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# A Not-So-Global Ethics: Contradictions in U.S. Global Ethics Education

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper traces the ethnocentric structure of U.S.-published anthologies in global ethics and related fields and it examines the ethical and philosophical implications of such ethnocentrism. The author argues that the ethnocentric structure of prominent work in global ethics not only impairs the field's ability to prepare students for global citizenship but contributes to the ideological processes that maintain global inequities. In conclusion, the author makes a case that fuller engagement with global-South and indigenous writers on global issues can encourage U.S. students and scholars to examine more closely the ideologies that order our lives and to risk the kind of self-examination that is necessary in order to build effective relationships with diverse global communities.

If you are holding this book in your hand, you probably had the opportunity to go to school. Perhaps you are still willing to listen to those who have not; perhaps you are still open to learn.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *Eyes of the Heart*

**I**N THE LAST DECADE MANY U.S. COLLEGES have affirmed the importance of global-minded thinking to a contemporary undergraduate education. Increasingly, schools are offering courses across the disciplines with a global focus, some are adding new global-related college requirements, and many are offering new majors and minors in global studies.<sup>1</sup> Such attempts to “globalize” the higher

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<sup>1</sup> A few examples indicate the broad reach of this trend: For instance, global studies majors and minors are now offered at Bentley College, University of Tennessee, Loyola University Maryland, University of California Santa Barbara, Marist College, Binghamton University, University of Montana, University of

education curriculum promise fresh attention on the part of U.S. students and scholars to the concerns of diverse world communities. And yet, for U.S. educators, enthusiasm for global studies is not enough. Those of us in U.S. higher education need to consider carefully the manner in which we approach these new fields, if we want the “global” to entail a genuine broadening of students’ minds and sensitivity to our situatedness within a global community.

As a North American philosopher and ethics teacher, I am particularly concerned with the field of global ethics.<sup>2</sup> I address this essay to fellow U.S. educators who are also interested in this field. The field of global ethics is premised on the recognition that ethical problems and responsibilities cross national, cultural, and geographic boundaries. As Sandra Harding (2008, 5-6) and Alison Jaggar (2008) have emphasized, the field thus calls for the input of people from the diverse social, cultural and geographic locations from which transnational moral problems are experienced as well as the capacity of such people to work together to address transnational moral problems.

Strikingly, however, U.S. global ethics scholarship and pedagogy has relied on a very narrow range of viewpoints. Prominent U.S.-published anthologies in global-ethics and related fields feature almost exclusively white U.S. and Western European authors. African, Latin American, and indigenous writers who have grappled with some of the most profound global inequities and have raised consciousness across the global South of the transnational dimensions of social suffering are curiously absent.<sup>3</sup> The field has also been defined in terms of a narrative of Western philosophers drawing on a European liberal tradition, as if whites in the United States and Western Europe were the only significant cultural and political agents, while the rest of the world remained objects for our planning and analysis. Of course, Eurocentrism in academia is nothing new. Postcolonial critics have traced colonialist and imperialist ideologies in disciplines ranging from history to literature, from the natural and social sciences to public education more broadly (Harding 2008; Kuokannen 2007; Mazrui 1999; Mignolo 2005, 2006; Willinsky 1998).<sup>4</sup> Still, in a field such as global ethics that aims to treat moral

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California Los Angeles, Marion College, and Missouri University. Some sort of “global”-related college requirement has been instituted at Columbia College, George Mason University, Iowa State University, Gettysburg College, Washington State University College of Business, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term “global ethics” broadly to refer to all inquiry that addresses ethical problems of transnational significance. “Global ethics” and “global justice” are sometimes divided according to a distinction between inquiry that addresses individual actions and inquiry that addresses institutional structures; however, practical problems blur this division and much writing on transnational moral problems (as even Thomas Pogge admits) does not “fall squarely on one or the other side of this divide” (2008, xxiii).

<sup>3</sup> Following current usage, I use the term “global South” to refer to regions of the world that have been on the receiving end of colonialism and imperialism. This term is problematic insofar as it presents in geographic terms a division that is really a matter of social, political and cultural hierarchies. The term is also imprecise insofar as global hierarchies do not divide neatly into northern and southern regions. Nonetheless, the term is now preferred over “East” and “West” in order to refer to broad global divisions of power and interests. (See, for instance, Harding 2008, 235-36.)

<sup>4</sup> I use the term “colonialist” in the sense used by Walter Mignolo (2005) to designate political and ideological structures that have continued even after the dismantling of historical colonialism; notably,

problems in their cultural and geographic breadth, the exclusion of viewpoints from the majority of the world's cultures and countries is particularly troubling.

I argue here that the ethnocentric structure of U.S.-published work in global ethics has undermined the ethical and philosophical aims of the field. . In the first section, I trace the ethnocentrism of typical U.S.-published global-ethics readers. Drawing on feminist standpoint theory, I show how this ethnocentrism limits the field's ability to challenge students' thinking or to prepare them to work with others to address global problems. In the concluding section, I argue that a global ethics curriculum that included global-South writers from outside the European liberal tradition could better prepare students for the kind of self-examination and the reckoning with difference that is necessary in order to reflect critically on transnational moral problems and live responsibly in a global community.

### **Ethnocentrism in U.S. Global Ethics**

The proliferation of global-ethics courses and scholarship in U.S. higher education in the last decade has strengthened the scope and political relevance of ethics courses. It has brought crucial issues such as world poverty and inequality to the attention of college students in the affluent world and has challenged students to address these issues with greater analytic rigor. Nonetheless, educators who aim to promote genuine critical reflection on our transnational moral responsibilities need to consider the ethnocentric structure of common approaches to global ethics and the political and intellectual dangers of such ethnocentrism.

Significantly, many U.S.-published anthologies in global ethics and related fields are dominated by white U.S. and Western European authors who work within variants of the liberal tradition. A few of the more prominent texts are indicative of the contradictions and imbalances that pervade the field. For instance, a recent double-volume set published in the Paragon Issues in Philosophy series--*Global Ethics: Seminal Essays* (Pogge and Horton 2008) and *Global Justice: Seminal Essays* (Pogge and Moellendorf 2008)—boasts “a representative sampling of the most significant, most original, most influential writings” on transnational moral issues (Pogge 2008, xxii); however, in this “representative sampling,” 34 of the 37 contributing authors are white U.S. or Western European scholars. Only one of the 37 contributors (Amartya Sen) writes from the standpoint of the global South and only one (Alison Jaggar) engages Global-south thinkers. Similarly, *Global Citizenship* (Dower and Williams 2002) has 19 contributors, all seemingly with a North American or Western European background. *How Might We Live? Global Ethics in the New Century* (Booth, Dunne, and Cox 2001) has 14 of 15 contributors of apparent North American or Western European background and *Global Feminist Ethics* (Whisnant and DesAutels, 2008) has 12 of 14 contributors of that same background. The anthologies also tend to define the field in terms of Anglo-American intellectual history; for instance, Pogge (2008) identifies the onset of

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the domination and exploitation of one cultural group by another in the name of “progress” and “salvation.”

global ethics with Anglo-American interest in global issues and describes global justice as an extension of John Rawls' work.

Granted, such a crude ethnic categorizing of authors and traditions cannot reveal the thinking of any individual author, especially when white U.S. and British global-ethicists (even ones writing in the liberal tradition) represent a wide spectrum of intellectual and political positions. They include authors from Richard Rorty (2008) and Garrett Hardin (2008), who argue that attempts to alleviate world poverty would threaten the integrity of affluent communities, to Peter Singer (2008) and Eric Unger (2008), who argue that wealthy people and governments are morally obligated to alleviate severe poverty-related suffering in distant lands. Nonetheless, the domination of global-ethics texts by liberal-oriented, white U.S. and British authors constrains the perspectives offered by these texts. For, notwithstanding the differences among such authors, they tend to share a generally "Western" cultural background,<sup>5</sup> a distance from the problems that they analyze, and a position of dominance within global academic cultures. All of this predisposes these authors to presume the universality of Anglo-American styles and conceptual frameworks and to approach issues such as world poverty with attitudes and conceptual lenses different from writers who take their bearings from the subordinate end of global hierarchies.

In effect, white U.S. and British global-ethicists share a ruling-group epistemic standpoint in the sense developed by early feminist standpoint theorists. Building upon the work of Hegel (1977), Marx (309-14, 409-60), and Lukacs (168-209), feminist standpoint theorists have explained that hierarchical social structures produce systemic differences in the ways that different social groups experience the world, such that (notwithstanding the heterogeneity within and intersections among social groups) people in common social positions share some common experience-informed perspectives on the world. For feminist standpoint theorists, these differences in the perspectives of different social groups arise not only from their distinct work activities (and their distinct modes of relating to natural and human worlds within their work activities) but also from their socialization into distinct discourses and value-systems. Moreover, people in dominant social positions can mistake for universal their own widely disseminated and institutionalized ways of interpreting the world, whereas people in marginalized positions must reckon with the tensions between their experiences and ruling representations of the world. As a result of such tensions, people in marginalized locations are more likely to confront the contradictions of ruling beliefs and institutions and thus to develop understandings of the world that point beyond the given toward social transformation (Collins; Harding 1991; 2009, 194-95; Hartsock; Smith).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term "Western" in Walter Mignolo's sense of an ideologically constructed category that has an actual historical referent in the socio-historical phenomenon of linked Christianity, "whiteness," and market capitalism (2006, 435).

<sup>6</sup> In accord with feminist standpoint theorists, I use the term "perspective" to designate the understanding of the world that one gains from one's daily experiences and cultural conditioning. A perspective is not yet a critical "standpoint," for the latter is achieved through critical reflection on lived experience, discussion and organizing (Harding 2009, 195; Hartsock, 159-60; Smith, 49-100). Elsewhere, I present in greater detail the account given by feminist standpoint theorists of the ways that life in marginalized

Most feminist standpoint theorists also affirm the capacity of people in dominant social groups to exceed the limitations of their social positions and pursue the critical standpoint that is possible from more marginalized social locations; however, such “thinking from others’ lives,” as Harding puts it, takes substantial cognitive, practical, and emotional effort (Harding 1991, 288-95; Hartsock, 159-62; Ortega, 61-70). Even the global-South and indigenous authors whom I cite here have had to make such efforts in order to pursue the standpoint of popular-classes in their regions. For, instance, Galeano tours mines with mineworkers (1997, 150-52), Guitierrez lives among the poor (1983), and Smith participates in anti-racist feminist social movements (2005, 2; 2009). All of these intellectuals deliberately venture outside academia and middle-class life in order to exceed institutionalized ways of thinking and sensitize their theorizing to more people’s lives. Such a broadening of perspectives is unlikely to occur amongst Anglo-American scholars who remain within familiar liberal traditions or from anthologies limited to such scholars. As a result, notwithstanding the valuable contributions of many individual Anglo-American global ethicists, the domination of the field by such authors limits the field’s ability to promote critical thinking and global awareness, as I elaborate below

### **Dangers of an Ethnocentric Global Ethics**

On the most basic level, the domination of global-ethics anthologies by Anglo-American theorists allows the presumption to prevail that epistemic authority resides in the white global North. This presumption is often taken for granted by Anglo-American scholars, who have been schooled and employed within institutions whose main actors are global-North intellectuals like themselves. In turn, their writing reflects this prejudice when they engage only the dominant Anglo-American theorists and traditions. Even when authors such as Pogge, Unger, and Singer argue for redistributing wealth to the poor, “the global poor” remain passive elements of their analysis. When such authors fill the pages of global-ethics anthologies, the anthologies reinforce the message that discussions about how to address transnational moral problems are the prerogative of white people in the global North. Far from preparing readers for intercultural dialogue, such anthologies teach white global-North readers that they have nothing to learn from thinkers in other cultural and geographic communities.

Such biases against the epistemic capacity of non-whites have effects beyond academia. These sort of biases played a key role in rationalizing European colonialism in Africa and Latin America (Fanon 1963, 296-303; Mignolo 2005, 15-20; Quijano 2000, 541-42). More recently, biases against the intellectual and governing capacities of nonwhites have been invoked to rationalize military occupation of other nations; for instance, former director of Harvard’s Carr Center for Human Rights, Michael Ignatieff (2003), argued in support of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq on the grounds that Iraqis were unable to govern themselves

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social locations can be conducive to critical and emancipatory knowledge (Stone-Mediatore 2003, 179-85).

without North American guidance, which it was our “burden” to provide. And, strikingly, U.S. Presidential Envoy Paul Bremer made plans for reconstructing Iraq without consulting Iraqi professionals, Iraqi state workers (500,000 of whom he fired), or ordinary Iraqi citizens (Klein). Few North American ethicists may embrace such blatantly arrogant thinking or policy-making. Nonetheless, when anthologies exclude global-South and indigenous writers from the discussion, they convey the same racist view that white people in the global North are the rightful and exclusive authorities in world affairs.

In addition, when anthologies are dominated by Anglo-American theorists, they tend to leave unexamined basic presuppositions of Anglo-American liberal culture. Feminist and postcolonial critics have addressed a similar phenomenon in the natural and social sciences, where prejudices that are shared by the (mainly white, male) scholarly community have informed supposedly objective scientific scholarship (Harding 1991, 30-34, 77-81; Fanon, 299-303; Smith 1987). In the field of global ethics, when most of the contributors are white global-North theorists who have been socialized and educated in “Western” (i.e., liberal-capitalist) institutions, European liberal presuppositions about the historical world tend to color the field. Pogge, himself, notes the influence of subconscious cultural presuppositions on our moral thinking. On the surface, suggests Pogge, the case for some global redistribution of wealth seems fairly straightforward: Severe poverty takes the lives of roughly 18 million people a year, even when these deaths are “avoidable at a cost that is tiny in relation to the incomes and fortunes of the affluent” (Pogge 2008, xv-xvi). And yet, despite the stark figures and the seemingly clear case for addressing severe poverty, most middle-class North Americans, including professionals aware of the statistics, tend to find world poverty and inequality not “troubling enough to warrant serious moral reflection” (Pogge 2002, 2-3). Our general indifference to world poverty, Pogge determines, is based less on “an elaborate defense” than on a “moral outlook” that leads us to view world poverty as not “morally salient” (2002, 4, 6, 7).

Anglo-American ethicists have countered such moral apathy with logical arguments for duties on the part of the wealthy to aid the poor. Philosophers such as Pogge (2008), Singer (2008), and Unger (2008) have presented cogent arguments that redistribution of wealth to the global poor is morally obligatory based on the widely accepted principles not to harm, to prevent severe harm when it does not require substantial sacrifice, and to apply our morals universally. Nonetheless, they have offered little analysis of the “moral outlook,” or underlying worldview, that has maintained many North Americans’ sense of indifference to world poverty, despite the dire statistics and the many moral arguments for redistribution. In fact, the claim that rich people owe a debt to the poor is not new. Such sources as the Christian Gospels and Kant have presented this idea quite strongly, although the idea has had little influence on modern Western practices, either within or across nations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, Kant suggests that poverty within an unjust social system calls for morally obligatory redistribution: “Although we may be entirely within our rights, according to the laws of the land and the rules of our social structure, we may nevertheless be participating in general injustice, and in giving to an unfortunate man we do not give him a gratuity but only help to return to him that of which the general



If (besides sheer self-interest) a culture-wide “moral outlook” has maintained contemporary Americans’ stubborn aloofness toward world poverty (and has helped to rationalize self-interest), then I would argue that central to this moral outlook is the liberal/Enlightenment conception of “progress.” As postcolonial critics have demonstrated, this narrative pervades modern Western thinking and remains influential in Western academic institutions. This euphemistic narrative of the modern world has led all of us under its influence to view the economic and technical advances enjoyed by the global North over the last several centuries in isolation from the region’s darker history of colonialism and imperialism. In effect, this paradigm has allowed those of us in the global North to view our region’s wealth as if it were entirely the result of social and scientific success—an entitlement that we deserve on account of our own and our predecessors’ historical achievements—and as independent from the poverty of those who have been less historically successful (Harding 2008, 2-12; Mignolo 2006, 427-31; Mazrui 1996; Galeano 1-6; Stone-Mediatore 2007, 63-64).

Regrettably, this problematic historical paradigm remains largely unexamined in Anglo-American-dominated global-ethics anthologies. This seems attributable, in part, to the acculturation of Anglo-American authors to worldviews that gloss colonialism: Most Anglo-American authors live and work within the same institutions that have practiced “convenient amnesia” (as Sunera Thobani [154] puts it) towards colonialism and neocolonialism. The minimal critical examination of “progress” by Anglo-American authors seems due, also, to their shared professional training in methods that abstract moral reasoning from socio-historical analysis. A full critique of this a-historical approach to moral philosophy is beyond the scope of this paper. It should be noted here, however, that global-ethics anthologies that are dominated by authors who take such an a-historical approach to moral thinking offer little analysis of the actual historical processes by which people and resources have been transferred across the globe. As a result, even when such anthologies treat the moral duties of the wealthy to the poor, the historical paradigm that has allowed those of us in the affluent North to feel entitled to our wealth and independent from others’ poverty remains basically intact.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, when anthologies are filled with authors who neglect the darker history of wealth and poverty, the anthologies reinforce the prejudice that ignorance of colonialism, imperialism, the slave-trade, and its legacies is acceptable. They imply that those of us in the affluent global North can understand our social identities and moral responsibilities perfectly well without attention to these discomfiting historical phenomena. This is convenient for Anglo-American philosophers, both because the phenomena are disturbing and because they often lie outside of our areas of expertise; however, the neglect of such phenomena can be

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injustice of our system has deprived him. . . . Even charity therefore is an act of duty imposed upon us by the rights of others and the debt we owe to them” (Kant 1963, 194).

<sup>8</sup> Pogge’s own scholarship presents a notable exception to this tendency, as he deftly bridges Anglo-American moral philosophy with socio-historical study; however, Pogge is less bold in his anthologies, whose contents, for the most part, follow typical Anglo-American abstraction from social history. Other authors, such as Kim Diaz (2010), have productively bridged Anglo-American moral philosophy with analysis of transnational economic institutions, but such work remains rare in global ethics anthologies.

maintained only by ignoring the voices of global South and indigenous thinkers, for whom colonialist hierarchies remain central to their life experiences and moral concerns.

Finally, the preponderance of Anglo-American authors in global ethics readers allows the detached, impersonal voice that is standard in Anglo-American philosophy to seem neutral and authoritative. As feminist epistemologists have demonstrated, this detached style has dominated academic and professional institutions but it is not neutral: It is the privilege of people in the governing and professional classes, who appear neutral only because their social and cultural identities have passed as “the norm” and because they have been sheltered from direct experience of the problems that they manage and analyze. When the impersonal and detached voice becomes the academic standard, it unfairly stigmatizes as “biased” anyone whose social location deviates from “the norm” and anyone who writes from more direct engagement with social suffering. In turn, the institutionalization of detached styles as “neutral” allows those of us who are safely removed from social ills to avoid examining how our own distance and disengagement from social problems might limit our thinking (Code, 224-64; Smith, 19-22, 56-69; Stone-Mediatore 2010, 25-29).

Ultimately, an approach to global ethics that reserves epistemic authority for people like ourselves, that sets aside disturbing histories of colonialism and imperialism, and that pretends that as detached professionals we escape our human and social ties to the world offers a comfortable way for U.S. students and scholars to pursue inquiry about extreme poverty and related social ills. It allows us to analyze these social abominations as if we could do so without disturbing our own authority or worldviews. This is convenient, but it suppresses critical questions about the ideologies in which we participate while it insulates us from the people across the globe with whom we need to work in order to address transnational problems.

### **A Response to Critics**

Critical readers might present several objections to my argument. First, one might argue that the liberal framework and the detached styles employed by Anglo-American global-ethicists are appropriate for reaching their intended global-North audiences. By employing styles and traditions that are familiar to academics and policymakers in their regions, Anglo-American global-ethicists can show their colleagues in elite academic and public-policy institutions how redistribution of wealth is not an alien proposition but is implied by commonly accepted liberal principles. Moreover, when these philosophers employ familiar Anglo-American principles and styles but combine these with topics not usually covered by Anglo-American moral philosophy—for instance, when Pogge analyzes transnational economic institutions, when Nagel (2008) thematizes market-oriented values, and when Singer (2008) and Unger (2008) appeal to their readers as situated human beings—they broaden discussion within elite circles without entirely alienating their audience.

Theorists who are sympathetic to the detached and seemingly straightforward style of Anglo-American moral philosophy might argue, too, that this style is not only strategically effective but epistemologically justified: It has become the norm precisely because it generates better arguments. By remaining emotionally and socially detached from the problems they study and by forgoing colorful rhetoric, Anglo-American ethicists (supposedly) can present arguments about duties toward the poor that are unclouded by personal bias or rhetoric.

I agree that many Anglo-American global ethicists, by employing familiar styles and traditions, have effectively stimulated and enriched discussion of poverty within the affluent global North. Nonetheless, dangers remain when anthologies are *dominated* by such scholars. In other words, anthologies whose pages are filled with Anglo-American authors and traditions may communicate more readily with affluent, global-North communities; however, they do not fully challenge the prejudices that are common to both authors and readers in these communities, notably, the presumptions that global-North wealth was legitimately earned, that detached knowledge practices can remain outside of critical scrutiny, and that discussion about world affairs can be limited to white people in the global North. Anthologies powerful enough to unsettle these trenchant prejudices must also include works that are more alien to us and provoke us more deeply than the familiar writings.

The second point regarding the epistemic superiority of the detached writing style raises fundamental epistemological problems that remain controversial in philosophy. As is now well known, Western philosophy has tended to regard emotional, social and rhetorical factors as contaminants to truth; however, post-Enlightenment theorists have challenged our ability to transcend social and linguistic situatedness and have questioned the desirability of doing so (Barthes 1989; White 1975; Gadamer 1991; Smith 49-226; Code 1991). I cannot pursue this debate here, but I will make two points that are relevant to these matters as they have pertained to global ethics. First, as I have indicated above, only those writers in privileged global locations (or those who have passed as their equivalent) have been regarded as “neutral,” and this designation has enabled them to avoid examining the biases of their own social locations and epistemic styles. In turn, the presumption that Anglo-American subject-positions and intellectual styles are “neutral” allows white U.S. readers to believe that they, too, can detach from the world they study and thereby escape self-scrutiny. In addition,, the treatment of Anglo-American philosophical styles as normative has effectively excluded from global-ethics anthologies many powerful global-South authors who have written about global issues in passionate and literary prose. Rather than presume epistemic controversies to be decided in favor of Anglo-American philosophical norms and summarily dismiss works that veer from these norms, a globally sensitive reader must consider why so many global-South writers have employed alternative styles and what they have achieved through them.

### A More Global Ethics

Although absent from most U.S.-published global-ethics anthologies, many global-South and indigenous authors have also written about transnational moral issues. Significantly, many have done so from outside the European liberal tradition and in styles that deviate from academic norms. Classic and contemporary writers such as Fanon (1963), Galeano (1997), Shiva (2005), Walter Rodney (1974), Gustavo Gutierrez (1983), Jean-Bertrand Aristide (2000), and Andrea Smith (2005) are a heterogeneous group, but they share some common insights and approaches that reflect their pursuit of a standpoint from “the receiving end of the colonial experience” (Mignolo 2006, 436). I argue here that the distinct approaches of these authors, including their mix of historically rigorous analysis with explicitly engaged and creative prose, can provoke the kind of humility and self-examination in global-North readers that the typical anthologies have not achieved.

First, global-South authors challenge the assumption that people in the global North control the discussion and direction of world affairs. Writing from within regions in which both colonialist power structures and resistance to those power structures are palpable, these authors eschew European audiences, topics, and “neutrality” and openly inspire activism amongst popular classes in their regions against colonialist institutions. For instance, Fanon speaks to colonized Algerians about their capacity to invert oppressive power relations, if they “use all means to turn the scale” (37). He identifies the social inequities left by colonialism as the most important world problem and warns that “[h]umanity must reply to this question or be shaken to pieces by it” (98). Likewise, Rodney is less concerned “to satisfy the ‘standards’ set by our oppressors” than to help Africans to understand and overcome the ways that Europe has “underdeveloped Africa” (viii). Across the ocean, Gutierrez reminds the poor that “history is theirs” even if their confidence “disquiets dominators” (107) while Galeano writes “to have a talk with people” about the possibility of transforming their conditions through “[r]ecovery of the resources that have always been usurped” (8, 265). More recently, Shiva (2005, 13-72) and Aristide (9-10) describe local markets whose human relationships and rich atmosphere resist corporate control and profit-based values while Smith describes how Native people can “make and take power” in ways that do not merely advance their status in the existing social order but create new kinds of community; for instance, Native Americans for a Clean Environment shut down Kerr-McGee nuclear facilities as they cultivated a social movement based on connecting with surrounding life in their everyday practices (2005, 190).

When these authors discuss with their communities how they can claim what is theirs or pursue different paths than those dictated by ruling transnational institutions, this has a very different effect on readers in the affluent world than do the Anglo-American-dominated anthologies, in which the global poor remain at the mercy of decisions made by others. Different U.S. readers may respond differently to the calls to regional empowerment by indigenous and global-South authors; however, at a minimum, these authors impress on those of us in the affluent world the limits of our authority and the need to attend to people on the other side of global hierarchies, who are shaping future worlds, with or without us. They thus

challenge us to develop the kind of humility and listening skills that we need in order to work with people across borders in whose hands the future may lie.

Many global-south and indigenous authors also challenge white U.S. readers on a deep level by combining abstract moral analysis with politically engaged historical analysis of poverty. Motivated by the concern to help popular classes in their regions to understand and transform their conditions, these authors take seriously the history of poverty. Thus, they trace the specific socio-historical mechanisms that for the past 5 centuries have distorted their local economies and transferred natural and human resources from African, Latin American, and Native communities to ruling classes in Europe and, later, the United States. For instance, Galeano describes how Spanish colonialists extracted through genocidal violence (according to incomplete official figures) 185,000 kilograms of Latin America's gold and 16,000,000 kilograms of silver, which flowed to the European bankers to whom the Spanish Crown was indebted and thereby financed Europe's economic development. When the colonies gained independence from Spain in the nineteenth century, British merchants (whose own industry had developed under strict protectionism) flooded unprotected Latin American markets, with the effect of enriching elites in port cities but destroying local artisans and budding industry and driving Latin American economies toward export of natural resources. At the same time, British banks financed the newly independent nations' spending (with loans that often consisted of drafts on orders for British products), which, in turn, prevented Latin American officials from taking measures to protect their economies, due to their subjection to blackmail by creditors. Galeano and others explain how such historical processes have set the stage for the current global order, in which economies of the global South remain subservient to those in the global North (albeit with layers of hierarchy within each of these regions), with the result that "there is no wealth that must not be held in some suspicion" (267).

In tracing the history of wealth and poverty, these authors not only help global-South communities to question and resist their poverty but also disturb the euphemistic historical paradigms and identities of global-North readers. Global-South authors are well positioned for such paradigm-challenges because, as feminist standpoint and decolonial theorists have explained, people who have been forced to accommodate to oppressors' cultures have learned to view the world through "a double framework" that acknowledges but also resists dominant modes of thought (Mignolo 2005, 9; also Smith, 49-60). Thus, global-South authors not only document historical mechanisms of exploitation but create new metaphors and narrative paradigms that make vivid the patterns indicated in their historical analyses. For instance, Rodney (1974) re-narrates "development" as European "underdevelopment" of local African agricultural, scientific, and civil activities. Shiva (1997) describes global process of property appropriation-- from papal bulls that granted Spain ownership of "discovered" lands to current corporate patenting of seeds--as "piracy" of non-commodified life (1997). Galeano contrasts common metaphors of history as a "competition," in which victory and defeat are accorded by merit, with metaphors that better convey the exploitation that he documents: Far from failing to serve history, Latin America has worked as "a menial" at the service of others; and far from the global division of labor constituting a so-called

comparative advantage, in which all parties benefit, the system has bled Latin American resources, as if from “open veins” (Galeano 1997, 1). In a more satirical approach, Britto Garcia provokes a fresh look at international debt through the voice of a fictional indigenous man, who graciously suggests that European colonialists “borrowed” Latin American riches in a sort of “Marshalltezuma” plan--in which case they owe Latin Americans 185,00 kilograms of gold and 16,000,000 of silver (1997).

Such colorful rhetoric defies academic norms; however, it also highlights problems and perspectives that have been suppressed in ruling representations of the world and that can be brought to our attention only with conceptual jolts. When readers in the affluent world engage such texts, we may not agree with them, but we cannot help recognizing the contested character of our received historical paradigms and raising for discussion the competing ways of conceptualizing history, wealth and poverty. Likewise, we cannot so readily confine global ethics to abstract moral questions but must at least consider uncomfortable realities of colonialism, imperialism, theft of Native lands and genocide of Native people. The moral implications of these historical phenomena remain open for discussion, but even to start that discussion disturbs the presumed innocence and neutrality of global-North readers. It compels us to consider the ways that our own location in global hierarchies might color our thinking, and the ways that moral questions about redistribution are also questions about how to reckon with contradictions in our own heritage. In effect, our frame of discussion shifts and we are compelled to ask not only about the moral demands of poverty but about the legitimacy of our core institutions from the standpoint of people harmed by them; for instance: *Is U.S. and European wealth a legacy of violence? Do the United States and Europe owe reparations to Africans, Latin Americans, and Native Americans? Are modes of life possible outside of the profit-governed system to which we are accustomed? Are the structures established by colonialism reversible? And how has our own location in the colonialist/imperialist world biased our thinking about these global issues?*

Finally, global-south and indigenous authors are more likely to describe economic deprivation as *violence* (as do Galeano, Fanon, and Gutierrez) and the appropriation of indigenous land and resources as *terrorism* (as do Shiva and Smith). Whether or not we accept such de-familiarizing characterizations of familiar market and state institutions, they show those of us in the affluent world something about how our institutions appear to others. They thus challenge us to consider that we are not the only people who have categorized the world, but that others are also categorizing us and we need to consider their perceptions of us, if we want to work with them. The unabashedly passionate descriptions of many global-South authors and their explicit attempts to rally social struggle also remind us that theorists are located in the social world and that intellectual work has political effects. They thus create a context for examining the political implications of the more detached academic styles that have passed as “neutral” but that distance us from social suffering and for considering the political effects of our own intellectual endeavors.

Ultimately, the extent to which global-South and indigenous authors provoke in affluent global-North readers critical questions about our own global identities and knowledge practices depends on how their texts are engaged and taught. Moreover,

some would argue that genuinely transformative education must involve not only reading others' texts but active participation by students and educators in social movements that challenge structures of oppression (Ortega 2006; Smith 2005). Nonetheless, recognizing global-South and indigenous thinkers as participants in global forums and including their work in global-ethics curricula is a vital first step toward encouraging white U.S. students and educators to face our situatedness within a global community whose moral problems demands our listening to and learning from people on the other side of global hierarchies.<sup>9</sup>

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