



# To What Extent Is the “Epistemology of the South” Social Epistemology?

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*Abstract:* Post-colonial and Global South Studies have recently borrowed certain concepts from social epistemology, such as the concept of *epistemic injustice* (e.g. Medina, 2012, Bhargava, 2013), introduced a little earlier by Fricker (2007), and the concept of *epistemic dependence* (e.g. De Sousa Santos, 2015), introduced much earlier by Hardwig (1985). Analytical social epistemology might probably clarify certain issues in the fields of Global South Studies and “Subaltern Studies” (Spivak, 1994, Dabashi, 2001) if concepts such as *epistemic dependence* were more clearly distinguished from other close concepts than it is currently the case, in particular within the so-called “Epistemology of the South” (De Sousa Santos, 2015).

I will argue 1) that there are at least *three distinct issues* that are entangled in these debates: one that deals genuinely with social epistemology, another one that concerns rather the more traditional philosophy of social sciences and a third one that is related to the politics of knowledge,

and 2) that the current use of the concept of *epistemic dependence* in the context of Global South Studies might have been biased by the concept of economic dependence, elaborated in the early fifties and, since then, developed in various ways by numerous authors (Baran, Amin, Cardoso, etc.). The same could be said of other concepts such as *epistemic domination* clearly influenced by the concept of economic domination in Bourdieu’s sense.

I will add that the concept of epistemic dependence – in the sense of social epistemology (Hardwig, 1985, Thagard, 1999) - could be particularly useful if one took also into account its relationship with the concepts of *epistemic interdependence* (Schmitt, 1988) and of *epistemic authority / epistemic modesty* (Christensen, 2013) - not being confused either with Foucault’s concept of power (widely used within this context since Spivak), or the concept of political and institutional authority.

زمان: دوشنبه، ۱۰ مهرماه ۹۶، ساعت ۱۶ الی ۱۸

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