

Research Article  
Araştırma Makalesi  
DOI: 10.20981/kuufefd.07189

**Mariusz TUROWSKI**

Dr. | Dr.

University of Wrocław, Institute of Philosophy  
Uludağ University, Faculty of Science and Letters, Department of Philosophy  
mariusz.turowski@uwr.edu.pl

## **Theory, Activism and Dialectics: Perplexities of Antiracism and Antiraciology in the Discourses of World-System Analysis**

### **Abstract**

Racism and raciology has been typically considered by the representatives of the world-system perspective as the problem linked to the question of the sources of peoplehood, which defines one of the most critical aspects of the capitalist geoculture: a question of differences and correlations between peoples (races, nations, ethnic groups) as a constructed category and classes as an objective reality (in Marxian and Weberian terms). In my paper I briefly present: 1) original Wallerstein's conceptualization of installation of race and racism within the logic of the modern world-system, 2) correction of that doctrine provided by Étienne Balibar, 3) outline of James Blaut's theory of cultural racism. Next (4) I will use all the three proposals as means of critical examination of the presence (or lack thereof) of race/antiracism in discourses of some contemporary social movement. Concluding sections of the paper refer to the prospects of progressive antiracist initiatives and their evaluation from the perspective of critical theory of democracy.

### **Keywords**

Cultural Racism, Anti-Racism Activism, World-System Analysis, Individualism, Étienne Balibar, Immanuel Wallerstein, James Blaut, David Harvey.

There are two levels in the Wallersteinian analyses of race and racism: meta-theoretical and factual. On the meta-theoretical level Wallerstein focuses on distinction between universalism and particularism (or on the dialectical-paradoxical construct “universalisms-particularisms”). Universalisms, in the plural form, are being deconstructed there, so they become understood as ideological components of the geoculture of the modern world-system, and not as containers of transcendental truth and laws discovered and described by natural or social sciences.<sup>1</sup> Wallerstein sometimes associates the first level of his analysis with an idea of the “two Marxes”. One Marx invented universalistic and objective categories and ways of descriptions of the linear processes of transitions between different modes of economic production. The second Marx – a pluralist and a relativist – attacked bourgeois liberal political philosophy as an incarnation of the Kantian belief in existence of a universal human nature. This “another Marx” protested against idea of inevitable progress, and suggested that there exists a multiplicity of social realities and various structures and modes of production. For the former Marx the idea of progress, taking the form of a theory of historical, relentless march towards emancipation of the most important class – working class, was a crucial characteristic of his considerations of social and economic history.<sup>2</sup> Having described sketchily first level of the Wallersteinian analysis of racism, in the remaining parts of my paper I will refer to its second, factual level.

## 1. The modern world-system and the imagined identities

Wallerstein sees race and racism as concepts and phenomena connected very firmly with processes defining capitalist modern world-system. They are invented, constructed and used in relation to tensions and struggles accompanying development and expansion of that system. Instead of being related to physical (biological), socio-political or cultural “facts” about social identity, race – together with nation and ethnicity – is a part and parcel of an economic dimension of world-wide division of labour and of global imbalances of power:

A ‘race’ is supposed to be a genetic category, which has a visible physical form. (...) A ‘nation’ is supposed to be a sociopolitical category, linked somehow to the actual or potential boundaries of a state. An ‘ethnic group’ is supposed to be a cultural category, of which there are said to be certain continuing behaviours that are passed on from generation to generation (...). (In fact) The concept of ‘race’ is related to the axial division of labour in the world-economy, the core-periphery antinomy. The concept of ‘nation’ is related to the political superstructure of this historical system, the sovereign states that form and derive from the interstate

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, „Global Culture(s) – Salvation, Menace, or Myth?”, in: I. Wallerstein, *The Uncertainties of Knowledge*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004; Immanuel Wallerstein, “Cultures in Conflict: Who are we? Who are the others?”, in: S. Dasgupta (eds.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, New Delhi: Sage, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, „Marx and History”, in: E. Balibar, I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, London: Verso, 2002 (8th edition; Original version of the volume was published as *Race, nation, classe. Les identités ambiguës*, Paris: La Découverte, 1988).

system. The concept of ‘ethnic group’ is related to the creation of household structures that permit the maintenance of large components of non-waged labour in the accumulation of capital. (...) Race and therefore racism, is the expression, the promoter and the consequence of the geographical concentration associated with the axial division of labour.<sup>3</sup>

Wilma Dunaway, another world-system analyst, dealing with the concept of race, ethnicity and nation, argues that all those concepts are constructions, which have historical character and refer to a logic of social-political exclusion and domination<sup>4</sup>. Nationalism, racism and ethnic wars as well as related phenomena of religious intolerance and culturicide need a state apparatus and its legal force which is used to control population movements and to affirm a homogenous cultural identity and a common, official history<sup>5</sup>. According to the authors working within the world-system perspective’s paradigm, race, nation and ethnicity are “structuring categories”, in a sense that they provide an explanation of inequalities existing in modern world-system within a specific dialectics of reconciliation-escalation of effects of those inequalities. If we speak of minorities, then there must be a majority. If we speak of “we” in an ethnic sense, there must be “they” in the same sense. And even if we treat all labour as exploited within capital-labour antinomy, there must be labourers that “lose” more than other, as a consequence of axial division of labour<sup>6</sup>. The extent of such loss and gains is defined along colour lines. The difference between nation and ethnicity on one hand, and race, on the other, is the horizontal character of the former, and vertical, hierarchical character of the latter, but all those categories refer both to segregation-exclusion (because of the existence of outer borders) and cohesion-inclusion (because of the need of internal unity).<sup>7</sup>

The main point of argument of the Wallersteinian analysis is that the potency and power of the structuring categories of race, nation and ethnicity is at the same time their weakness. Peoplehood is understood as complex, changeable and adaptable historical product, a collection of various *Gemeinschaften*, which, at the point of its bifurcation, would arguably “push the system” towards possible transitory alternatives and, eventually, to its replacement.<sup>8</sup> But for Wallerstein, as for the other Marxists, *Gemeinschaft* is an example of consciousness in itself (*an sicht*), which – as immature and only implicit – cannot play a revolutionary role. The change of the system can be

---

<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Construction of Peoplehood”, in: E. Balibar, I. Wallerstein, op. cit., p. 77-80.

<sup>4</sup> Wilma A. Dunaway, „Ethnic Conflicts in The Modern World-System”, *Journal of World-System Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Winter, 2003), p. 11. Dunaway in her narration applies the term “fictive ethnicity” coined by Etienne Balibar (“The Nation Form”, in: E. Balibar, I. Wallerstein, op. cit., p. 96-100), which in turn is a paraphrase of the famous idea of imagined identities and communities, developed by Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> W. Dunaway, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> I. Wallerstein, „The Construction of Peoplehood”, op. cit., p. 83

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 80-81

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 85

ignited only by class for itself (*für sich*), an “objective”, mature and explicit class, which is related to world-historical *Gesellschaft*, the capitalist world-economy.

To what extent is it plausible to equate all inequalities which are/must be present in the modern capitalist world-economy with the antinomy of capital-labour, that triggers the most fundamental hierarchy in that entity? Are accusations against classical- and neo-Marxist projects suggesting that they imply economic reductionism, particularly in the field of culture, correct? Those questions, among others, were posed in the famous debate and dialogue between I. Wallerstein and Etienne Balibar that took place during the seminars at the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme in Paris which they run together in year 1985-1987.<sup>9</sup>

Balibar defends Wallerstein against charges of economism<sup>10</sup>. On one hand these accusations –which result in defining Wallersteinian project as non- or even anti-Marxist – are misleading. It is true that the idea of world-economy could be described as a substitution of classical Marxist determinism of development of productive forces by other purely economic factors: in the model offered by Wallerstein it is a dialectic of capitalist accumulation and its contradictions. According to Balibar however, Marx emphasized the primacy of the social relations of production over productive forces. In this way contradictions of capitalism – including those identified by Wallerstein – refer not to differences between relations of production and, defined as social or private, productive forces, but to “contradictions of progress” (of the entire world-system). Critiques of economism usually lead to the idea of definite autonomy of the political sphere and the state from economy (market relations or the class struggle). Balibar treats the “autonomy thesis” as an objectionable restoration of classical liberal distinctions between state and civil society or politics and economics, criticized by both Marx and Wallerstein<sup>11</sup>. World-system must be understood on one hand as a generalized (“total”)

<sup>9</sup> Etienne Balibar, „Preface”, in. E. Balibar, I. Wallerstein, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> ibid. 3. The charges that Wallerstein’s position is an example of the economic reductionism were raised most notably by Theda Skocpol (“Wallerstein’s World-System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, No. 5 [March 1977]), Robert Brenner (“The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism,” *New Left Review*, 104 [July-August 1977]), and Aristide Zolberg (“Origins of the Modern World System: A Missing Link,” *World Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 2 [January 1981]). For the overview of that vast and long-lasting controversy, see: Terry Boswell, “World Formation or World Mode of Production? Alternative Approaches to World System Analysis,” *Contemporary Crises*, Vol. 8, No., 4 (October 1984), Teivo Teivainen, *Enter Economism, Exit Politics: Experts, Economic Policy and the Political*, London: Zed Books, 2002, George Steinmetz, “The State of Emergency and Revival of American Imperialism: Toward and Authoritarian Post-Fordism,” *Public Culture*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Spring 2003) and Walter L. Goldfrank, “Paradigm Regained? The Rules of Wallerstein’s World-System Method,” *Journal of World-System Research*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Summer/Fall 2000) who presented an interesting summation of the whole (pseudo-?) problem: “It seems fair to say that Wallerstein’s position here represents a synthesis of the economism of the 2nd and 3rd International with the antithetical ‘politicism’ of its Gramscian and Maoist critics” (idem, p. 193).

<sup>11</sup> E. Balibar, “Preface”, op. cit., p. 3. See: I. Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 4.

economy, and on the other as a structure with economic processes shaped by state formations, hegemonic struggles, class alliances etc.<sup>12</sup> From that point of view the question of nationalism and racism (why does capitalist state formation lead to integration and segregation carried out in the name of unifying and supremacist ideologies?) becomes intriguing and crucial and not trivial or secondary as it usually is for the proponents of the “autonomy thesis”. For instance, within this framework of analysis it is possible to focus in a more fruitful manner on specific and distinct features of modern and contemporary forms of nationalism and racism, as opposed to much more primordial and vague phenomena such as xenophobia and intolerance:

This account (the world-system perspective - MT) has the merit of synthetically explaining the phenomena of the globalization of politics and ideology which we have seen occurring over several decades and which appear to us to be the outcome of a cumulative process extending over many centuries. (...) It provides (...) a powerful instrument for interpreting the ubiquitous nationalism and racism of the modern world, while avoiding confusing them with other phenomena of ‘xenophobia’ or ‘intolerance’ seen in the past: the one (nationalism) as a reaction to domination by states of the core, the other (racism) as an institutionalization of the hierarchies involved in the world-wide division of labour.<sup>13</sup>

The fact that Balibar support one aspect of the world-system analyses – the interdependences of social, political and economic spheres, instead of their perfect autonomy or a linear determination by a single factor – does not mean that he agrees with the whole perspective and model offered by Wallerstein. The main point of divergence between the two theorists is the role of the state within the capitalist world-economy and the relation between local and global conditions of “social world”. According to Balibar the original Wallerstein’s model of world-system implies that the only social formation in the true sense (with an internal autonomy as a crucial requirement) today is the whole, global world-economy: all traditionally conceived units of analysis, such as states are minor, merely dependent units within that totality<sup>14</sup>. The global has primacy over the local, for example when it comes to dialectical influence of world-wide conditions over local relations of force. According to Balibar, when analysing specific social phenomena within a given system, we should focus not on its “outer limits” and the range of regulations which we can discover there, but on local and particular instances of movements and conflicts characteristic for the particular system. In contemporary world we should differentiate between “social units” and “economic unity”. Social units have distinct features, including those connected with (and influencing) the division of labour and the organization of production and exchange, formed by their distinct histories (Althusserian “society effect”), even if they are difficult to identify<sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2-3.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7. The term “society effect” was used by Althusser and Balibar in their *Reading Capital* (trans. B. Brewster, London: NLB, 1970) and it refers to relations between the constitution of society and transformations of modes of production, which is a problem of “the historical production of a given mode of production, of a given social formation”. The

Now referring to racism, the above reflection about local dimension of social formations has very radical implications – for the world-system perspective, for Marxism and for social theorizing in general:

The point is (...) to ask whether Marxists were not by chance victims of a gigantic illusion regarding the meaning of their own analyses, which are, in large part, inherited from liberal economic ideology (and its implicit anthropology). The capitalist division of labour has nothing to do with a complementarity of tasks, individuals and social groups: it leads rather (...) to the polarization of social formations into antagonistic classes whose interests are decreasingly ‘common’ ones. How is the unity (even the conflictual unity) of a society to be based on such a division? Perhaps we should then invert our interpretation of the Marxist thesis. Instead of representing the capitalist division of labour to ourselves as what founds or institutes human societies as relatively stable ‘collectivities’, should we not conceive this as what destroys them?<sup>16</sup>

The conclusion offered by Balibar is by no mean a defeatist one and it does not mark the end of social sciences and elimination of any possibility of social change, because in all societies we can detect not only practices reducible to this or that aspect of the behaviour of *homo economicus*. He mentions linguistic communications, sexuality and techniques of knowledge as examples of social existence as those facets of “the social” which have emancipatory-utopian character and thus have power to restrict the “imperialism of the relation of production” and transform the whole system from within. According to Balibar, we should consider the history of social formations not as a series of transitions between various stages of complexity, experienced by the communities which we study, with regard to economic exchange processes (from non-commodity relations to market societies and finally to societies of generalized exchange). This is the classical thesis of liberal sociological theories, which had been preserved and confirmed also within Marxist projects. Instead, we should perceive social changes as a result of reactions against the “expansion of the value form”, which is destructive and de-structuring for “historical collectivity of individuals” bound together by complexity of non-economic social relations. The main aim and the task of

---

problem is articulated by Marx’s within *Capital* as the theory of the structure of a mode of production. Althusser and Balibar reconstruct it in the following way: “what Marx studies in *Capital* is the mechanism which makes the result of a history’s production exist as a society ; it is therefore the mechanism which gives this product of history (...) the property of producing the ‘society effect ’ which makes this result exist as a society, and not as a heap of sand, an ant-hill, a workshop or a mere collection of men. (...) Marx (...) is focusing his theoretical attention on the task of explaining the mechanism by which some particular result functions precisely as a society, and therefore the mechanism producing the ‘society effect ’ peculiar to the capitalist mode of production. The mechanism of the production of this ‘society effect ’ is only complete when all the effects of the mechanism have been expounded, down to the point where they are produced in the form of the very effects that constitute the concrete, conscious or unconscious relation of the individuals to the society as a society (...), in which men consciously or unconsciously live their lives, their projects, their actions, their attitudes and their functions, as social. In this perspective, *Capital* must be regarded as the theory of the mechanism of production of the society effect in the capitalist mode of production” (L. Althusser, B. Balibar, op. cit., p. 65-66).

<sup>16</sup> E. Balibar, “Preface”, op. cit., p. 7.

those reactions is reconstitution of society, with all consequences – positive as well as negative, revolutionary-emancipatory as well as obscurantist-exclusivist – of this endeavour:

It is these reactions which confer upon social history an aspect that is irreducible to the simple ‘logic’ of the extended reproduction of capital or even to a ‘strategic game’ among actors defined by the division of labour and the system of states. It is these reactions also which underlie the intrinsically ambiguous ideological and institutional productions, which are the true substance of politics (for example, the ideology of human rights, and also racism, nationalism, sexism and their revolutionary antitheses). Finally, it is these too which account for the ambivalent effects of class struggles to the extent that, seeking to effect the ‘negation of the negation’ – that is, to destroy the mechanism which is tending to destroy the conditions of social existence – they also aim, in utopian fashion, to restore a lost unity and thus offer themselves for ‘recuperation’ by various forces of domination.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. The predicaments of racial culture

The theory of cultural racism could offer us some clues on why there are theoretical and practical problems with anti-racism of world social movements. I consider that relationship problematic for at least two reasons. The first problem relates to the conflicts of goals and strategies of anti-racism and anti-globalization movements, as analysed by Amory Starr<sup>18</sup>. The second problem has been expounded within studies of networks of alliances and divisions among transnational social movements, carried on by scholars linked to Institute for Research on World-System of University of California-Riverside (with Christopher Chase-Dunn as senior and leading scholar)<sup>19</sup>. I will analyse those two points in section 3 of this paper. First I would like to sketch an outline of the Blautian theory of cultural racism<sup>20</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Amory Starr, “How Can Anti-Imperialism Not Be Anti-Racist? The North American Anti-Globalization Movement,” *Journal of World-System Research*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Chase-Dunn, Christine Petit, Richard Niemeyer, Robert A. Hanneman, Rebecca Giem, Erika Gutierrez and Ellen Reese, “The Contours of Solidarity and Division Among Global movements,” IROWS (The Institute for Research on World-Systems) Working Paper, <http://irows.ucr.edu/papers/irows26/irows26.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> James Blaut, “The Theory of Cultural Racism”, *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (October 1992). The notion of “cultural racism” which I use here is based mainly on James Blaut’s narration. For other uses of the concept see for example: Susan Wright, “The Politicization of ‘culture’,” *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (February 1998). The idea of “cultural racism” as a part of “new racism” (neo-racism) linked mainly to the recent European debates on the “crisis of multiculturalism” is the subject of comprehensive analyses by Michel Wieviorka (*The Arena of Racism*, London: Sage 1995 [originally published in 1991]; *Le Racisme: une introduction*, Paris: La Découverte/Poche, 1998; *Neuf leçons de sociologie*, Paris: Robert Laffont, 2009). Ideas of racial nature of sciences (primarily social, cultural and historical sciences) and knowledge are developed within discipline called critical race theory (with critical white or critical whiteness studies as

James Blaut deals with modern Westerns, Eurocentric racial attitudes, described as practices of discrimination which could refer to a broad spectrum of behaviour and phenomena from personal abuse and violence to colonial subjugation and oppression<sup>21</sup>. According to Blaut racism, as every social and political phenomenon, is based on a theory, which justifies and rationalizes its functioning. Racism is not just a prejudice. It is a doctrine built, as its proponents believe, with solid foundations: empirical facts and evident reasons<sup>22</sup>. Theoretical roots of Western racism has evolved through three stages:

1. In the early nineteenth century it was linked to religious-biblical arguments;
2. In the period between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century it used natural-biological narrations;
3. Today it is tied to the idea of civilizational-cultural superiority<sup>23</sup>.

Blaut is preoccupied with the nature of cultural racism and its paradoxes, one of which is expressed in the formula “nowadays we seem to have a lot of racism but very few racists”<sup>24</sup>. Cultural racism is a consequence of domination of theory of modernization in contemporary social sciences. This theory, or rather a family or a set of theories, is rooted chiefly in Max Weber’s studies on the uniqueness of European institutions and social structures understood as sources of modernity, to Talcott Parsons’ structural-functional explanations of differences between modern and traditional societies and to David McClelland’s analyses of psychological motivations which lead to successful modernization of societies<sup>25</sup>.

---

its subgenre). See: Theodor W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race. Volume One: Racial Oppression and Social Control*, London: Verso, 1994; Birgit B. Rasmussen, E. Klinenberg, I. Nexica, and M. Wray (Eds), *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, London: Duke University Press 2001; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, London: Verso 1991; Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, London: Routledge, 1990. Blaut’s text was a part of a larger effort to reconstruct the logic of Western colonialism, understood as both a cause and a consequence of Eurocentric vision of the world (main accounts of that effort are Blaut’s two books: *The Colonizer’s Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*, New York: Guilford, 1993; and *Eight Eurocentric Historians*, New York: Guilford, 2000). An approach that calls for a “reconciliation” of different perspectives on cultural racism is offered by Ramón Grosfoguel (e.g. in “Colonial Difference, Geopolitics of Knowledge, and Global Coloniality in the Modern/ColonialCapitalist World-System”, *Review*, Vol. 25, No. 3).

<sup>21</sup> James Blaut, “The Theory of Cultural Racism”, op. cit., p. 289.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 293-294. New wave of culturalism in historiography could be regarded as a confirmation of the claim that the modernization theory should still be treated as an important paradigm in social sciences and humanities of our age. The new culturalism, as its former avatars, draws on Max Weber’s canonical examinations of the spirit of capitalism and the stages of development of modern societies. Its most famous proponents are David Landes (*The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western*



Racial supremacy of the Europeans (or the peoples from the West in general), as sanctioned by the modernization theory, is based on cultural history of those societies, and not on their religion or their biological traits. In order to present main features of cultural-racist mode of thinking, Blaut utilizes two more concepts which he developed in earlier studies: tunnel history (and idea of natural and fundamental pre-eminence of Europeans and their culture in comparison to other civilizations)<sup>26</sup> and Eurocentric difussionism (a conception according to which non-European cultures and civilizations are treated as recipients of progress which has its origins in Europe)<sup>27</sup>. There are four main historiographical propositions which could be regarded as expression of cultural racism:

1. The world has a permanent center, or core, and a permanent periphery. The center is Greater Europe, that is, the continent of Europe plus, for ancient times, the Bible Lands and, for modern times, the countries of European settlement overseas. The core sector, Greater Europe, is naturally inventive, innovative, progressive.

2. The periphery, the non-European world, naturally remains traditional, culturally sluggish or stagnant.

3. The basic reason why Europe is progressive, innovative, etc., is some quality of mind or spirit, some "rationality," peculiar to Europeans.

4. Progress occurs in the periphery as a result of the diffusion, the outward spread, of new and innovative traits from the core to the periphery. The diffusion process itself is natural. It consists of the spread of European ideas, European colonialism, European settlers, and European commodities.<sup>28</sup>

According to Blaut that theory was developed as justification and rationalization of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Max Weber's vision of history gained massive popularity in the second part of 20th century not only because it was treated as an explanation of the rise of capitalism alternative to the Marxist theory, but mainly thanks to possibility of restatement of classical theses about uniqueness of European rationality and culture which it provided<sup>29</sup>.

---

*Europe from 1750 to the Present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969; *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor*, New York: WW Norton & Company, 1999), Joel Mokyr (*The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), Francis Fukuyama (*Trust: Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, New York: Free Press, 1995) and Douglass C. North (*Understanding the Process of Economic Change*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). See also Lawrence E. Harrison, Samuel P. Huntington (eds.), *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, New York: Basic Books, 2000 (the book contains chapters by other important culturalists, including Nathan Glazer, Orlando Patterson and Ronald Inglehart).

<sup>26</sup> James M. Blaut, "Colonialism and the Rise of Capitalism", *Science and Society*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Fall 1989); James M. Blaut, "Fourteen Ninety-Two", *Political Geography*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (July 1992).

<sup>27</sup> James M. Blaut, "Diffusionism: A Uniformitarian Critique", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (March 1987).

<sup>28</sup> James M. Blaut, "The Theory of Cultural Racism", op. cit., p. 294-295.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 294.

### 3. World social movements and the anatomy of antiracial ambiguity

In the remainder of this paper I would like to focus on relationship between antiracism and antiracist activism on one hand and the idea of anti-globalization and world social movements on the other. I will refer to two recent research projects which highlighted that issue: first is a study of anti-racism and anti-globalization movements conducted by Amory Starr<sup>30</sup>, second is a series of investigations and surveys carried on by Christopher Chase-Dunn and his collaborators, who try to describe the contours of solidarity and division among world and transnational social movements<sup>31</sup>. Amory Starr discusses the question of accusations raised against American anti-globalization movements by representatives of anti-racist organizations and initiatives (Anti-Fascist Forum, the Colorlines magazine, Colours of Resistance, Anti-Racism for Global Justice, Challenging White Supremacy etc.) especially after such events as 30 November 1999 Seattle WTO protests, Washington D. C. 16 April 2000 mobilization or June 2002 G8 meeting in Kananaskis<sup>32</sup>. Starr summarizes those accusations and highlights their complaints:

- The (anti-globalization) movement is inadequately diverse.

- White-dominated organizations don't address the race-problem directly but see it as subsumed under the "big tent" of globalization and usually treat it as a "distraction" from more important work.

- White activists use methods (these include lifestyles, food preferences, intellectual styles, meeting styles, and protest tactics) that make people of colour feel alienated, unwelcome, uncomfortable, or disinterested.

- White activists are privileged (they are affluent, because they can afford to travel to mass events, and they are protected from police brutality because of color of their skins).

- The very idea of organizing supports and perpetuates white supremacy, because white activists present themselves as only real experts and *de facto* leaders<sup>33</sup>.

---

<sup>30</sup> Amory Starr, "How Can Anti-Imperialism Not Be Anti-Racist? The North American Anti-Globalization Movement," *Journal of World-System Research*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Chase-Dunn, Christine Petit, Richard Niemeyer, Robert A. Hanneman, Rebecca Giem, Erika Gutierrez and Ellen Reese, "The Contours of Solidarity and Division Among Global movements," IROWS (The Institute for Research on World-Systems) Working Paper, <http://irows.ucr.edu/papers/irows26/irows26.htm>; Christopher Chase-Dunn and Matheu Kaneshiro, "Stability and Change in the contours of Alliances Among movements in the social forum process", IROWS (The Institute for Research on World-Systems) Working Paper, <http://irows.ucr.edu/papers/irows44/irows44.htm>; Rebecca Álvarez, Erika Gutierrez, Linda Kim, Christine Petit, and Ellen Reese, "The Contours of Color at the World Social Forum: Reflections on Racialized Politics, Representation, and the Global Justice Movement," *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (May 2008).

<sup>32</sup> A. Starr, op. cit., p. 120, n. 3.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 127.

In addition to above descriptions, which could be considered – relegate – as purely subjective ones, Starr notes also objective differences between two discussed movements:

“While anti-globalization activists base their assessment of a ‘good’ campaign on how clearly and compellingly it makes the intellectual connections, antiracist organizers are far more concerned about the intensity with which the issue is affecting the local community. Put another way, for anti-globalization activists ‘making the connections’ is using the local to help people understand the global, while for anti-racist activists, ‘making connections’ is talking about the global to help people understand the local”<sup>34</sup>.

On the other hand Starr estimates the goals of anti-globalization movements not being very different from those formulated by activists of anti-racist movements: ending oppression, community self-determination, democratization, empowerment, anti-imperialism in domestic and international affairs etc. She maintains that those two movements differ substantially merely with regard to methods and tactics – the aspect which reflects their distinct cultural backgrounds (for example individualistic self-creation of white activists versus communal, family-oriented and family-dependent norms of activists of colour)<sup>35</sup>. Thus Starr suggests that the leaders of anti-globalization movements should try to focus on re-articulation of the meaning and practices of responsibility and solidarity, which was proposed among others by Massimo deAngelis, a political economist and activist of global social movements:

For the anti-globalization movement, the organizing strategy was to disrupt the Party’s legitimacy at its Convention (National Democratic Party Convention in Los Angeles, August 2000 - MT) in order bring maximum public attention to dissent and alternative ideas. For anti-racist organizers, the strategy was to ‘bringing a diverse and radical movement to the street.’ This strategic difference depended on a different analysis of effective organizing<sup>36</sup>.

But do these distinct forms of activity really highlight just differences in means and attitudes, and not some crucial and profound divergences, which could be regarded as consequences of fundamental cultural hierarchy dividing society? Does culture refer only to shallow, simplistic customs, as one may conclude from the examples mentioned by Starr? It might be true that the leaders of anti-racist groups are usually more interested in bringing their claims to the streets than to disrupt legitimacy of the leadership. But perhaps they prefer that strategy simply because they are afraid that the disruption of legitimacy of leaders must involve some actions on the level of elites, which could be difficult as elites, in their opinion, are imbued with cultural-racist preconceptions and ideas developed within social sciences which they perceive as Western and “white”. Maybe activist of anti-racists movements are right saying that “white-dominated organizations” tend to call concerns about cultural identity issues, including racism, a “distraction” from more “urgent” work and that they see race as “subsumed under the ‘big tent’ of globalization”?

---

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 141.

At this point of the paper, pursuing answers to the questions which we stated above, we can turn to the results of research done by Christopher Chase-Dunn and his collaborators during the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Allegro<sup>37</sup>. The research focused on connections and alliances of world social movement and initiatives, and had two main aims: first to realize what is the geographical distribution of regions of residence of the movements, and second to find out if there are any “topically hegemonic” discourses organizing the whole network within and between the movements. The study, which involved survey of participants in the WSF05 in Porto Allegre, identified core and peripheral elements in both, geographical and topical, aspects of the networks. The core region<sup>38</sup> was South America<sup>39</sup>. Regarding the second issue, the analysis of transnational social movements shows the their networks have two major hubs: first is human rights movements and second, environmental movements<sup>40</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusions and prospects of reconciliation

What is the significance of the findings of the sociologist investigating contemporary transnational social movements in the context of this paper and in the context of antiracism and antiracial activism in general? They could be regarded as confirmation of concerns raised by representatives of anti-racist groups, as discussed by Amory Starr. The discourse of human rights turns out to be hegemonic, with its role as a “host discourse” which encompasses and dominates over other ideas of contestation, including antiracism. Is it possible for social activists, especially for those Marxist-oriented, to express anti-racist and anti-raciological<sup>41</sup> claims in language different than

<sup>37</sup> See note 19 above.

<sup>38</sup> The core for the purpose of this study was defined on the basis of frequency of answers to questions concerning region of home residence of the participants. The research referred also to “standard” zones (core, periphery and semiperiphery) expounded within world-system perspective theorizing: see Table 2 in: C. Chase-Dunn et. al., op. cit.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, Table 1

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, Table 3, Table 6 and Figure 5.

<sup>41</sup> I use the term “raciology” following Paul Gilroy’s analyses of the phenomenon of race and racism in contemporary culture and social life from his book *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000). Gilroy provides only loose definitions of the concept, calling it “a shorthand term for a variety of essentializing and reductionist ways of thinking that are both biological and cultural in character” which enables us to grasp – and eventually confront – “the continuing power of ‘race’ to orchestrate our social, economic, cultural, and human experiences” (*ibid.*, p. 72). However the more suggestive exposition of the way of thinking about what raciology is one can find in the following passage: “‘(R)ace’ (should be viewed) as an active, dynamic idea or principle that assists in the constitution of social reality. It is a short step from appreciating the ways that particular ‘races’ have been historically invented and socially imagined to seeing how modernity catalyzed the distinctive regime of truths, the world of discourse that I call ‘raciology.’ In other words, the modern, human sciences, particularly anthropology, geography, and philosophy, undertook elaborate work in order to make the idea of ‘race’ epistemologically correct. This required novel ways of understanding embodied alterity, hierarchy, and temporality.” (*ibid.*, pp. 57-58). “Raciology” refers to discursive – ideological

that of human rights which is in principal individualistic and individual-oriented one. Would they be ready to accept instead communitarian and community-oriented notions, such as cultural rights, minority rights, ethnic groups rights etc.?<sup>42</sup> This seems rather dubious, considering historical antipathy of Marxism towards cultural and national diversity which was rooted in its commitment to internationalism and the idea that “proletariat have no nationality”<sup>43</sup>. Nationalistic and particularistic sentiments, especially those present within smaller nations with their inclinations to highlight issues such as linguistic rights, were perceived by Marxists as a dangerous counterrevolutionary force:

There is no country in Europe which does not have in some corner or other one or several ruined fragments of peoples, the remnant of a former population that was suppressed and held in bondage by the nation which later became the main vehicle of historical development. These relics of a nation mercilessly trampled under the course of history (...) always become fanatical standard-bearers of counter-revolution and remain so until their complete extirpation or loss of their national character, just as their whole existence in general is itself a protest against a great historical revolution. Such in Scotland are the Gaels (...). Such in France are the Bretons (...). Such in Spain are the Basques (...). Such in Austria are the (...) Southern Slavs.<sup>44</sup>

One the other hand Marx and Engels approved a right to nationalism in the case of some peoples – namely those nations who are large, have the strong, hegemonic bourgeoisie and are capable of building modern bureaucratic state and capitalist relations of production. Such nations are defined as modern and historical (in a Hegelian sense), and are opposed to weak, non-historical and small communities, which will always remain backward and regressive<sup>45</sup>. However the national question in works of Marx and Engels, together with a more general issue of cultural identity, can be regarded as secondary one: after all the nation as well as the formation of the nation-states, with the development of bourgeoisie and capitalism, are instrumental for the revolutionary and historical processes of socio-economic emancipation. Thus a focus on national identity may be seen as a distraction from a more important task – preparing for

---

and “mystifying” – nature of “race-thinking” and there seems to be a lot of commonalities between this project and the broader tradition of theorizing about race and racism encompassing writers such as Hannah Arendt, George L. Mosse, Étienne Balibar, Zygmunt Bauman and Robert Miles. For a critical treatment of this issue see: Barnor Hesse, “Im/Plausible Deniability: Racism’s Conceptual Double Bind,” *Social Identities*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2004)

<sup>42</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, pp. 2-3, 208 n. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Will Kymlicka, “Introduction”, in: id. (ed.), *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Friedrich Engels, The Magyar Struggle, in: K. Marx and F. Engels, *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976. See: Ephraim Nimmi, “Marx, Engels, and the National Question”, in: W. Kymlicka (ed.), *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, op. cit., p. 69-70; W. Kymlicka, “Introduction”, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> E. Nimmi, op. cit., p. 62-63

the revolution in the domain of the relations of production. This view may be detected also in one of the most recent commentaries by a concerned progressive writer:

After half a century of anti-racism and feminism, the US today is a less equal society than was the racist, sexist society of Jim Crow. Furthermore, virtually all the growth in inequality has taken place since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1965—which means not only that the successes of the struggle against discrimination have failed to alleviate inequality, but that they have been compatible with a radical expansion of it. Indeed, they have helped to enable the increasing gulf between rich and poor. Why? Because it is exploitation, not discrimination, that is the primary producer of inequality today. It is neoliberalism, not racism or sexism (Or homophobia or ageism) that creates the inequalities that matter most in American society; racism and sexism are just sorting devices. In fact (...) they are not very efficient sorting devices, economically speaking. If, for example, you are looking to promote someone as Head of Sales in your company and you are choosing between a straight white male and a black lesbian, and the latter is in fact a better salesperson than the former, racism, sexism and homophobia may tell you to choose the straight white male but capitalism tells you to go with the black lesbian. Which is to say that, even though some capitalists may be racist, sexist and homophobic, capitalism itself is not. (...) Americans still love to talk about the American Dream—as, in fact, do Europeans. But the Dream has never been less of a reality than it is today. Not just because inequality is so high, but also because social mobility is so low; indeed, lower than in both France and Germany. Anyone born poor in Chicago has a better chance of achieving the American Dream by learning German and moving to Berlin than by staying at home.<sup>46</sup>

But is it necessary to make sharp distinctions between economic and social inequality on one hand and the right to cultural difference on the other? Is egalitarianism as an attempt to define a system of “just and fair redistribution” really incompatible with demands of the politics of identity (ethnic, national, racial, sexual etc.)?<sup>47</sup> I. Wallerstein, E. Balibar and J. Blaut argue that the issue of socioeconomic oppression remains inseparable from ethnocentrism or racism, particularly in contemporary world with its more and more mobilized as well as integrated horizontally global economy. The age of time-space compression encourages and facilitates growing frequency and intensity of contacts – but also conflicts – among peoples of different cultures and identities.

In my paper I did not intend to provide a new grand- or meta-narrative about race and racism, which would link in an exact and decisive way the potency of theoretical tools invented by Balibar, Wallerstein and Blaut with practical perplexities faced by many activists fighting in the name of justice and democracy on the world-wide scene (where a problem of possibility of presence of antiracial arguments and tasks within broader emancipatory and progressivist discourses would serve as one example of such perplexities). Instead I have been trying to raise a question why representatives of

<sup>46</sup> Walter Benn Michaels, “Against Diversity,” *New Left Review* 52 (July-August 2008), pp.33-34, 35-36.

<sup>47</sup> The dilemma was famously addressed among other during the debate between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser (*Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, 2003).

progressive and democratic currents in social and political life are sometimes so reluctant to deal with issues of race, ethnicity, nation and cultural minorities in a way which would mark a departure from traditional Marxist and Marxian “biases” (that they are all products of either a false and immature consciousness, or ethics and politics of identity, which would be abolished in the process of emancipation and with an eventual termination of the class struggle).

However I would like to lump those two levels, theoretical and empirical-statistical together in a provisional way, and argue that this is liberalism – with its various tensions and contradictions, reconstructed by Balibar and Wallerstein, as well as Blaut in his criticism of the essentially liberal theory of modernization, present also in agendas, campaigns and attitudes of the agents of contemporary social movements concerned about distresses caused by recent advancement of globalization and capitalism – which should be treated as the main obstacle on the way of building constructive responses against raciological thinking and racist phenomena evident in our world. I believe that Michaels, in his article which I quoted above, is right when he singles out neoliberalism as the main problem which should worry all representatives and proponents of progressive forces. But his recognition must not be regarded as a denial of the importance of the issue of culture- and identity-based discrimination. If we are to address the question of inequalities in an effective way, we should treat questions of socioeconomic exclusion and the politics of identity (cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual etc.) as complementing and not eliminating each other. We must question the idea of “there is no alternative to neoliberalism,” but while doing it we can base on Wallerstein’s, Balibar’s and Blaut’s analyzes, which may be referred to not only by philosophers on the very abstract level of theoretical argumentation:

The first lesson we must learn, therefore, is that if it looks like class struggle and acts like class war then we have to name it unashamedly for what it is. The mass of the population has either to resign itself to the historical and geographical trajectory defined by overwhelming and ever-increasing upperclass power, or respond to it in class terms. To put it this way is not to wax nostalgic for some lost golden age when some fictional category like ‘the proletariat’ was in motion. Nor does it necessarily mean (if it ever should have) that there is some simple conception of class to which we can appeal as the primary (let alone exclusive) agent of historical transformation. There is no proletarian field of utopian Marxian fantasy to which we can retire. To point to the necessity and inevitability of class struggle is not to say that the way class is constituted is determined or even determinable in advance. Popular as well as elite class movements make themselves, though never under conditions of their own choosing. And those conditions are full of the complexities that arise out of race, gender, and ethnic distinctions that are closely interwoven with class identities. The lower classes are highly racialized and the increasing feminization of poverty has been a notable feature of neoliberalization.<sup>48</sup>

One of the most powerful and consequent critiques of (and not philosophical speculations about) liberalism and neoliberalism was developed recently by David

---

<sup>48</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 202.

Harvey in his two books.<sup>49</sup> For Harvey the crucial aspect of neoliberalism is “commodification of everything” (as assumption that all components, phenomena and relations of social life can be treated as commodities<sup>50</sup>), linked to the main item of the “liberal creed” – freedom, chiefly the market freedom. At the same time total commodification leads to “accumulation by dispossession”, which discloses the most destructive forces hidden behind liberalism as a foundation of political and economic order: privatization of land and removal of peasant population, installation of private property rights regime, a trend towards erasure of all forms of common property rights (state pensions, paid vacations, access to education, access to health care etc.) monetization of exchange and transactions, elimination of rights to the commons, introduction of processes of appropriation of assets typical for colonialism and imperialism<sup>51</sup> and establishing of the market as the only measure of value for labor, production, consumption and leisure. Harvey’s critique of neoliberalism is simultaneously an attempt to construe an opposition to it, to argue that “there is an alternative”. This task is important because of the destructive outcomes of the “commodification of everything” and the “accumulation by dispossession”:

But there are far more serious issues here than merely trying to protect some treasured object, some particular ritual or a preferred corner of social life from the monetary calculus and the short-term contract. For at the heart of liberal and neoliberal theory lies the necessity of constructing coherent markets for land, labour, and money, and these, as Karl Polanyi pointed out, ‘are obviously not commodities . . . the commodity description of labour, land, and money is entirely fictitious’.<sup>52</sup>

The liberal fiction and utopia affects economic base – production processes – as well as also social and cultural “superstructure”, with specific effects on the domain of the “politics of identity:

Neoliberalization has transformed the positionality of labour, of women, and of indigenous groups in the social order by emphasizing that labour is a commodity like any other. Stripped of the protective cover of lively democratic institutions and threatened with all manner of social dislocations, a disposable workforce inevitably turns to other institutional forms through which to construct social solidarities and express a collective will. Everything from gangs and criminal cartels, narco-trafficking networks, minimafias and favela bosses, through community, grassroots and nongovernmental organizations, to secular cults and religious sects proliferate. These are the alternative social forms that fill the void left behind as state powers, political parties, and other institutional forms are actively dismantled or simply wither away as centres of collective endeavour and of social bonding.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., id., *Spaces of Hope*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

<sup>50</sup> D. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 158-159.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 171.



An alternative, which is outlined by Harvey<sup>54</sup>, must have an adverse effect on the kernel of liberal theory – especially on its conception of rights with its claim to universality. This alleged universalism, as we could see, continues to attract leaders, activists and proponents of global social movements, including those of them who tend to fight against racism. As Harvey suggests it is possible to reformulate the basic principles of human rights so that they stop serving the liberal utopia and instead would provide us with “meaningful ideals upon which to let our imaginations roam as we go to work as insurgent architects of our future,”<sup>55</sup> even if that project would imply the founding of a new utopia – one that refers to a social construction without raciology in all its variations: religious, scientific-biological and cultural-symbolic-institutional.

---

<sup>54</sup> Harvey provides an 11-points list of „universal rights worthy of attention”: The right to life chances, The right to political associations and ‘good’ governance, The right of the laborers in the process of production, The right to the inviolability and integrity of the human body, Immunity/destabilization rights, The right to a decent and healthy living environment, The right to collective control of common property resources, The rights of those yet to be born, The right to the production of space, The right to difference including that of uneven geographical development, Our rights as species beings (see: D. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, op. cit., pp. 248-252; id., *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, op. cit., p. 204).

<sup>55</sup> D. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, op. cit., p. 248.

## **Teori, Aktivizm ve Diyalektik: Dünya-Sistemi Analizi Söylemi İçinde Anti-Irkçılık ve Anti-Irkoloji ile ilgili Tereddütler**

### **Öz**

Irkçılık ve irkoloji (raciology), dünya sistemi perspektifinin temsilcileri tarafından, tipik kapitalist jeokültürün en eleştirel boyutlarından birini ifade eden halk-olmaklığın kaynağı sorusuyla bağlantılı bir problem olarak dikkate alınır: İnşa edilmiş bir kategori olarak halklar ile (Marxçı ve Weberci anlamda) objektif bir gerçeklik olarak sınıflar arasındaki farklılıklar ve bağıntılarla (ırklar, uluslar, etnik gruplarla) ilgili bir soru. Bu makalede, kısaca 1) Wallerstein'in modern dünya sistemi mantığı içinde ırk ve irkçılığın kuruluşuna yönelik orijinal kavramsallaştırmasını 2) söz konusu doktrinin Étienne Balibar tarafından tashih edilmesini 3) ana hatlarıyla James Blaut'un kültürel irkçılık teorisini ele alacağım. Sonrasında da 4) ele aldığım bu üç öneriyi kimi çağdaş sosyal hareketlerin söylemi içinde irk/irkçılık karşıtlığının varlığına (ya da yokluğuna) yönelik eleştirel bir incelemenin araçları olarak kullanacağım. Makalenin sonuç bölümünde, ilerlemeci irkçılık karşıtı inisiyatiflerin görüş ve beklentilerine ve onların eleştirel demokrasi teorisi perspektifinden değerlendirilmesine yer verilecektir.

### **Anahtar Sözcükler**

Kültürel Irkçılık, Irkçılık-Karşıtlığı, Aktivizm, Dünya Sistemi Analizi, Bireycilik, Étienne Balibar, Immanuel Wallerstein, James Blaut, David Harvey.