Frankfurt School requires looking "outside" its white, male, European borders, Winter calls into question the very assumption of an inside/outside dualism—and what he regards as the accompanying essentializing mystification of the colonial "Other"—on which this suggestion, and by extension my argument, seems to be premised.

In response, I'd like to attempt to clarify what is perhaps too vague and imprecise in my book, which is the specific sense in which this project aims at something that might be called a "decolonization" of critical theory. As I see it, the precise—and rather limited—sense in which this is an apt description of what I am doing is the following: the book diagnoses contemporary Frankfurt School Critical Theory's strategy of grounding its normative perspective by appealing to a conception of progress that is vulnerable to powerful objections drawn from post- and decolonial theory and attempts to offer an alternative way of conceptualizing normativity that is responsive to these objections. Given the fairly limited scope of the book's "decolonizing" aims, although I think it is accurate enough to point out that I do not offer detailed discussions of the wide variety of positions and perspectives that can be found in the vast literatures of post- and decolonial theory, nor do I provide extensive reflection on the difference between these two approaches to the critique of colonialism or coloniality, I'm not convinced that I need to do this in order for the argument to be successful.[15] This is so because it seems to me that the critique of the narrative of European-modernity-as-progress is a thread that runs through a wide range of texts and authors in post- and decolonial theory—even if it is articulated in a variety of ways in this literature and even if these theorists draw distinct conclusions from it—and that insofar

as it is this critique that I want to press against contemporary Frankfurt School approaches, this is sufficient for the purposes of my book.

Thus, the sense in which my project aims to be "decolonizing" is rather narrow. I don't pretend to develop either a critical theory of imperialism or of decolonization, nor do I claim to provide a fully decolonized critical theory, much less a decolonial critical theory. I say this not because I regard these to be unimportant or uninteresting projects, but simply to emphasize that my aim is much more modest but, in my view, no less important: namely, it is to "decolonize" the normative foundations of Frankfurt School critical theory by confronting that tradition's strategies for grounding normativity with objections drawn at least in part from the literature of post- and decolonial theory and developing an alternative strategy that can, I hope, meet these objections.

Two aspects of this formulation are worth emphasizing in this context. First, my focus is the question of normative foundations, not the project of critical theory writ large. In other words, I am trying to answer a specific question within critical theory—namely, how it can secure its normative foundations without appealing to progressive historical or universalistic metanarratives that are vulnerable to post- and decolonial critique—rather than trying to offer a full-blown critical theory of society or of our post-/neo-/colonial condition. In line with this thought, I would agree wholeheartedly with Nichols that this kind of project may be necessary but is not at all sufficient for the broader, and still urgent, project of decolonizing critical theory—and would simply point out that I don't think I ever claimed that it was sufficient. (This is why the subtitle of the book is "Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory" not "Decolonizing Critical Theory.") Second, the bulk of the book, as all three of these reviewers note, consists in the construction of an immanent critique of the Frankfurt School's strategies for grounding normativity that draws, at least in part, on criticisms that are articulated in postcolonial theory. But this way of putting it suggests that I do not presume to make a substantial contribution to post- or decolonial theory. I am well aware, as I acknowledge in the preface, that much of what I say about post- and decolonial theory in the book is likely to be all too familiar to readers who know those literatures (p. xvi). To the extent that the book may have something to offer post- and decolonial theorists, this is limited to the following: a vision of Frankfurt School critical theory that I hope is congenial to their concerns and a way of conceptualizing normativity that may prove useful in responding to the charge, frequently leveled against postcolonial theory, of relativism.[16] Although I readily acknowledge that I am far from the first to have claimed the usefulness of either Foucault or Adorno for postcolonial theory, I do believe that there is something distinctive (at least as far as

I am aware) about the way that I formulate their projects as a response to the problem of normativity in conversation with post- and decolonial concerns. Whether or not this might prove to be helpful for the project of "criticalizing" postcolonial theory, as I call it (perhaps ill-advisedly) in the book, remains to be seen.

Hopefully these remarks go some way toward addressing one of the critical threads that runs through both Nichols's and Winter's reviews. In answer to the question of why I lean so heavily on the "epistemic" or "culturalist" or "Saidian" conception of postcolonial theory in my book, my answer would be that it is this conception that enables one to see most clearly the problems with the strategy for grounding normativity in the contemporary Frankfurt School. To be sure, this leaves open the question of whether this whole question of normative grounding is worth pursuing in the first place; I will return to this question in the next section. But before I do, allow me to say a few words about Leeb's and Winter's mirror image criticisms. In response to Leeb's worry that I don't go far enough in a decolonial direction because of my largely immanent strategy of critiquing the Frankfurt School, although I would admit that this is a kind of "decolonization from within" that one might oppose to a more radical decolonial "decolonization from without,"[17] I still think that this project has value. Even if we all agree that the "Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism" that emerges, for example, in postmodern theory is insufficient for the project of decolonization, this does not mean that it is unnecessary.[18] There is, I think, a value in showing that one can start within the Frankfurt School tradition and end up in a very different place with respect to the question of "the postcolonial," even if I would agree that doing so may not accomplish all that we might hope for under the ambitious heading of the "decolonization" of critical theory.

Moreover, and here I am inclined to agree with Winter, I worry about the conception of radical subaltern difference that seems to operate in the background of notions of "decolonization from without"—a conception of radical alterity that is implied by the very idea of the "without." (I should note that I'm not offering this as a criticism of Leeb—I don't think that her criticism necessarily commits her to this kind of view, and I'm not sure where she stands on this issue). Although I would not want to presuppose the outcome of dialogues across lines of colonial difference in advance—and for that reason I emphasize *openness* as important for cultivating the stance that Euro-American critical theorists adopt toward subaltern others—I do not think that this commits me to a strong, essentialized notion of subaltern difference as constituting a radical outside of or alternative to modernity. On the contrary, my understanding of colonial alterity—which is informed by the works of Chakrabarty, Young, to be sure, not to mention by feminist and queer

postcolonial theorists such as Saba Mahmood, Jasbir Puar, and Gayatri Spivak, but is not for that reason identical to any of these views—is, I think, better characterized as a line of fragility and fracture that challenges the hegemony of colonial modernity from within.[19]

However, and this brings me to my second thematic, this line of response may well seem to dodge the real issue raised to some degree by Nichols and more forcefully by Winter: why focus on the question of normative foundations at all? Why take up this admittedly abstract, epistemological or metanormative, and in that sense "idealist" question as the angle of approach for "decolonizing" critical theory rather than offering an empirically rich, historically specific social theory of imperialism? After all, as Nichols quite rightly reminds us, critical theory is supposed to be critical *social* theory, an interdisciplinary project that draws extensively on empirical social research. Or, as Winter insists, there are important historical and political differences between specific forms and experiences of imperialism and colonialism, past and present, that can and should be the focus of critical theory. In response to this last point specifically, although I admit that Winter is quite right to point out that my accounts of neo-colonialism and informal imperialism are insufficient inasmuch as they do not take into account ongoing settler colonialism in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Israel-Palestine and ongoing imperial colonial projects in Puerto Rico and elsewhere, I am not convinced that taking these forms of colonialism into account would have compelled me to change my argument. After all, the idea of European civilizational superiority—which rests on the narrative of European modernity as the outcome of a process of historical progress, development, or social evolution—seems to me to be very much at work in justifying many, if perhaps not all, of these ongoing colonial and imperial projects. But, Nichols and Winter might protest, this is precisely the problem: my account of colonialism and imperialism abstracts away from the kind of detailed empirical analysis of the historically, institutionally, socially, and politically specific forms of colonial and imperial structures that we should expect from a critical theory that engages substantially with the question of colonialism.

Although this appears on its face to be a powerful line of criticism, it seems to me to boil down to asking why I didn't write a (very) different book. To which I'm not sure the answer can be anything but the following: because *this* is the book that I felt compelled to write. But why did I feel compelled to write *this* book? Perhaps it is a matter of disciplinary formation (or deformation, as the case may be), but in large part I felt compelled to write this book because I find the debate about the normative foundations of critical theory to be not only important but also interesting in its own right. I also find the way that this debate is typically framed within contemporary Frankfurt School

critical theory—as a choice between neo-Kantianism or neo-Hegelianism—to be deeply unsatisfying.[20] Although I would readily agree that critical theorists as a group should not spend so much time and energy arguing about the normative foundations of critique that they never actually get around to critiquing existing societies, I also think of critical theory as a broad interdisciplinary research program that requires a division of labor among its participants. Addressing the question of normativity is one of the (perhaps limited, but not for that reason insignificant) contributions that someone trained as a philosopher can make to this enterprise. Even as I would defend the value of this type of project, I would also simply point out that one should not infer from the fact that I chose not to write a book analyzing the intersection of colonialism and critical theory from a more social-historical or materialistic angle that I think that sort of project is unimportant—far from it.

The questions of materialism and social theory are also at issue in Nichols's and Winter's formulations of the third thematic, which concerns the roles of Marx, Marxism, and the critique of capitalism in my project. As I've already discussed, both Winter and Nichols worry that my focus on the "culturalist," "idealistic," Saidian strand of postcolonial theory underappreciates the social-historical and material relationship between colonialism and capitalism. I think I've already said as much as I can say in response to this line of criticism. Perhaps I can pursue the kind of project that Nichols and Winter call for in future work—it would certainly be important and interesting work that would contribute toward the broader project of decolonizing critical theory—but as things stand I don't see how the fact that I haven't yet done so causes problems for the specific task that my book sets for itself. Leeb, by contrast, pursues a different angle on the Marx question. She questions the wisdom of and justification for my claim that Marx's work doesn't offer critical theorists the kinds of resources that we need for rethinking the question of progress, and that we are better off turning to Adorno and Foucault instead (see 24–25). Leeb points out that Marx's position is actually much more complicated than I make it out to be—in fact, I discuss Marx only briefly in the book and without engaging directly with his texts—and that it contains important resources for the project of unlearning Eurocentrism.

In response, I want to acknowledge that Leeb is quite right that in the absence of close textual analysis and support, I don't earn my criticism of Marx's philosophy of history. And I think that her review gives an interesting and promising sketch of how one might draw on Marx precisely to critically interrogate and reformulate the notion of progress along lines that are fundamentally sympathetic to what I attempt to do in the book. So, I should perhaps qualify the claim that I made in the introduction to the book and admit that one *could* find resources within Marx's thinking for rethinking progress

and critiquing Eurocentrism.[21] Still, I think that to some extent doing so requires reading Marx against Marx—that is, it requires reading the passages to which Leeb directs our attention against what we might call Marx's "official" philosophy of history as articulated in texts such as *The German Ideology*—to a degree that seems less necessary when one is engaging with Adorno's and Foucault's conceptions of history. In other words, however, much contingency and ambivalence can be found in Marx's scattered and somewhat varied reflections on history, it seems to me that his "official" philosophy of history is not the kind of resolutely and thoroughly non-progressive, anti-teleological, genealogical view that one finds in Adorno and Foucault. Whatever their other faults or blindspots may be, Adorno and Foucault were relentless critics of the ideology of what I call the backward-looking conception of progress as a "fact"—on both general methodological grounds and more specific grounds having to do with their assessment of the achievements of European modernity—and they also offer a well-developed, coherent, and plausible alternative to the left-Hegelian approach to conceptualizing the relationship between history, normativity, and critique. That said, as Leeb quite rightly reminds us, Adorno, at least, was also a Marxist. Admittedly, my book leaves much work undone in terms of exploring the specifically Marxist elements of Adorno's thinking, how these elements might complicate the Adorno–Foucault connection (given Foucault's own very complex relation to Marxism), and how an exploration of these issues might deepen and inform critical theory's engagement with the question of colonialism.

However, I would like to emphasize that none of my lingering doubts about the relative merits of Marx's versus Adorno and Foucault's conceptions of history should be taken to suggest that I regard the critique of capitalism to be unimportant for critical theory. To the contrary, I agree wholeheartedly with Leeb about the vital importance of recovering a radical critique of capitalism for contemporary critical theory. Unless one were to subscribe to a pretty orthodox reading of Marx according to which the critique of capitalism is inextricably bound up with a historical materialist account of the development and overcoming of crisis tendencies, I don't see that any of my criticisms of Marx's "official" philosophy of history undermine that position—though I do take Leeb's point that they may unwittingly reinforce a problematic tendency of some contemporary Frankfurt School theorizing.[22]

In closing, I'd like to say a few words in response to Leeb's question about the unconscious in relation to my conception of epistemic humility, and to the broader question about the importance of psychoanalysis for critical theory. On this point, I completely agree with Leeb that assumptions about racialized or colonized others often operate on a pre-conscious or unconscious level and

thus that a discursive plea for epistemic humility may not be sufficient to dislodge and counteract such assumptions. Thus, a full analysis of what is required for unlearning Eurocentrism would need to tackle the question of how such pre- or unconscious habits or assumptions can be transformed.

Like Leeb, I would be inclined to develop such an analysis along the lines of a more robust account of the relationship between psychoanalysis and critical theory. Although that is an issue that I have dealt with somewhat indirectly in my earlier work—by way of my engagement with Judith Butler's psychoanalytically inflected account of subjection—it is also a prominent strand of my current research project.[23] This project is partly motivated by a point that Leeb helpfully reminds us of, namely, the limits of a purely rationalist or cognitivist conception of critique, however epistemically humble and modest it may be. It is also motivated by the intuition that within critical theory the kind of rationalist, progressive, and developmentalist readings of history that I diagnosed in *The End of Progress* tend to be closely bound up with rationalist, progressive, and developmentalist understandings of the self. Although the story of psychoanalysis's relationship to developmentalist understandings of the self—and to the problematic conceptions of "the primitive" on which such understandings rest—is a complicated one, I am interested in exploring the work of Melanie Klein as offering, among other things, a complex, drive-theoretical account of the self in which phantasy plays a crucial role but that does not depend on—and in fact even could be seen to undermine—developmental trajectories of the self. Although this angle of approach does not take up Leeb's question about the unconscious aspects of colonial racism directly, it may well provide some additional resources for thinking through questions such as this one.

Notes

1. Amy Allen, *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 73. References in parentheses are to this text.
2. Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
3. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).
4. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital I, Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, Erster Band, Buch I: Der Produktionsprozeß des Kapitals*, in Karl Marx-Frederick Engels Werke, Band 23 (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, [1867] 1947), 247. For further elaboration on the metaphor of the "vampire capital" see Claudia Leeb, "Suffering and Political Change", *Contemporary Political Theory* (Published online: 15 February 2018).

5. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, [1964] 2002).
6. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York: Penguin, 1993), notebook V, 524.
7. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 6–7.
8. I am reminded here of Lenin's critique of Karl Kautsky. Kautsky had framed imperialism in terms of an aggressive foreign policy of external domination and annexation. The problem with this, for Lenin, was that it "arbitrarily and *inaccurately* connects imperialism *only* with industrial capital in the countries which annex other nations and in an equally arbitrary and inaccurate manner brings out the annexation of agrarian regions." V. I. Lenin, "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism," in *Essential Works of Lenin*, ed. Henry M. Christman (New York: Dover, 1987), 239. In other words, while Kautsky thought imperialism was something the Great Powers were doing to the rest of the world, Lenin wished to shift the framework to describe a global condition—not something we "do," but something we "are." For a useful exploration of the idea of "postcolonial social theory," see Julian Go, *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
9. Benita Parry, "The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 75.
10. See, e.g., Neil Lazarus, "The Fetish of 'the West' in Postcolonial Theory," in *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 61–63; Neil Lazarus and Rashmi Varma, "Marxism and Postcolonial Studies," in *Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism*, ed. Jacques Bidet and Stathis Kouvelakis (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 325–28; Benita Parry, "What Is Left in Postcolonial Studies?," *New Literary History* 43, no. 2 (2012): 341–58.
11. Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, and Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 33; Axel Honneth, *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 150.
12. "Germany's Most Important Living Philosopher Issues an Urgent Call to Restore Democracy," *Haaretz*, August 16, 2012, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/germany-s-most-important-living-philosopher-issues-an-urgent-call-to-restore-democracy-1.458767
13. Many thanks to Antonio Vazquez-Arroyo for organizing the panel on my book at the Western Political Science Association meeting in Vancouver in April 2017 on which this symposium is based.
14. For a similar worry, see Jakeet Singh, "Colonial Pasts, Decolonial Futures: Allen's *The End of Progress*," *Theory and Event* 19, no. 4 (2016).
15. In the book, I do discuss some of the complexities of the term *post-colonial* [23–24], acknowledge the differences between "post-colonial" and "decolonial" approaches, and offer a limited defense of my use of the term *decolonization* [233n16].

16. Raised most recently and quite vociferously by Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013).
17. See Singh, "Colonial Pasts," and George Ciccariello-Maher, "Decolonizing Theory from Within or Without? A Reply to Baum," *Constellations* 23, no. 1 (March 2016): 133–37.
18. On this point, see Walter Mignolo, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 57–96, at 57.
19. I am grateful to Alexandra Hibbett for this helpful formulation.
20. I discuss this in more detail in Allen, "Beyond Kant versus Hegel: An Alternative Strategy for Grounding the Normativity of Critique," in *Feminism, Capitalism, and Critique: Essays in Honor of Nancy Fraser*, ed. Banu Bargu and Chiara Bottici (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
21. For a related rethinking of Marx's philosophy of history, see Kevin Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
22. Leeb's own recent book is an exception to this trend. See Claudia Leeb, *Power and Feminist Agency in Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
23. See Amy Allen, *The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Autonomy, and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), chap. 4.

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