

Global (Dis)Orders

Marxism 2000 Conference Plenary Session

[transcript]

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Thank you, I generally talk about social movements when I speak about globalization. I understand that yesterday there was some talk about my relationship to Emanuel Wallenstein, and indeed if there had been time I would have spoken again about the all together misnamed or euro centrically named social movements and how they actually do relate to globalizing globalization, but I've chosen to speak about my other area of my activism – the other area you mentioned, the children's education, because I think it's very important to look at that when we talk about globalization and it's future. My specific title comes from my intervention at the International Women's University after Sakia Sassen's talk. Professor Sassen and I are very good friends, and our friendship rests on our difference. She's also one of our foremost thinkers on globalization. In the spirit then, of friendly critique, I repeat my discomfort with a presentation on that occasion, as I understood it, and recall why it led to an excitement to globalize globalization. Because I felt Sassen in her current incarnation keeps her eye on metropolitan countries, looking only at central banking systems, urban complexes, and all telecommunications when she looks at the rest of the world, and because she believes that the role of the state is definitively over she said that, "Underclass migrant women are empowered through citizenship practices even when they are undocumented". Because meeting with migrant women from other countries during her day in London or Frankfurt she goes beyond a merely national consciousness. Although Sassen felt that this was thickening globalization discourse, she cautioned us again and again that such empowerment was not for the individual but was systemic. I did not think this could be seen as women's empowerment in globalization. It was this that made me say that we had to globalize our view of globalization and engage with women's counter-globalizing struggles in the periphery and continue the struggle for civil rights rather than simply speak of empowerment without documentation of immigrant women in the metropolitan state whose repressive role is not over merely because the state can be bypassed as an inconvenience sometimes in globalization.

For similar reasons of conviction and omission, Sassen felt that there was a new global women's fellowship. Some of us have attempted to situate, heterogenize and criticize this self-styled international civil society component of the global feminist dominant in much of our published work and on the groundwork. Indeed there is a good deal of careful criticism of this group among many Marxist feminists embracing a range from Gene Franco to Farida Aktar. To attend to this is also to take a globalized view of globalization. Sassen often suggests that because of the growing role of human rights interventions there is now a new legal subject. This is where a cultural critique in order to globalize itself must learn to learn from below. This is too complex an argument to summarize; I have been able to present an anecdotal version in the Fukuoka Women's Center in Japan, a version that I have repeated in California and Germany. I will try to tighten this argument because I am completely

against the specious presentation of cultural human rights. I will try and tighten the argument for an amnesty lecture in February. Today I want to share with you how to access the above rather than the bellow, as it trains the triumphant dispenser or human rights globally. It leads to a simple question, if child laborers are bad why are child investors good? What's the difference between child consumers and child investors?

I published an account on the misunderstanding of the child labor situation in Bangladesh in my last book. That account was not really about child labor but about making human rights a trade related investment issue, about the easy good will of boycott politics, about the lazy cruelty of moral imperialism, about doing deals with local entrepreneurs – themselves bound by their own greed and the greed of global trade resulting in no labor laws. It was about finding in this a justification for a permanent involvement in a country's affairs through foreign aid. There I discussed the use of racism to divide international labor by way of a gender studies meeting at Columbia, where an explanation of this interested use of child labor as a way of blocking exports from developing countries, was summarily dismissed in an absurd cultural relativist way by U.S. nationalist domestic welfare sociologist female colleague, as if child labor was just a part of Bangladeshi culture and we should not interfere.

I commented there that the righteous anger of the Child Labor Deterrent Act of 1993, or the benevolence of a long distance benefactor looses all plausibility when confronted with the actual indifference and deception that follow the dismissal of these children. These are not unusual intuitions; Youssef Boutros Ghali, the Egyptian Trade Minister asked at the end of the Seattle debauch, and I quote, "Why all of a sudden when third world labor has proved to be competitive to industrial countries, do industrial countries start feeling concerned about our workers?" I asked the same question in my book quoting the Harkin Bill-the Child Labor Act; I quote the bill, "Adult workers in the United States and other developed countries should not have their jobs imperiled by imports produced by child labor in developing countries".

My own direct involvement for the last decade has been with the nature, quality, effectiveness, and relevance of the teaching in ground level schools. I can say with conviction that those questions cannot be raised in the hapless situation that follows the so-called restoration of the sanctity of childhood at the direct foreign investment garment factories. Therefore, I asked this question in my book: "Capitalism is better than slavery, but is exploitation the only way out?" I open today's remarks at that point, for in spite of various kinds of moves on both sides, the situation in broad strokes has not changed in Bangladesh and I would only repeat myself with sensationalist detail in a thirty minute talk. The idea of childhood as a time of innocence and protection from both the knowledge and cares of the world is a red herring in the debate over child labor. The dreary stories of children's education at best a little short of useless but still withheld goes on as usual. The education supposedly offered to the children, which is withheld, is useless because it cannot fit the national system of education, but the national systems of education are themselves defunct upon the South Asian sub-continent when it comes to the education of the very poor, especially the rural poor. I am not dismissing Indian education- I am the product of the University of Calcutta. I am talking about the scandal of the absolute divide

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when it comes and you fall below the middle class into the urban working class, the urban proletariat, and the rural poor.

The prevailing system of education is to memorize answers to ante graded questions relating to set books, the occasional human interest story of villages establishing their own schools, or NGO's joining a UN drive for schools must first be evaluated against this grid if indeed it penetrates to the bottom layers of diversified Salboltan life – which it doesn't. There is something like an opening into women's history even here. The sharp young girl waiting up through the muddy, sluggish currents of gender drawl politics can aim for the reserved seats on the various organs of state government, generally to become pawns of veteran mainstream players. When they enter UN statistics, as women entering politics, the Declaration of Mexico 1975, the entry is meaning less. Therefore, the real infrastructural change for us as educators is to ponder how the details of the philosophy of education at that level can be improved, and just pondering will improve nothing.

We know that such a huge difference between the primary education of the rich and the poor is not unknown even in New York City, where I live for the moment. Although in the general culture the liberation of the girl-child has abundantly produced a backlash of concern for the boy-child, it would be appropriate to discuss how in the effort to practice the internalization of democratic reflexes in the very young, one must also fight to establish gender justice in the follow-up. In the interest of time I will leave such considerations for the discussion session and simply distinguish my position from the popular panaceas offered in the area of children's education without specific reference to sexual difference so I can get on to my questions. If child laborers are bad why are child investors good? What's the difference between child consumers and child investors?

The panaceas offered in the area of children's education are generally confined to celebrating the building of school buildings and the placing of teacher bodies in them. The actual quality and methodology of the education offered on that level is not and cannot be discussed because the benefactors are for various kinds of reason unable or uninterested to evaluate them or in-evaluating them. This panacea can include an entire spectrum from immigrants to sending money to found schools in the country of origin to and I quote, "Private sector venture philanthropy," venture philanthropy that's a step beyond corporate philanthropy you understand, "private sector venture philanthropy building classrooms in Ethiopia and backing the Ethiopian adoption project which places Ethiopian orphans with foreign parents." Corporate philanthropy, development sustaining cost efficiency, impatient human rights intervention, have no time to respect local responsibility based systems that have been allowed to stagnate, and cannot fulfill the imaginative capacity that we are gifted with. I'm not against sending money to build school buildings, but the teaching of very young children whose cultural base has been neglected for centuries can even be harmed by the presence of nothing but money, buildings, and bodies. In India for example the net cast by the UN D.P., which since 1989 of course has completely gone over into becoming a tool of the trans-national agencies, cast by the United Nation's developmental program, penetrates the SCSD or the schedule cast/schedule tribe level bottom, including also he so called other backward casts, penetrates the SCSD level and is helped along by women in the capital city in the name of establishing non-formal

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elementary schools. Its data collection is as it were subcontracted to the custodian of the Salboltan. Now this is going to sound a little opaque here because I can't actually tell you in detail, I can't explain what actually happens there because this is not very well known, but I'll be very happy in the discussion to flesh out the story and tell you why this becomes an instrument of data collection. Its data collection is as it were subcontracted to the custodian of the Salboltan. I have copies of those readably innocent survey forms devised by these ground level activists of the Salboltan. I would be happy to expand on this. The DFID, the British Department of Foreign Investment and Development, flings its net wide but does not always penetrate quite so far down, perhaps because it is tied to a nation state.

Even efforts based in the particular southern country and run by activists don't necessarily lead to the kind of mind changing which patiently learns from disenfranchised children, how to teach them to draw on their cultural resources to connect to the habits of democratic citizenship. For this effort which I sometimes compare to invisible mending, unrelated to resistant nationalist content like 'Know your rights' 'Love your country' etc, or indoctrination in to this kind of stuff is not popular when one is desperately and necessarily interested as are the activists in quick solutions to immediate oppression. On the other hand, if this is understood as ground level education, one can in fact reduce fascists pledging allegiance. We can assume that the quick fix of something called 'Education for the children of the very poor', even if that promise were kept would not constitute freedom from poverty and domination, and certainly not the reflexes and habits of the practice of freedom. It is this practice of freedom that I have called reflexes of democratic culture. I must now confess that it is these reflexes that can in my mind, turn capital around again and again, to the preservation of a socialist state anchored in a responsibility based ethical calling. A more political-philosophical discussion of this conviction about a democracy always in the mode of to come, would be required in any extended discussion of children's education. Time now to go back to the questions again.

If child laborers are bad why are child investors good? What's the difference between child consumers and child investors? I hope you now see my drift. For interpretive reasons we want to argue that it is not a good idea for their children to be paid to work. The education that we offer as a substitute is an empty promise, on the other hand, we feel it is completely appropriate to train our children to make money without themselves working but by making others work by remote control. There is consorted primary training in exploitation. Companies are even reaching out to preschoolers. Gusher's CBS Market Watch, 26, August 2000. Then Morgan Stanley, Dean Rita, they actually appeared on the program talking about how they were reaching out to preschoolers. The hottest new demographic in town- I quote, "Is the 8-10 year olds. 10% of whom own bonds." August 20, 2000. A book published in August called *Wow the Dow!* engages toddlers in investment through play. A book that engagingly asks 'Why teach financial literacy?' is entitled *Poor Dad*. I hasten to add here, that I have as little against investing as I have against sending money to poor countries. No socialist could be against investing as such. My point is training rich and poor children into specific and different confrontational mindsets. It is interesting that the television reporter had no understanding that in finance capital, money does not in fact be-get money. That because competitive markets and negotiable instruments do not touch base with the

production of tangible commodities constantly and directly only means that the volume of circulation can be exponentially larger.

I'm no economist but simply keeping a breast of advanced textbooks I know, that – and I quote, “With the development of modern finance new models are developed to deal with problems of asymmetric information and information processing, institutions like banks and contracts like loans that are observed in all developed economies emerge as rational responses in a world where information is asymmetrically distributed.”

Saving children from simple greed by giving to them not products but education and interaction between borrowing, lending, and claiming for productive rather than individual consumption is not particular moral safeguard, because there is a lot of extremely bogus moralizing on these programs saying, ‘At least they’re giving education and not just making them consumers.’ The difference between the two is like the visible violence of a knife cut which makes you bleed and radiation passing through which you cannot see. Thus, we are preparing our children to be agents of exploitation in a financialization of the globe and it doesn’t matter what color it is Anglo or Anglo-clone. Thus, we are preparing our children to be agents of exploitation in a financialization of the globe directly or indirectly while we stop their children from being ‘agents of production’, Marx’s upbeat word for the working class.

I don’t think what is being done to our children is particularly nurturing either. It’s rare in the pre-substantive arena – real education is unavailable to children. Here upon post-African terrain the substantive quality of education is allowed to shrivel. By that I really mean a trivialization of the humanities. At the end of the day I wouldn’t remain a teacher in the humanities if I believed the imagination, the privatization of the imagination was a great cultural loss. I said a minute ago, that in order for a socialist globe to be envisioned, one needs to pay some sort of attention to responsibility based ethics. Freedom from is all-fine but it is in the freedom to that we in fact have no training at all in the practice of freedom. Paul M. Romer the apostle of New Growth Theory suggests- I quote, “ At the undergraduate level, schools be paid a bounty for increasing the number of graduates who receive science or engineering degrees, \$10,000 a head. This would reward liberal arts schools whose student population tend to run heavy with English, history, and social science majors, with an incentive to expand science and engineering programs”. Just as the innocence of childhood is a red herring, when it comes to the criticism of child labor the preponderance of the humanities is disingenuous. When Mr. Romer’s real point is a strike against immigration, and I quote, “Organized labor complains but it will be to little effect. The industry will typically prevail reasonably because the problem is a real one, and the VISA quotas for skilled immigrants are raised once more.” I cannot here resist the temptation to show a recent cover of the influential German news weekly Deutschen. Now ‘Why Are Germans Too Dumb For The Computer? Then the picture – we don’t really think this is an Indian face, we think this is a white model kind of dressed up with the ‘dot’ which signifies India, but I can’t really discuss this now because obviously it’s 30 minutes. I’d be extremely happy if anyone were at all interested as to why this picture of tradition, dot has appeared with hardhat contractors on the cover of Forbes’s magazine. Why in fact all over the place you in fact see this particular gender icon as the threat presented by the influx of

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skilled immigrants in the software industry? To quote the ILO, “The Euro-U.S. is a Geriatric Ward.”- Not my words. Children indoctrinated into ecommerce, growing into adolescence, choosing majors through fast web, are being jostled out of software jobs by the very forces of globalization they helped to foster. I have not the expertise and we not the have the time to discuss this in detail. In the final movement of my remarks I will focus on the corollary of my argument so far, electronic education.

We have argued that among the poorest sector of the electorate in the poorest countries, all the largest sector of the electorate the best intentioned do not concentrate on the techniques of learning. We have also argued that among the richest section of the electorate in the richest countries the best intentioned concentrate on the techniques of financialization. It is also a fact that the former are promised and the latter posses the resources of electronic learning. I would like to digress here for a moment to point in terms of Marxist Theory at the speciousness of the promise of unmediated cyber-literacy in the developing world. This actually also needs a longer arguing out. In my lead article in Judith Butler’s recent collection, ‘What’s Left of Theory’ I actually discuss, because it’s somewhat counter intuitive reading of Marx in English. I discuss why I say the things that I am just going to say now. “It was by contemplating the made object of views –“ and in Marx says most people in fact, if you’re just looking at the intuitive scene, value seems to emerge in exchange, but he’s trying to train his implied reader into production, the working class. In fact if you contemplate use value you will see value. “It was by contemplating the made object of views as use value - and of course in the English that distinction can’t be made - and by abstracting from it that Marx deduced its irreducible value constituent, abstract labor power.

If the worker managed this abstraction well, then we would have a society that was at once a community and socialist *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. This formulation is hopelessly utopian, without an understanding of responsibility- but at least Marx thought this. I should mention here that this attempt by Marx, to deconstruct the binary opposition between *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, found in the anthropology of his time, in his vision of socialism has been obliterated in translation; it is invariably translated common to all societies. In such a society people will of course use objects of use and notes. It is just that considerations of that human activity is irrelevant for learning the way to socialism, but if a *Gesellschaft* is to be also *Gemeinschaft*, it must continue to learn the last bit on arguing from below. Undo the forgotten origin Hegelian story into the mode of a necessarily impossible to come. Let us now reproduce Marx’s lesson in the field of telecommunication, computer telephony, and the circuits of electronic capitalism. Marx contemplated – because over and over again you hear, we need a completely different kind of theory now to understand the dot com world, and so on and so forth. I think one has to go a little ways beyond capital one to see that without being a Marxist Fundamentalist, which I certainly am not, it is still possible to understand what’s going on rather better than simply declare a rupture. Let us now reproduce Marx’s lesson in the field of telecommunication, computer telephony, and the circuits of electronic capitalism. Marx contemplated the made use object as use value. We must contemplate the produced knowledge object as knowledge value, machinal epistemology, human or otherwise this is not a luddite position. One must be able to understand that so-called natural intelligence is a machine. Machinal epistemology human

or otherwise as data. If we abstract from knowledge as from use, we will finally arrive at the irreducible value constituent data, abstract intellectual labor power produced as or by artificial intelligence. It is of course in its exchange that value as finance capital appears. It is because we have ignored Marx's insistence on the difference between use and use value that we have no protection against the constant sale of telecommunications and high tech as knowledge. If in contemporary, philosophical, theoretical accounts of globalization, the line from Lenin, "Pointing at the importance of the international network of imperialist central banking systems is all but forgotten in the deconstructive thinking of ethics the invariable invocation of tele-technology cannot see its indistinguishability from or rather it's continuity with finance capital in the value form."

Here I emphasize that even at its best the substitution of Internet access for developing learning in children, is a misunderstanding, which has something like a relationship with the equation of buildings and bodies with education. That would only be feasible if the so-called natural intelligence machine were combatable with the electronic program and if the electronic program could be uploaded in to the child's brain. There are projects and promises afoot in this area, which emerges into sensationalist popular literature- I mean about this kind of project not literature in the sense of fiction. There are projects and promises afoot in that area of course but they're very far from anything like complex realization. I'm not a technophobe, and indeed in the bio-medical area, the business to business communication area, in the area of digital art, upon the terrain of research access where the investigator is working with already developed research skills, and for the development of databases- high tech open vistas. In each of these areas, philosophical and political considerations continue to be undertaken by many serious thinkers and activists from many perspectives. Arching overall is the thin line between the movement of data and the operation of finance capital. In a piece that is just about to come out called "Mega City", in the new architecture journal called *Grey Room*. I've tried to relate this to Marx's discussion of the transportation industry in *Capital Volume II*, and it's incredibly exciting to see how prescient in many ways that Marx is about this situation. Of course, you can't make a travel without actually reading it, but there it is.

Arching overall is the thin line between the movement of data and the operation of finance capital. As our children are being educated in the manipulation of electronic data access and investment, including of course e commerce they become as a generation, the agents of exploitation congratulating themselves on corporate philanthropy while we forbid children in the southern sector to become responsible agents of production. Because my contacts are in Bangladesh, and my mother tongue is Bengali I can produce a bit of handwritten Bengali here and actual accounts with this- I learn there from there rather than impose this kind of thinking upon them. Because my contacts are in Bangladesh, and my mother tongue I can produce a bit of handwritten Bengali here detailing the devastation of local industry in the name of protecting children from organized labor. But this sort of testimony is available to anyone who cares to cross the academic research international civil society indigenous activists leadership barrier, into hands on contact with the ground level field worker. It would be interesting to show how even this is not the Salboltan speaking, but we must get back to the question of electronic education. I have given you a list of areas, where high tech is a brilliant aid, irrespective of an ethical, political position on these activities. In

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the area of children's education- if we understand education to be a non-coercive rearrangement of desires and a cultivation of imaginative reflexes, as well as skills with content, high-tech is not an unquestioned good.

Telecommunication as unmediated access to learning does not work with very young children- because it can make them enjoy the thing, that's not what we are talking about. We are talking about something that is going to last, because the simplest human activities take an enormous amount of calculation to be technically replicated the reproduction of simple brain functions are dazzling in their mathematics. What we as educators have to remember is, however impressive and incomprehensible the calculus may be, as today's children of the world are growing up those functions can be realized infinitely better in the natural intelligence classroom, where the teacher's internal computer and the student's can be made compatible with effort. Another name for this is good teaching. Unassisted distance learning is not an option for the very young. In the case of the so called LDC's or least developed countries, odious Social Darwinist term, where the problem of child labor, isolated form infrastructure is projected as most acute. Good teaching involves learning to learn the secret of that compatibility from below, for which corporate or venture philanthropy has no space and the from above do gooding of most activism has no time or skill, and the point I continue to repeat is that even in the best schools in god's own country, access to the internet cannot take the place of the education of a child, especially when the child is slated to be indoctrinated in the arcane mysteries of managing a portfolio as a pre-schooler. Serious work in neural-networking in the areas of cognitive science or behavioral psychology, accesses children's language acquisition descriptively and promises no quick fixes and sensationalists talk on uploading, as I had mentioned is simply that, sensationalist. I can look forward to a remote time when this becomes possible, I fear that that crisis will also be managed as all so called progress is. Some years ago, the feminist writer Luanne Walter tied down the invention of the child to Victorian England and Philippe Aries to the European, eighteenth century. The U.S. today is breeding a monster by grafting that simple enlightenment idea that upon the axiomatics of globalizing triumphalism. Critique of child labor, celebration of child investor, bad faith about child consumer make up the current scene. Melanie Klein had written in 'A More Innocent World' and I quote, "The repeated attempts that have been made to improve humanity in particular to make it more peaceable have failed because nobody has understood the full depth and vigor of the instincts of aggression innate in each individual. Such efforts do not seek to do more than encourage the positive, well-wishing impulses of the person while denying or suppressing his/her aggressive ones, and so they have been doomed to failure from the beginning." I have tried to suggest the extent to which the positive, well-wishing impulses of themselves foolish or knavish in the U.S. today, and I have tried to speak of the nature of an effort to harness the aggressive intelligence of the child into the reflexes of reparation. Thank you.

David Harvey: We live in, at the moment, in this rather silly political season of presidential elections, and of course it produces an immense number of clichés. One of the clichés, which we find, is this notion that we are at an unparalleled moment of opportunity, potentiality, and possibility and if only we can seize it right. Now, the trouble with clichés is that they're just clichés, they're not necessarily wrong. I want you to imagine for a moment,

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or maybe for the next half hour, that indeed we are at a moment of tremendous potentiality, possibility, and opportunity for those of us who remain basically loyal to the Marxist/Socialist tradition and ask the question, how can we seize this moment, and do something with it? In a very positive kind of way and what kinds of things will we have to do in order to do it. In putting it this way, I want to emphasize the importance of the Marxist/Socialist tradition in general and I want to begin I think by pointing out that tremendous significance that tradition has had in changing the kind of the nature of the world which we now live in. It never managed to overthrow capitalism but it sure as hell changed it and made capitalism adapt, shift, and in many ways for a lot of people that was a very very singular effect and something that I think we ought to be collectively proud of. I think going beyond that of course it could be argued, and indeed I would argue it as well, that the effect of all of this activity on the part of Socialism and Marxism has been to save capitalism from itself, to save capitalism from its horribly self destructive capacities and tendencies, and that in a curious kind of way the Socialist/Marxist movement on a global basis over the years has helped stabilize capitalism without overthrowing it. And its done that for one very simple reason as Marx commented in a chapter on capital when he said, "Let with self, competitive capitalism will lead to the destruction of all forms of wealth in particular the two forms of wealth so fundamental to capital i.e. that of the laborer and that of the soil." And it seems that destructive side of capitalism is something that we're still combating and combating in realistic ways. The destruction of the laborer in all kinds of way and the destruction of the soil and for that reason it's not simply sufficient to say well we have a roll to play in emealurating this god damn awful system. What we really have to do is to really think about the whole kind of question of overthrowing it, replacing it, finding that alternative to the system to which we are repeatedly told there is no alternative. Now in pursuing this objective, I want to just raise the question of the necessary conditions that can as it were feed into such a kind of political project. The classical way of doing things is of course is to do a through analysis of the contemporary situation and all of its details and all of its ramifications and to theorize it in such a way that we then learn to think about what possible political practices there are so that we can bring forth the new society out of the wreckage of the old. This analysis of course means that we need to analyze in great detail in ways that I couldn't possibly attempt in a short talk of this kind but I want to concentrate on just two elements for the contemporary situation, and regard them as rather key in terms of the analysis. I want to look specifically at first globalization and secondly at the revolutions in productive forces, the sort of transformations of technology and science which have gone on over the last thirty years. I want to argue in both cases that while globalization has been around for a very very long time and there are always these famous statements in the Communist Manifesto, and you can go back much further and that has always been an inherent part of what capitalism has been about and what capitol accumulation has been about, that over the last thirty years there have been some quantitative shifts in what globalization is about which may have generated some qualitative changes that we need to address in terms of our political responses.

I want to argue the same thing about productive forces, that while the whole revolutionary strategy of capital in relationship to production forces has been there all along and has been a fundamental aspect of capitalist history. That indeed in that sphere too, there are

some revolutionary movements over the last thirty years, which I think require very specific attention, a very careful kind of attention.

In both instances, both in globalization and in with respect to the productive forces, I want to argue that these are central contradictions within the Capitalist system. That they're not simply flat kind of dimensions that we have to confront but they are deeply contradictory, and by concentrating on the contradictions I think we'll start to find some of the levers, which are there for change. One of the contradictions which exists within the globalization argument is of course the connectivity which is presupposed between the individual, the body, the political person and the global processes of connectivity achieved through the market exchange of commodities, goods, information, and people. That tension between, as it were, the micro of the individual and the macro of the global is of course generating this huge interest these days in notions of human rights. I think this is a very important dialogue to look at and it's a problematic one because I think in the realm of human rights, capitalism is perpetually promising things that it can't deliver, and by concentrating on what it can't deliver we are in some sense of empowering ourselves to move politically both in relationship to the individual person and the global situation. I also want to make another argument about globalization and I'm not going to go into my particular cut on globalization- there are end books about it, we all have our own sort of view of it, I've written out mine I don't want to go into that. One of the other elements I want to try to unpack is to make very clear that globalization is constructed in a very interesting way and we should pay attention to this feature. That indeed there are a set of global institutions now and there's a lot of talk about global governance and so on which I'll come back to, and that global level of activity is important to look at and to think about. Global activity is actually constructed in some ways through the existence of very distinctive regional power blocks: Europe, Japan, and United States. We have also to think about the way in which the world is desegregated into these major power blocks, and what those power blocks are doing in relationship to each other - they are not necessarily in accordance, there is a lot of tension between them and I would mention historically of course that in the 1930's those sort of power blocks went to war with each other. And that is not unfeasible. So at the lower level there is that sort of configuration of regional power blocks, then of course there is the nation state.

I think it's absolutely ridiculous to say that the nation state is unimportant- absolutely ridiculous. The nation state is still an extremely powerful institution. In fact, I think what we have constructed now is not neo-liberalism but a kind of state, monopoly neo-liberal capitalism if you want to call it that. What on earth are we doing when we say Singapore is an example of neo-liberalism? The United States, yes the United States is getting out of the welfare state and is you know getting out of many of those things, social protections and so-ons', but what the United States is doing is supporting capitalist activity. In my own city there's hardly any development that occurs that is not public financed. We have this thing called the public private partnership, and in my city this amounts to the public taking all of the risk, and the private taking all of the profits. The other interesting thing is, where is risk in this capitalist system these days? Long-term capital management goes belly up and what happens? The Federal Reserve assembles and bails them out. I mean to say that this nation state doesn't matter anymore seems to me to be kind of crazy, but that is again that level of

the nation state is crucially important. But beneath that we also have regional configurations, state configurations, and in some cases we have even regional-separatist movements in Europe and also even in the United States, you know what California is about is not what the North East is about. I mean there's lots of regionality and then there's a metropolitan level if you like, then you come down to the community level - my local neighborhood, then you come down to the person and the individual. I want to argue that if globalization means anything, it is a series of activities across these different scales which are connected in very specific kinds of ways, and we have to appreciate those connections because each one of those connections is a sight of potential political action and I want to come back to that in a way of conclusion.

The other elements of globalization, which is crucial in all of this, is of course uneven development. We are all very familiar with the tales of absolutely obscene transformations in income distribution and power, which has gone on, and class distribution in power, but there's also been in the process of uneven geographical development where rich regions have grown richer and poor regions have grown poorer. Even within the United States you will find this going on within the metropolitan areas. You will find this going on in of course between countries; you will find this going on. So there's as it were, unevenness in the whole thing in which capital works on an uneven terrain it makes use of the unevenness as it finds very specific kinds of ways but it also produces unevenness in a different kind of way, a new kind of way. We have to look at that whole kind of process of production of uneven geographical development and uneven class power. We have to look at that I think again as something being very specific.

But within this system of course, we've also witnessed, massive oppositional movements. I mean if you ask yourself the question, where is opposition to the system to be found? The answer is all over the place. Everywhere; in my local community, in my local city with a struggle over living wage, in the sorts of movements that you'll find in many countries against the depredations of finance capital or against the pirating of biological resources and so on. I mean you know if you had sort of a map of oppositional movements you'd find it all over the place. It's not that there's lack of opposition - it's everywhere, but the opposition is of course fragmented and often frequently local. Often built around very specific kinds of questions and issues. And so one of the things that comes out of this analysis, which is one the things I want to put on the table is what do we do as academics and intellectuals in trying to create a framework of knowledge and understanding which permits connections to be seen and understood between all of these diverse oppositional movements. Are there ways to start to think about the commonalities that bind them together, and are there ways that we can work in more constructive and creative ways instead of emphasizing all of the differences to actually talk about the differences being meaningful and important? But at the same, as it were containing certain commonalities, which can be the basis of some kind of common political project, some sort of common political action.

Now on science and technology, the productive forces. Indeed I think, much of what's happened over the last thirty years has been a very very powerful transformation of capacities and powers through computer revolution and the like, information technology,

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information transfer and the like. And the question arises on that, as to how exactly it is going to be used and are there progressive and emancipatory ways in which it can be used as opposed to kind of saying this is just another capitalist plot, lets dump it. But there's another aspect to this, which I want to draw attention to. I don't want to go into the information because we covered it and we can come back to it I'm sure in the discussion. And that other aspect really concerns the way in which scientific understandings these days in the realms of biology, genetics, mind/brain relations, those kinds of things are actually putting us in a position right now to interfere in the evolutionary process. Interfering very fundamentally direct biological ways in the evolutionary process we've always interfered in the evolutionary process via our technology, our culture, our economy and our politics and all the rest of it. And that side evolution has always been there, and it has always had certain biological implications including species extinction and the like. But what we're actually facing right now is a situation where human choice, human action, direct human action is going to have very powerful biological consequences. And I think at this point, the question then arises is who is going to decide about those biological kinds of choices? Who's going to decide about this evolutionary trajectory? Is it going to be decided by DOW Chemical and Monsanto and all of the biotech companies? Who and how, and can and is there a possibility to bring it under conscious choice? And I think if we insist that this has to be a conscious political choice in which there is a great deal of popular participation as to who it is we want to be in the future, and what kind of human being we want to see in the years to come. Then it seems to me, which is a very powerful rhetorical argument that leads as it were to some very strong political possibilities.

Now lets look immediately then at some of the potential political responses to those two particular situations. I mean it's a very much more complicated problem in lots of ways, but let me just look at political responses to them. What you're finding worldwide coming out of globalization and all that goes along with it and the institutions of political governance, and in relationship to also this revolution in productive forces is a growing sort of set of discourses which are about the morality ethics which attach to the global scene. You'll find this in literature that attaches to Cosmopolitanism and the sort of the ethics of Cosmopolitanism, what's that all about? The attempts by writers like David Held to kind of talk about some sort of Cosmopolitan democracy and the ethics and morality involved in that. You'll find as it were, a whole terrain of debate, which is beginning to focus in on these questions of moral and ethical dimensions to what capitalism is about. Now you can sort of dismiss that as hot air and the typical rhetorical flourishes by which the Bourgeoisie disguises its real activities and so on, and I am indeed sure that a lot of that does go on. But I think there's some virtue in taking that debate at face value, particularly since you will find it at other levels also.

The Catholic Church, just to take one- the Pope has launched this whole kind of question of the new humanism for this century and what is the new humanism about? The new humanism is about; trying to define what it it's going to mean to be human under conditions of globalization and technological change. That is precisely what the religious rhetoric is now seeking to define. And the church is finding way to empower itself i.e. to start to go to people and say look, you're life is being constructed by these forces. What does it mean to you and how can we actually bring you back into the conversation in a

curious kind of way? The church has always sought to speak for the salbotin and it will continue to do so for a long time but it also has to find a rhetoric that's meaningful to its constituents, which are these days are very much located in the poor, the impoverished, the marginalized, and the oppressed.

So this debate and what does it mean to be human, and what does it mean to be human in terms of the kinds of societies that are being developed right now? That is as it were, a key debate. And the question that then arises is; well, what does the Marxist/Socialist tradition have to say about that? But of course if you go back into the economic and philosophic manuscripts, you will find a whole range of different concepts, which are pulled together, in a very specific kind of way around that issue. Trying to define, what is that we're alienated from? And one of the key concepts in there is this notion of species being, we are a species, we have capacities and powers. What are we like as a species, how do we understand ourselves as a species, what are our potentialities, what's our relationship to other species? How does this work out? Are we homogenous species or do we have specific diversities and capacities and powers and so on? So it seems to me that one the ways in which we can get back into the debate is to say look, this whole notion about globalization and all of these ethical and moral dilemmas which you are opposing are actually forcing us back to that very basic kind of question, what does it mean to be human? Can we say something about species being and what does it mean?

Now this notion of species being is of course a dangerous notion. It's a dangerous notion for a number of reasons and one is because it can be as it were, easily homogenized or turned into something which is so unitary and essentialist that in the end it can be exceedingly damaging to the prospects for any kind of lively sorts of change. But I want to suggest that we can avoid some of those dangers. We're beginning on a debate in a process around the question of what does it mean to be human in these times? As part of the leading and cutting edge of the critique of capitalism and to say it's basically the inhumanity of capitalism, it's inability – it's inability to treat us as human beings, that is at the core of one of the reasons why it has to be gone and give way to something else. But as I suggested we need to be careful in this process, careful for a number of reasons. First, we have to be careful because we have got to recognize that when we launch into a debate of this kind we're likely to find ourselves caught in a certain situatedness of our knowledge. Now a great deal has been made in recent years about the notion of situatedness, and I think it's fine but there's sort of a trivializing idea about a notion about it. You know, the fact that I'm sort of a nearly dead white, European, bourgeoisie male who works in Johns Hopkins University and that therefore says okay, you know, that's kind of a trivialized version, and I know I'm caricaturing but there's a rather deeper sense of it. For example, lets look at our situatedness within the division of labor in society. I work in a university, a university is not a socialist institution, and it is not a good socialist place. I have to do all kinds of things that I don't want to do in order to keep my job and all the rest of it. And through that division of labor I find myself actually assuming a kind of consciousness, which is part of the institution. I become, as it were, one of those people in there who just does those things and I think that way because that's where I happen to be. And I often don't even recognize, but it's my situatedness within this sort of labor process, which is actually affecting many of the things I say. You can see that by the way in this conference. That this sort of confusion

sometimes between what people are trying to do in order to actually make it in academia, and there's nothing wrong with that because you've got to make it in academia if you're going to be there. Nothing wrong with that, it's the confusion between that and what we want to say is socialists. I think we've got to recognize that contradiction in ourselves and work with it. You know I'm not guilty tripping anyone for sort of doing what the man wants inside of universities because that's what we have to do a lot of the time. So recognizing our situation and the division of labor and also something else here about this project, and this reflects on this conference and maybe it's a hard thing to say but if we're going to have this debate about species being we need the scientists. We really need the scientists; the microbiologists, the geneticists, we need to be in dialogue with them and we need them right in here. You know it's fine that Marxism is well established in the humanities and cultural studies and all the rest of it and I think it's great, but if it just stays there it gets ghettoized. And by being ghettoized loses the possibility to actually engage in this debate. We need that debate with the scientists- and they're very hard to debate with.

There's also something else, which is always troublesome, which is, the hidden geography of knowledge production. You know, some Europeans who come to this country and listen to the American left look in absolute astonishment of what they hear. Because I don't know, it's almost like people on the left in this country develop a set of concerns and then pretend it's universal, without even recognizing it. There is a hidden geography of knowledge production which you also have to recognize and the danger I'm trying to point to is to say, look if we launch into this debate about species being and we don't recognize these contradictions within the University, our positions within the divisions of labor, and the hidden geography of knowledge production, all these kinds of things, we're likely to get things terribly terribly wrong. But if we recognize some of those things, we can actually I think make a difference. Then there's the other side of things. I mentioned earlier, the way in which globalization gets constructed through these different scales of activity and action. And it's interesting when you look around you and you say people these days often think that real political change is going to occur at just one or other of these levels. At the individual level we have the slogan that personal is political. Well, I think that's terribly important, you can't do without it but if that's all you got forget it. The same would be true about collectivities and solidarities in communities and so on. A lot of people now say that the solution to all of the kinds of the global problems we got is something local called community. Something very, very local and we can solve the problems at that level. Well community activism is terribly important of course in itself it can become exclusionary, reactionary, neo-fascistic in some instances and is really problematic. But you need that level of activity in order to do anything. The same is true with organization at regional metropolitan levels. Catalonia or Scotland or somewhere like that, that kind of level yes, you know, a level of political organization. Something can happen there, something can be done there, it's important to work at that kind of level. It's vital also to work at the level of a nation state.

Now there are some people who nowadays say well actually real political change is going to come from the institutions of civil society not from the state, and think that's where the action is going to be. I'm very skeptical, I think the institutions of civil society are terribly important they can play a roll but in themselves all they're going to do is ameliorate

capitalism and just sort of drift it back. To what it's doing they're going to end up being sort of a welfare state, a sort of privatized welfare state structure. And the same is true for European assemblies and institutions of global governance and WTO world bank and these meetings on, you know - Beijing meeting on women, Rio meeting on the environment, and Kyoto and all those kinds of things. I want to argue that political action has to be construed as being significant at all of those levels simultaneously. And that we will lose entirety on the game if we think it is located at only one of those levels. That what you need to do is to start to think through how the person who is political relates to the collectivity, relates to the region, relates to the nation state, relates to the larger aggregate, relates to the institutions of global governance. It's all very well saying abolish the WTO and IMF and all the institutions of global governance, but we need some kinds of institutions or global governance given the state that we've now created.

There is finally this point and I want to end on this. I want to insist, you know Marx had this fantastic metaphor, which I've used again and again and probably overused which is the metaphor of the architect and the bee. It says, what separates the worst of architects from the best of bees is the architect erects a structure in the imagination before creating it on the ground. Most of us in our daily lives, I'm sorry to report, really act like bees and we can't do anything else, and I think it's important to recognize that. But at the same time we need to cultivate an architectural imagination; an architectural imagination of the sense that says I, we, you could be architects of our fates and fortunes. And that means liberating the imagination in certain kinds of ways about alternatives. Saying look, there's a positive alternative out there, how can it be set out? Traditionally its been set out by the utopian tradition. A negotiation of the resurrection of interest in that tradition is present in this conference. And I think a renegotiation of those possibilities, which are there within the utopian tradition, and a critical engagement with them is one of the ways to go. It's a liberatory kind of thing to do to say to people; look society could be organized in a completely different way. And if I ended the last book I did with a utopian sketch or sort of little novella of a utopia, it was precisely to say look we could all do this and it is through the liberation of the imagination in that kind of way, we could start, as it were, to engage-reengage on this political process. This political process of course in the end has to look at finding commonalities within the differences, and I'm sorry to report that if we're fighting capitalism the commonality that must lie with the differences is that of class. There's no avoiding it, you can call it what you like you can try to evade it, you can run away this way and that way in this way and that way, but in the end it's going to take class action, class consciousness, class work, class organization if we're going to make any kind of dent on this system.

So I'm actually very optimistic, about the possibility of interventions at the intellectual level and the political level in the contemporary situation. We have a fantastic opportunity. We have a fantastic opportunity with lot of potentialities, and I guess my big question is why aren't we going to use them? Why would we turn our back on this possibility right now? It's a wonderful moment, lets use it. Thank you.

David Ruccio: Good afternoon. The title of my talk is 'Rethinking Globalization.' It is a deliberate play on the title 'Rethinking Marxism.' Which has brought us together not only

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this afternoon, but also for this fourth in a series of international conferences. Can you hear me in the back? Okay. Sure, I don't care, is that all right?

I want to thank the conference organizing committee for inviting me to participate in this plenary session. I am indeed honored, and for doing all of the work necessary to plan, pull together, produce and move the mic for this conference. I want to publicly recognize the role of the members of the committee as well as that of many others who have raised money, designed and distributed posters, assembled the program, made local arrangements and joined together in a collective work project to put together this vibrant endeavors' gathering of students, scholars, artists and activists. I think we deserve for them another round of thanks.

Now on to the topic at hand. Let me state up front that I am worried about the ubiquity of the term globalization in our current thinking. In general, the uses of the term suggest that there is something fundamentally new happening in the world. That a more or less complete reorganization of culture, politics, and economics is taking place. On both the right and the left and in both mainstream and alternative analyses. But for this afternoon, for the next half hour, is a set of understandings of globalization on the left that I am most concerned about.

As much as they have mobilized large numbers of people in demonstrations against the current forms of governance of the world economy. I worry about the ways in which many on the left have rushed to accept the existence of globalization. To invoke it to explain everything that is happening in the world to slide over or forgo concepts in modes of analysis that have long defined the Marxian tradition. To foreclose other ways of seeing and acting in the world.

Most uses of the term globalization assert that something fundamentally new characterizes the world today. Let me suggest, however, that the forms of global economic integration that we are witnessing today are at least quantitatively not so different from those of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The period between say, 1870 and 1913. Let me list three of the salient facts of this earlier period because, as I have learned, at least at Notre Dame everything comes in threes. From the 1860s onwards, export growth and rising foreign trade shares were stimulated by the widening and deepening of capitalist relations. Along of course, with breakthroughs in long distance transportation such as steam ships, and communications especially the telegraph. Thus, for example, the growth of international trade averaged 3.5% per annum compared with output growth of 2.7%, one.

Two, the international economy was characterized by large and relatively stable capital flows. Based on the spread of the gold standard convertible currencies and the financial hegemony of Great Britain. During the 1870-1913 period, the growth of portfolio investment exceeded the growth of trade, foreign direct investment, and output. In fact, by 1913, the volume of international capital flows had reached 5% of the gross national product of the capital exporting countries. Third, production was also internationalized during this earlier period as foreign direct investment increased. The stock of which reached 9% of world output by 1913, a figure that has not been reached even today. In

other words, the activities of international trade, finance, and production are evolving rapidly, if of course unevenly, from 1870 to 1913 and the levels in all of these areas today have generally not surpassed the earlier ones. Hmmm. Is globalization new?

At the same time, we should not overstate the similarities between the two periods. I really do want it both ways. There are new features within the most recent forms of globalization. For example, while the trade structures of both periods are characterized by a strong north south orientation, the colonial regimes of the late 19th century meant that many regions of Latin America, Africa, and Asia were forced to have the freedom to specialize in raw materials, exports, and manufacturing imports. This led to a deindustrialization of the south who share in global manufacturing production fell from 1/3 to less than 1/10 during that period. Today, the internationalization of economic activity has been accompanied by a reindustrialization of the third world and a decline in the share of manufacturing activity in the north.

Other new developments within the contemporary global economy compared to this 1870-1913 period include: One, clearly a growth in the number size and global reach of transnational corporations. The internationalization of service sector activities such as marketing, banking and finance, insurance, hotels and tourism, health, and telecommunications. Which like transnational corporations themselves did play a role in the earlier period. But their recent internationalization has far outpaced that of other sectors.

The speed of capital flow is around the world, and the role of short-term capital movements especially. As national financial markets have been deregulated, and new international and financial instruments invented. The list of changes within the world economy, in other words, could go on. My point is that concentrating exclusively on either what is new or what is old can only lead to errors for Marxist thinkers and activists. We need to pay attention to the current conjecture for points of rupture, new challenges, and new possibilities, but we don't need to accept the wholesale movement to globalization as an absolutely new phenomenon.

It is the rush to globalization that, in my view at least, leaves us trapped in sterile debates, for example, between a truly global economy versus the continued relevance of nation states. International organizing versus national level politics. Free trade versus regulated trade and so on. The result is to limit our conceptions of the possible. In the hands of many left wing economists, for example, progressive economic policy is reduced to a project of national and international economic regulation. As if encouraging economic growth and productive capital accumulation and discouraging speculative financial investment did not also provide some of the conditions of existence of capitalist exploitation. How and when did left political economy become confined to the choice between different patterns of capitalist development? If the terms of the existing debates concerning globalization are not ours, even less so is the inclination to invoke the economy as a demiurge. Propelling all other elements of society to some end point, whether utopia or dystopia. Too much has been done including in the pages of *Rethinking Marxism* and elsewhere. With the aim of recovering the non-economistic elements of Marxism to return to such traditional

formulations. The critique of political economy is among other things, a critique of this economizing tendency.

Finally, the focus on globalization has displaced other concepts or ways of making sense of the world. I'm thinking in particular of the notion of imperialism. Historically, let's remember that imperialism refers both to what Edward Said calls the age of classical imperialism and to the configuration of conditions that Lenin referred to as the highest stage of capitalism. Exactly the time period that can be characterized by a process of internationalization or globalization that at least quantitatively is very similar to our own. So if we want to argue that the concept of imperialism held at least some validity for that time, what fundamentally has changed to all but eliminate its use today? Not that the exact definitions need apply as theoreticians deployed it. Or is it emerged in the writings of novelists of the time as Edward Said has so remarkably shown.

Today, of course, such formal empires no longer exist. Precisely because the thinkers and movements of anti-imperialism and national liberation from Mariátegui and Gandhi to Fanon and Che. From Peru and India to Algeria and Cuba were successful. Because imperialism was apposed both by broad alliances of subaltern and colonized peoples and by equally broad alliances within the imperial nations themselves. The results were not always what we or they had hoped. But since when, as Marxists, have we ever expected purity or finality in the real concrete processes of history in the making? But for all that, we are witnesses today to events and activities that can only be understood in terms of some notion of imperialism. And that can only be opposed by sustained broad anti-imperialist intellectual and political work. How else to understand the wars in the gulf and Kosovo?

Are such massive military interventions so far away from the invasions of Granada and Panama? Or the support for the countries in Honduras? Or the efforts to establish NAFTA, and the WTO, and the Activities of the World Bank, and the IMF? No these do not involve a political or economic carving up of the world, not exactly. Its not individual parts of the world but the world as a whole. A project to recolonize the entire world, to remake it. With the zeal of a humanizing mission precisely reminiscent of civilization, Christianity, and commerce. The theme that, according to the legendary David Livingston, was the basis of the European Colonization of Africa. Today for the imperial presidencies of Reagan, Bush, Clinton, and Gore to come, the mission can be summed up as democracy, anti-communism, and free trade. Where and then resides the resistance to revoking imperialism to characterize and oppose at least some significant events and activities, frameworks and projects, in the world today? Let me venture at least a couple of reasons why there may be such resistance and respond if only briefly to each in turn.

One may be the messiness of recent military interventions for example, the Gulf War. George Bush versus Saddam Hussein? One of the most discouraging personal episodes of that war was watching my liberal and even left wing colleagues become supporters of US led smart bomb alliances to drive Iraq out of Kuwait. It was never a question of choosing between the two, but of opposing the war itself based on an understanding of the history that gave rise to both the invasion of Kuwait and the effort of United States to obliterate Hussein. The failed negotiations, the massacre on the highway and so on. The fact that the

victims of aggression are never so innocent should not prevent us from understanding and opposing the institutions, practices and projects that constitute imperialism.

A second reason may be the association of globalization with the universalization of capitalism. While imperialism is traditionally referred to the relationship between capitalism and non-capitalism, the colonization of one by the other. However, it's a mistake, I think, to assume that because capitalism has become global, was there ever a time when it was not, all forms of non-capitalism have been eliminated. Or that they can simply be ignored in the economic and social landscape. The historical similarities between then and now constitute one reason to support the idea of recovering imperialism to understand what is taking place in the world.

Another reason to deploy the concept of imperialism has to do with its effects, its performativity if you will. Imperialism, different from globalization, refers to a multi-dimensional set of practices with no necessary unity or inevitability about them. They may and often do work together but with no singular purpose or organizing entity. They are set in motion and they can be resisted and alternatives devised. Globalization on the other hand has a depressing inevitability about it. And that's because it is configured as an unfolding of an economic logic. Globalization is gigantic and apocalyptic. Imperialism on the other hand, is partial and incomplete. Less a description of an entire stage of capitalism or world development than a project in that world, an attempt to make and remake that world. I think then, imperialism shares these features with another venerable Marxist concept, exploitation.

There's nothing inevitable about exploitation. Either in general or in its specific forms capitalist, feudal, slave, individual, and so on. Exploitation or in its capitalist form, the extraction of labor from labor power, the self expansion of value, is a process. One among many within the social totality - exploiters, the boards of directors of capitalist enterprises appropriate the surplus value produced by the labors within those enterprises. This surplus is in turn distributed to merchants, bankers, the state, other capitalist stockholders, and so on who provide some of the economic, political, and cultural conditions under which that exploitation continues to take place.

Such distributions of surplus labor profoundly shape the social and natural environment within which we live. What we call capitalism then is that constellations of conditions and effects that are associated, not inevitably or uniformly, but contingently and historically with the extraction of surplus labor in the form of surplus value. Imperialism in turn, is the set of conditions that shape and are shaped by the existence of this exploitation. Yes, capitalist imperialism. Not because capitalism always get what they want, nor because forms of colonial expansion did not pre-date the emergence and development of capitalism. Nor finally, because capitalism can be reduced to or explained entirely in terms of the economy or class, I wouldn't want to. But because the particular forms of imperialism I am referring to from the British annexation of India to the US military barrage and Iraqi forces and the ongoing embargo against the Iraqi people, cannot be divorced from these complex changing conditions and effects of capitalism.

And that's as true in the metropolitan centers as in the southern periphery. Moreover, these conditions and effects can be felt throughout society in culture, politics, and economics. Let me stay with the economics for the afternoon. Leaving the remainder not because they are any less important to those with more expertise than I, especially my fellow panelists. As I see it, we need

to understand both the economic dimensions of contemporary imperialism and the role of economic discourse in constituting imperialism. That is, no less than the novels, movies, and other cultural artifacts analyzed by literary and cultural critics, economic discourse plays an important role with the imperial frame of contemporary capitalism.

I won't attempt to describe in this brief talk, the myriad international economic activities that we witnessed today. Let me focus instead on the class dimensions of one activity: subcontracting to foreign sweatshops. This one example gives us a sense of the complex class dynamics in forms of anti-imperialist politics that can be and are being carried out. Briefly in Marxian class terms, the subcontracted sweatshop production of Nike and other transnational manufacturers does not represent foreign exploitation as is often believed. But rather an exchange relationship in which Nike and other such companies purchase commodities, goods or services from sneakers, other forms of apparel and computer software, to grocery coupon counting and data entry from foreign suppliers. The fact that the purchaser is a capitalist enterprise does not in and of itself tell us the class character of the production that takes place on the other end.

And even if the supplier is a capitalist sweatshop, as many although not all of them are, we do not have any form of foreign exploitation taking place. An important part of the inducement to exploit, and to improve or from the prospective of the laborers, worsen the conditions of exploitation, comes from the attempt to get and maintain the subcontract. But the capitalist of the domestic, in this case for example, US buyer, do not extract the surplus labor of the laborers within the foreign shop. This makes transnational subcontracting different from the kinds of transnational direct investment in through which foreign exploitation does take place. Not nation by nation but by the capitalist located in one country who extracts the surplus value from laborers working in another country.

They are different. What is true is that the imperial machine creates the conditions from both relationships to exist precisely by defining private property rights and opening up markets reducing tariffs and other so called barriers to trade and encouraging the flow of goods and services whether produced by subsidiaries or by subcontractors to take place between countries. What are the implications of this class distinction between subcontracting and direct foreign investment? First, as I mentioned before, the subcontracting enterprise need not be a capitalist one. One of the characteristics of markets is precisely the idea that commodities need not be capitalist commodities. Non-capitalist producers can and do sell subcontracted goods and services to capitalist including the largest transnational capitalist corporations.

Second, if and when the subcontractors are capitalist enterprises now, then determining how and when exploitation takes place will depend on the nature of the enterprises. When they are local manufactures or even multinational subcontractors, which run many sweatshops for Nike and other such multinational buyers, then we have local or in general foreign capitalists, extracting surplus value from their laborers, not the transnational partner in the United States or elsewhere. What this analysis helps us to do is to challenge the economic or class homogeneity imposed by most uses of the term globalization. The idea for example, that capitalism has become singular and universal.

We can begin instead to see a heterogeneous class landscape. Filled with both different forms of capitalism and various types of non-capitalism. In the midst of the global reach of certain capitalist enterprises and free international markets and yet we can still identify the imperialist project and devise an anti-imperialist political practice. This encourages me, at least, to think of imperialism as a kind of machine. As against either a particular stage of capitalism, that was Lenin's preference, or merely a political choice, the approach of Lenin's nemesis, Kautsky.

In contrast, the machine-like quality of capitalism, of imperialism, gives a sense of the ways in which it has various parts that often but do not always work together, a set of energies that propels individuals and groups, institutions and structures to a net designs and to civilize those who attempt to resist it's apparent lessons, to make them succumb to the naturalized logic. Not a stage of capitalism but rather a machine that energizes and is energized by capitalism at various points in its history. Not a mere political choice available to ruling governments and regimes although it does include various options, military bombardment or occupation, economic carrots and economic sticks, cultural hegemony and world wide news reach. And the knowledge is produced by economists. Economic analysis as it is practiced today in the US academy think tanks and government agencies cannot be maintained apart from the imperial machine that attempts to discipline us as well as them. The disciplinary machine dovetails and works with the imperial machine. Without conducting a detail history of economic thought, what I am referring to are the elaborate theoretical models and empirical estimations of what is called the Heckscher-Ohlin-Samuelson theory of comparative advantage and the benefits of free international trade or the macroeconomists who debate the relative merits of neoclassical and structuralist stabilization and adjustment policies that need to be adopted by third world countries.

Countries which are presented in exactly the classed, gendered, and racialized terms that were applied to the subaltern groups of classical imperialism out of control instead of rationally directed. Driven by passions instead of interests, lazy profligate, in other words, in need of the expert advice of objective disinterested Harvard World Bank and IMF economists. That's the mainstream.

And then there's the weak opposition within the discipline, which testifies to the ravages committed in the name of the imperial machine, the increase in poverty, and the growing income gap between nations. The swelling of the parking lot for the poor in the cities, the fragility of national economic accounts in the face of international capital flows and so on but then limits the political options available by arguing in favor of more regulation of trade and finance, faster growth rates and more international stability. Our Marxian project is radically different. We need to theorize the imperial machine, reminding ourselves of the complex changing determinations and effects of capitalism's worldwide expansion. And alongside our resolute opposition to imperialism we also need to formulate and enact our own desires for new non-capitalist class arrangements and forms of globalization. Our own, if you will, Full Monty. Thank you.

[end]