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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Syed Hussein Alatas and the "Captive Mind": Decolonizing of the Non-Western Psychoanalyst

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Abstract This essay examines the work of Syed Hussein Alatas and his concept of the captive mind as it relates to psychoanalysis in the non-Western context. I argue that psychoanalysts have to go through a two-part process to decolonize psychoanalysis so as to avoid trapping analysts and analysands within the confines of the captive mind, as detailed in Syed Hussein Alatas's many writings.

Keywords psychoanalysis · captive mind · captor mind · decolonization · colonialism · eurocentrism

Introduction

One of the earliest attempts to understand the nature of the psyche subjected to European colonialization came from the Malay political and social theorist, Syed Hussein Alatas. In his numerous writings, including his 1977 book, *The Myth of the Lazy Native,* which influenced Edward Said's book, *Orientalism* (1978), Alatas argued that subjects of colonization go through a psychological process wherein their psyches become "captive." This captivity leads to a form of self-colonization, wherein the individuals' psyches begin to conform to the civilizational demands of the colonizer, thus perpetuating the social-economic and intellectual structures of colonialism to the benefit of the colonizer. Alatas believed the captive mind was especially acute among non-Western intellectuals in Asia, who regarded Western social sciences and humanities as having universal value while indigenous

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knowledge production was seen as valueless, primitive, and/or simply irrelevant.[1] Among the Western disciplines that were adopted by non-Western intellectuals was psychoanalysis. Like many other Western academic disciplines, psychoanalysis exported Western categories, cultural norms, and humanistic assumptions that were embedded in Freudian thought, thus constructing heteronomic and destructive standards for non-Western societies. While the spread of psychoanalysis commenced with good intentions, with the belief that psychoanalytic concepts were universally valid, it inevitably contributed to the captive mind among non-Western psychoanalysts.

In this essay, I will elucidate Syed Hussein Alatas's notion of the "captive mind" from a psychoanalytic perspective, highlighting the psychological dynamics that structure the captive mind amongst non-Western psychoanalysts outside of the West. Additionally, I will argue that Alatas's notion of "autonomous social sciences" for the non-Western world includes psychoanalysis, but in an expanded form; it learns how to distinguish between what is scientifically *universal* in psychoanalytic thought, and what is *particular*, i.e., bound to culture, time, and place. Thus, in this analysis, I argue that Alatas's work demonstrates that psychoanalytic theory, once determinately negated (*Aufhaben*) from Western social norms and translated into cultural language relevant to non-Western societies, can play a role in the decolonizing process of non-Western intellectuals, who to this day tend to give heavier credence to Western academic thought rather than to thought indigenous to their own societies. While Alatas's work was predominately centered around his own culture and society in Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia, his notion of the "captive mind" has implications for all peoples who found themselves subjected to European colonization or who remain subject to its abiding legacy. The goal of such an argument is ultimately to contribute to the decolonization of psychoanalysis and what I call the "captive psychoanalyst," thus emancipating the non-Western psychoanalyst from their unconscious belief that they need to uncritically imitate Western psychoanalytic thought to be effective in therapy and in order to be relevant in today's globalized academia.

Syed Hussein Alatas

Outside of Southeast Asia, Syed Hussein Alatas (1928–2007) is not well known. While there have been a considerable number of articles written about his work in Western journals, there have been very few systematic studies of his corpus and its

[1] I follow Syed Hussein Alatas in using "Western/the West" as shorthand terms for Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, a constellation of nations and people that despite their inner-civilizational diversity, share what Jürgen Habermas calls common "pre-political foundations," i.e., common histories and ontologies, language families, closely interconnected cultures, religious traditions and practices, origins, etc. Syed Hussein Alatas deployed the same terms to distinguish the part of the world that the "captive mind" affects (the non-West) from those whose interests the "captive mind" serves (the West), especially in postcolonial societies. While the concept of "the West" is problematic and is an ever-evolving concept, for the sake of consistency with Alatas's work, I deploy the terms throughout this article. On "pre-political foundations," see Habermas (1992/1996).

impact on a variety of academic disciplines. This is particularly true for psychoanalytic studies, wherein Alatas's work on the effects of colonization on the psyche have gone relatively unnoticed. Nevertheless, now that psychoanalysis is beginning to take seriously (if it truly is) the psychological dynamics created by colonization (and decolonization), Syed Hussein Alatas's work should come to the fore.

Syed Hussein Alatas hails from Malaysia, a British colony. He was not a trained psychoanalyst, but rather a sociologist by education. Nevertheless, he was quite familiar with Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalytic work, and as we'll see, he had a keen mind for the ways in which Western colonization affected the collective psyche of the colonized, particularly in Southeast Asia.[2]

Alatas's Parley with Freud: On Religion

Alatas's engagement with traditional psychoanalysis in writing is limited. Nevertheless, in 1963, he wrote his book, *Reflections on the Theories of Religion,* in which we find his first systematic writing on psychoanalysis, demonstrating his thorough understanding of Freud's psycho-sociological work, especially as it relates to religion. In chapter four, entitled, "Religion and the Oedipus Complex: The Theory of Sigmund Freud," Alatas summarizes Freud's main analyses of religion, and offers some general criticism as to why such analyses cannot withstand critique, especially from a non-Western perspective (1963, pp. 53–57). One of the main accusations Alatas renders against Freud is that he has a sociological/cultural blind spot. Alatas writes,

> Freud tends to ignore the influence of society on the emergence of the Oedipus complex, confusing the biologically with the culturally conditioned. He exaggerates the role of the sex factor amounting to a reduction of cultural phenomena like religion, art, totemism, and myth to the sex motive. (1963, p. 54)

Alatas goes on to demonstrate that Freud's assumptions about the fatherliness of God (both as protector and antagonist) is rooted in his experiences with the paternalistic theology of Judaism and Christianity. As such, Freud's sweeping critique of religion fails to adequately consider Islamic theological positions that do not align with the "fatherly" nature of God within the Jewish and Christian traditions. "In Islam," Alatas writes, "God has never been conceived as a father but at most as a friend."[3] As psychoanalysis informs us, the social-psychological

[2] For an extensive investigation into Syed Hussein Alatas's biography through his writing, see Masturah Alatas, *The Life in the Writing: Syed Hussein* Alatas (2010).

[3] In the Qur'ān, Surat al-Baqarah, verse 257, Allah (God) is referred to by the adjective "*walī*," or "friend." Nevertheless, the term *walī* also connotates "protector," which does overlap with Freud's notion of a father as a source of protection from nature and history. The Arabic term *walī* can also suggests an "ally," "client," or "ruler." Thus, depending on the context, the term can be used to imply a vertical relationship of unequals, such as a father-son relationship, or a horizontal relationship of equals, such as a platonic friendship.

dynamic of close friendship is a considerably different form of intersubjectivity than the father-child relationship, especially as it was understood in Freud's Vienna in the early twentieth century. The reality of this difference renders Freud's God-as-Father claims to be inapplicable in Islam, or dubious at best. Alatas also questions Freud's critique of religion as it relates to non-theistic religions, such as Buddhism, that have no theological entity for which to project father-like characteristics. What appeared to be universally true regarding religion for Freud, only seems to be relevant to certain Western religions, and even there we may add that it is applicable to only certain orientations within those religions, namely authoritarian/paternalistic orientations.

Why is Alatas's entanglement with Freud important for our study of the "captive mind"? In terms of his early writings, Alatas's *Reflections on the Theories of Religion* is one of the first times that he explicitly identifies important differences between Western and non-Western cultures that are generally unaccounted for in Freudian thought. These differences are not trivial, as they have a profound bearing on how psychoanalysis would be practiced outside the West. Alatas is aware that subsequent psychoanalysts recognized the over-generalizations perpetrated by Freud's cultural assumptions, as he makes mention not only of the anthropologist and ethnologist, Bronisław Malinowski, who undermined the anthropological work on patriarchy that Freud depended on in his work *Totem and Taboo*, but also the Freudian revisionists, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, and Abram Kardiner. Nevertheless, this book is an early attempt to critique the assumed "universality" of Western sciences, including psychology, and more specifically, psychoanalysis. As we'll see, Alatas's critique of the assumed Western "universal" by way of the actually existing non-Western "particular" will be a major component in his concept of the captive mind.

A Mental Condition Born of Colonialism: The Captive Mind

According to Syed Hussein Alatas, the captive mind is a result of "intellectual imperialism," which itself is an epiphenomenon of direct colonialism and/or imperialism. In his essay on "academic imperialism," Alatas writes,

> Intellectual imperialism is the same domination of one people by another in its world of thinking. Intellectual imperialism is usually an effect of actual direct imperialism or indirect dominance arising from imperialism … the political and economic structure of imperialism generates a parallel structure in the way of thinking of the subjugated people. This is the product of intellectual imperialism. (2001, p. 33)

For Alatas, the experience of being dominated, exploited, and culturally colonized creates a "parallel structure" in the intellectual life of the dominated subjects. It also influences the way they value themselves and their culture and creates a mentality that idolizes the civilization of the colonial master. They no longer identify with the

sources of their own culture's identity, but rather have become something "other-than," something amorphous or ambiguous—a hybrid identity.[4] In essence, colonialism is a power relationship in which an external force (the colonizer) cultivates hegemonic control over the political and economic systems of another nation, state, or people (the colony). This often involves the direct presence of military forces that served to repress dissent and/or protest against the colonizer, as well as to enforce the political-economic and cultural prerogatives of the colonizer. For Alatas, a keen factor within this colonial hegemony is the psychological control the colonizer wields over the colonized through a pernicious ideology meant to lessen the value of the colonized culture, systems of thought, and other indigenous aspects of culture, including the arts, history, language, etc. Direct colonization has a corrosive export on the collective psyche of the colonized; it creates a form of mass "menticide," which, according to the Dutch psychoanalyst, Joost Meerloo, means to "overwhelm and to enrapture, to invade, to usurp, to pillage and to steal" the minds of whom it affects, and thus establish psychological hegemony over the subject population (2015, p. 13). Thus, menticide is the exertion of mental pressure on a given individual or population so that they psychologically submit to the demands and priorities of the colonizer. This process ultimately aims at creating a class of colonized individuals who aid in the furtherance of the colonizers' demands against the collective interests of the subjugated peoples.

The psychological hegemony born of menticide is a form of epistemic violence that seeks to eradicate cultural and psychological autonomy within the subjugated population. In other words, the brutality of physical domination is accompanied by mental domination through the process of epistemiscide: the eradication of local epistemologies, which determine the worldview, culture, and way-of-being for indigenous populations. While such "psy-colonization" occurs in subjugated populations at large, for Syed Hussein Alatas, it is especially acute among non-Western academics who operate within educational institutions that have come to be defined by Western academic norms and values. For Alatas, it is the colonized intellectuals' role within society to create the academic conditions that would further the goals of epistemiscide, as they are the vanguard of thought, ideals, and values within societies (see Seyed Javad Miri, 2023).

To further understand the psychological results of menticide in colonized populations, we must turn to Alatas's essays in which he develops the category of the "captive mind." In his 1974 article, "The Captive Mind and Creative Development," Alatas lists ten defining characteristics of the captive mind as it relates to non-Western academics. These are:

> A captive mind is the product of higher institutions of learning, either at home or abroad, whose way of thinking is dominated by Western thought in an imitative and uncritical manner.
> A captive mind is uncreative and incapable of raising original problems.

[4] This ambiguity as to *what* the captive mind individual is often provokes fear and distrust of that person from both the colonizer and other colonized. This resulting dynamic is called "proteophobia": fear of the ambiguous (see Byrd, 2023, pp. 87–89).

> It is incapable of devising an analytical method independent of current stereotypes.
> It is incapable of separating the particular from the universal in science and thereby properly adapting the universally valid corpus of scientific knowledge to the particular local situation.
> It is fragmented in outlook.
> It is alienated from the major issues of society.
> It is alienated from its own national tradition, if it exists, in the field of its intellectual pursuit.
> It is unconscious of its own captivity and the conditioning factors making it what it is.
> It is not amenable to an adequate quantitative analysis, but it can be studied by empirical observation.
> It is a result of the Western dominance over the rest of the world. (Alatas, 1974, p. 691)

For Alatas, this list of characteristics constitutes the psychological framework of intellectuals who have succumbed to colonial hegemony. Such intellectuals have capitulated to the defeat of their nativist epistemologies, which is a cause for self-celebration, as it means civilizational "progress" from their captive perspective. While some have willfully committed themselves to the ideological conditioning of the colonizers, most have absorbed the captive mind *unconsciously*; they were socialized into captivity by the colonizers, their native allies, and the various state, civic, and religious institutions established in the colonies. While those with the captive mind are also victims of colonization, their victimization is understood as liberation from "nativity"—nativity being a regressive state of being.

While each of the ten characteristics warrant extensive psychoanalytic analysis, it is beyond the scope of this article to do so. Rather, I will elaborate on each as it relates to non-Western intellectuals in a more generalized form.

"The captive mind is the product of higher institutions of learning, either at home or abroad": For Alatas, colonial education can be imparted both in the metropoles and the colonized homeland. "The choice," he writes, "is one of being converted by the master abroad or by the disciple at home" (Alatas, 1974, p. 697). Due to Eurocentrism, and the assumption that Western knowledge is universally true, Western education implicitly—often unconsciously—exports its own cultural values, ideals, and concerns alongside its empirical knowledge to those who it is educating. Non-Western students unconsciously appropriate the latent assumptions and unarticulated value judgments of their Western education, which is often positivistic (which itself is a metaphysical position). Because prestige is associated with the colonizer's education, such students remain "uncritical" of what they have learned and thus "imitate" their colonial teachers in their own work. Due to a colonial-induced latent inferiority complex, the result of centuries of ideological absorption and colonial humiliation, they often do not believe themselves worthy to

question the Western academic canon.[5] Even today, in the field of political philosophy, this inferiority complex leads to non-Western students (and often faculty) holding Western philosophers in high regard, even idolizing them, while simultaneously ignoring or even disparaging philosophers from their own cultures and civilization. It is not uncommon for philosophy students from the Muslim world to quote Plato, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Georg W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Karl Marx, i.e., the Western philosophical pantheon, while knowing nothing of Abu Nasr al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīna, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldun, or even modern Muslim philosophers like Muhammad Iqbal, 'Ali Shariati, and Abdolkarim Soroush. This is despite many of the Muslim philosophers' tremendous influence on Western philosophy.[6] True philosophical thought, they assume through the captive mind, comes exclusively from the West.

Syed Hussein Alatas makes an important distinction regarding the *imitative* nature of the captive mind; he argues that there are two forms of imitation: (a) "constructive imitation," wherein what is learned from Western social science and humanities (to limit our scope) is adapted to the needs, conditions, and cultural norms of the non-Western society (1974, p. 692). For example, he argues that if an Asian individual adopts communism as their political creed in a constructive imitative manner, they will adapt it to their society in a creative way, wherein they will "[extricate] what is culturally Western from the general philosophical components of communism," thus preserving that which is meaningful within Western communism within an Asian context, and negating that which belongs exclusively to the West (Alatas, 1974, p. 692). Constructive imitation is rational; it leaves open the door to learn from the West without blindly adopting its cultural norms, values, and concerns as a whole. The other form of imitation is (b) "negative imitation," wherein automaton-like mimicry is the dominant mode of relation (Alatas, 1974, p. 692). In this form, imitation of the West is unreflective; the West is blindly copied not because it is superior, but rather simply because *it is the West*. Negative imitation is pathological; it lacks any sense that what is beneficial for the West may not be beneficial for other cultures and societies. Thus, the impulse to imitate the West is bifurcated: between the rational and the pathological. Or as Alatas writes, "what defines the captive mind is the state of intellectual bondage and dependence on an external group" (1974, p. 692). For constructive imitation, the West is merely one source of knowledge from which a society can learn. For negative imitation, the West is *the* source of knowledge from which there is no mutual learning, only "tutelage."[7]

[5] For a work that attempts to overcome this Eurocentric model in social theory, see the works of his son, Syed Farid Alatas, especially the book published with Vineeta Sinha, *Sociological Theory Beyond the Canon* (2017).

[6] Alatas writes of a similar situation in Singapore: "Very few students are really interested in what the Asian thinkers of the past had said. Our students would read Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli and other contemporary Western thinkers, but they would skip Wang An Shih [Wang Anshi], Ibn Khaldun, Rizal and Nehru simply because they started with the initial outlooks, probably unconsciously, that there is nothing to learn from Asian and other non-Western societies" (2001, p. 37).

[7] In his essay, "Academic Imperialism," Alatas defines tutelage as "intellectual dependence" on an outside civilization, which teaches the colonized how to be "civilized" according to the standards of the colonizer (2001, p. 34).

"The captive mind is uncreative and incapable of raising original problems": We have already mentioned how negative imitation blocks creativity for the captive mind, but such imitation has a secondary effect: it does not allow the colonized intellectual to "raise original problems." Part of the imitative nature of the captive mind is that social, economic, political, and cultural problems are only perceived to be genuine problems when they are problematic in the West. In other words, when Western intellectuals take up an issue that is relevant to their societies, it also becomes an all-engrossing subject of discussion in societies outside of the West, even when such problems are mostly irrelevant within those societies. The captive intellectuals are simply imitating what they see their colleagues in the West doing. Because of this, intellectual resources are directed away from the pressing issues of non-Western societies and are guided into fruitless conversations about issues intrinsic to the West, or at minimum more relevant in the West.

"It is incapable of devising an analytical method independent of current stereotypes": Because the captive mind is dependent on outside resources for its own intellectual endeavors, it fails to develop novel means of analysis. Rather, the captive mind defers to the analytical tools developed by its tutor. Such analytical systems of thought often carry within them conceptual contents that are particular to social, economic, and political conditions that do not transfer well into non-Western societies. For example, Marx's class analysis, wherein industrial workers (the proletariat) were locked in a constant class struggle with the bourgeoisie, is a social-economic and political analytical structure that does not fit well outside of the industrial West, and therefore must be creatively adapted to the conditions outside of the industrial West. However, according to Alatas, because the captive mind is "uncreative," it will attempt to impose such a class analysis as it was articulated by Marx on a society lacking such classes, often feudal agrarian societies in the East. For Alatas, "captive minds are not able to create a new conceptual vocabulary," and thus remain dependent on Western analytical tools, no matter how inapplicable for their own work (1974, p. 697).

"It is incapable of separating the particular from the universal in science": Because the captive mind devotedly follows the "current stereotypes" emanating from the West, it blindly imitates their analyses within its own society without any concern for the particularities of the societies from which the analytical method derives, nor the particularities from which the captive mind is imposing such analyses. Like the captor mind, the captive mind unconsciously assumes that Western knowledge is universal knowledge, and therefore there is no pressing need to distinguish the particularities of the West from the rest. Because the knowledge comes from the West, it is de facto correct, not only for itself, but for the world entire.

The captive mind "is fragmented in outlook": According to Alatas, the captive mind is an internally splintered mind; it is a mind divided against itself along the lines of where it comes from and how it views itself. This antagonistic dual sense-of-self, the Western "persona" versus the non-Western self, limits the captive

mind's ability to grasp reality outside of a Western framework.[8] Because of its "intellectual bondage and dependence on an external group," both for a sense-of-self and its academic orientation, important aspects of its own national and cultural realities remain alien to the captive mind (Alatas, 1974, p. 692). Because the captive mind latches onto ideas of an alien provenance, and finds its persona identity within such ideas, it does not see the discrepancy between those ideas and its own reality, nor does it recognize any need to devise new ideas from within its own tradition or empirical reality. The thought of doing so is envisioned as a painful descent from the heights of Western greatness to the atavism of the indigenous.

"It is alienated from the major issues of society": Because the captive mind finds so much of its identity in the colonizer's civilization, it experiences its own culture from a distance. Being associated with Western academia gives the captive mind a sense of superiority, a feeling of being above the embarrassing "primitivity" of its own native culture. The outward expression of its "Westernality," which is often exaggerated, is the persona that defends the fragile ego against the nativity that the captive mind unconsciously feels it still belongs to. As a means of strengthening and perpetuating its persona, the captive mind puts a distance between itself and the "major issues of [its] society." Such "trivial" issues do not concern the captive mind; they are the domain of the native plebians who occupy their time with "small things." The captive mind, on the other hand, occupies its time only with issues of great importance, evidenced by the fact that such issues are fashionable in the West.

"It is alienated from its own national tradition, if it exists, in the field of its intellectual pursuit": For the captive mind, the intellectual pursuits of its own civilization are foreign. The captive mind does not read, study, or expound on the works of native individuals who came before them, nor those of their colleagues that work within the national tradition. They have nothing of interest or of importance to offer the captive mind. Indeed, such "native" work can hardly be considered "intellectual," as it does not refer to, nor comport with, the Western intellectual tradition. Its independence from Western academic jargon is not evidence of its autonomy, but rather evidence of its irrelevance. The "national tradition" is only relevant anthropologically, as it serves as a subject of investigation for Western academics studying the foreign "traditions" of the native others. The tradition itself is not taken seriously by Western academics, nor by the captive academic.

"It is unconscious of its own captivity and the conditioning factors making it what it is": For Syed Hussein Alatas, the captive mind is unaware that it is captive, so deep is the colonial menticide. The consciousness of the captive mind has been so thoroughly integrated into the Western academic norms that it cannot recognize itself outside of such structures. For Alatas, the comprehensive nature of the Western intellectual tradition (established by the Enlightenment), exported via colonialism and colonial education in the metropoles, is one that also camouflages the particularities of Western academics, thus creating the illusion that Western knowledge production—both in method and content—is universal, with the

[8] By "persona," I follow C. G. Jung's definition: "the persona is a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression on others, and, on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual" (1977 p. 192).

assumption that universal knowledge production has no alternative. With that claim being assumed by non-Western intellectuals, mental captivity is not even possible; they perceive themselves as being engaged in a universal project, not one particular to the West, and certainly not one that is exploitative. However, to be confronted with the reality that Western knowledge production is not universal, but rather embodies values, principles, and ideals closely associated with the Western ethnosphere, discloses the possibility to understand that one has become captive to the falsity of universalistic assumptions. Realizing mental captivity, i.e., confronting the fact that one has fallen for the false universalization of Western knowledge production, holds the potential to do psychological damage to the self-worth of the captive mind, for that self-worth is closely tied to the perceived prestige of being a part of that "universal" project, spearheaded by the West and its acolytes.

"It is not amenable to an adequate quantitative analysis, but it can be studied by empirical observation:" While quantitative analyses on Alatas's concept of the "captive mind" had not been done when he conceived of this category in the mid-twentieth century, evidence of the reality of the captive mind could be witnessed throughout the postcolonial world, as Alatas thoroughly documented. For Alatas, the psychological phenomenon of captivity was only observable within non-Western countries that had once been colonies of the West. The more thoroughly a nation or people were saturated with Eurocentrism during colonization, the more the captive mind syndrome developed in postcolonial geographies. Throughout his writings, especially on Asia, Alatas demonstrated that one could find the captive mind not only in academia, but also in the political-economy of postcolonial states, wherein the ruling classes, most often educated by elite institutions in Europe and America, would try to replicate the norms of Western democracy and capitalism within their home countries, without any attempt to modify such norms to accommodate for the cultural particularities of non-Western peoples. Alatas observed that these attempts to recreate the West in the East were purely imitative; they assumed that Western forms of governance and economic were also universal, and thus could be applied blindly anywhere (1974, pp. 693–694).

One may reasonably assume that such a captive mind could also feasibly be found within the West itself. Alatas disagrees. Despite Western colonialism being the cause of the captive mind, it was not a problem *within* the West (Alatas, 1974, p. 691). He argues,

> Where in Western civilization do we come across even a single mind trained entirely in the sciences from the Orient, reading books from the Orient by Oriental authors, going to a university run along an Oriental tradition, taught predominantly by Oriental teachers, directly or indirectly by means of their books, dependent on libraries overwhelmingly stocked with Oriental books, using an Oriental language for higher study? The counterpart of the captive mind does not exist in the West. (Alatas, 1974, p. 691)

As such, examples of the imitativeness cannot be found within the West in any good measure, except maybe within the "culture industry," which appropriates cultural norms and values of non-Western peoples and creates products out of them. Beyond

that empirical observation, Alatas concludes that one can only find systemic captivity among those attempting to imitate the West, not the other way around.

"It is a result of the Western dominance over the rest of the world": While Syed Hussein Alatas wrote the bulk of his analyses in the mid-twentieth century, Western dominance via globalization remains true to today. Nevertheless, historical events in the twenty-first century have challenged that domination, i.e., the September 11, 2001, terror attacks; the disastrous "global war on terrorism"; the financial crisis of 2008; Vladimir Putin's challenge to the post-Second World War "rules-based order"; and the rise of China as an economic and military power. Despite these challenges, the West is still the predominant world-historical force. Although signs that this dominance is waning are readily observable, the prestige of Western education in the non-Western world remains. As such, non-Western students continue to study in Western institutions, and as Alatas would argue, they develop a captive mind before they return home, although recent developments in Western higher education have begun to combat its previous civilizational myopathy. We can attribute this partially to Western academic institutions attempting to create a form of inclusive and diverse education, which is less likely to create such mental captivity because it has become conscious of its past captor function.

Regardless of this progress, the non-Western captive mind has not disappeared altogether. Indeed, the exorcising of the captive mind is still an active issue with the process of decolonizing psychoanalysis.

Decolonizing the Captive Psychoanalyst

Recent studies have demonstrated the long interconnected history of psychoanalysis and colonialism, as well as the lasting effects colonialism has had on psychoanalysis (see Beshara, 2019; Khanna, 2003; Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022). For example, Sally Swartz's 2023 study, *Psychoanalysis and Colonialism: A Contemporary Introduction,* has demonstrated how colonial-derived stereotypes, myths, and assumptions about non-Western people's saturated Sigmund Freud's and C.G. Jung's understanding of the "other." Swartz argues that psychoanalysis not only had a "long relationship to colonial exploitation of indigenous people[s]," but also "appropriated descriptions of the lives of colonized indigenous peoples" from colonial anthropology, which colored psychoanalytic theories, and have subsequently been passed down through the decades in psychoanalytic institutes (2023, p. 1). Clearly, it was not only colonial anthropology that reinforced stereotypes and prejudices against non-Westerners, psychoanalysis suffered from a qualitatively different yet equally false form of colonial assumption: that all of humanity was essentially the same psychologically.

Embedded in psychoanalysis were assumptions about the "universality" of psychological categories. Psychoanalysts assumed that the human psyche was by-and-large independent of the society within which it was formed. Society and culture impinged on the psyche, but it did not determine its fundamental geography. From its inception psychoanalysis rejected the crudest forms of cultural chauvinism, as Sally Swartz argues, it nevertheless was not immune to cultural prejudices and

colonial-derived chauvinism. While assuming that psychoanalytic concepts were "universal," deeply embedded within early psychoanalysis were many of the same colonial-derived anthropological biases that pervaded much of Western thought in the twentieth century. Much like the ancient Greeks, who thought all non-Greeks were *barbaroi* (barbarians), colonial Europe believed in the "primitivity" of the rest of the world's populations, including their "savagery," their inability to think rationally, and their racial inferiority (Swartz, 2023, pp. 8–28). The universality assumption, alongside the negative anthropological stereotypes, were reproduced within non-Western psychotherapists and psychoanalytic theorists, who studied within the major psychoanalytic institutes in the West. Thus, emerging non-Western psychoanalysts would absorb and mimic forms of psychoanalytical thought that were tainted with Eurocentrism and its underlying anthropological and ontological assumptions about the non-Western world. For Alatas, this mimicry of a wholly Eurocentric form of psychoanalytic thought created what can be called the "captive psychoanalyst."

This antagonistic opposition at the heart of early psychoanalysis, wherein the other is both included in the psychoanalytic "universals" but also excluded as being a bearer of inferior cultural differences, sets up a devastating double effect. On the one hand, psychoanalysis exported to non-Western societies ignored the cultural differences that would account for the non-universality of psychoanalytic concepts, thus choosing to perpetuate the false notion of universality, while on the other hand, psychoanalysis continued to view the "others" through the lenses of superiority, thus emphasizing the inherent differences and assumed hierarchies between cultures and civilizations. Thus, the non-Western other is psychologically the "same" yet qualitatively "different," "identical" and "non-identical." As such, the captive psychoanalyst advances an image of humanity that is simultaneously unable to reconcile fundamental differences while also claiming a lack of fundamental differences to reconcile.

Understanding psychoanalysts as being within the parameters of what Syed Hussein Alatas understood as "intellectuals," we must ask the following questions: how does this double effect influence the way psychoanalysis is practiced by the captive mind, and what kind of effects does the "captive psychoanalysis" have on the psyche of the non-Western analysand?

Being that Alatas's concept of the captive mind is both "imitative" and "uncritical," the non-Western captive psychoanalyst does not question the "universality" claims embedded within traditional psychoanalysis, nor do they relinquish the latent biases that psychoanalysis appropriated from colonial anthropology (Alatas, 1974, p. 691). On the contrary, the captive psychoanalyst's analyses subject both their analysands and their society to the irreconcilable claims of universality and inherent difference. In other words, via Occidental mimesis, the captive psychoanalyst subjects the non-Western individual and collective to the latent norms and standards inherited from colonial anthropology. Under the spell of the "universality" claim, the captive psychoanalyst continues to reintroduce and reinforce certain psychological categories that are both foreign and irrelevant for the analysand and their non-Western society, often causing ineffective diagnoses and/or deformed social analyses that fail to grasp the otherwise manifest vagaries of the

psychological issues, which only analyses sensitive to—or rooted in—the complexities of the culture could have access to. In the worst-case scenario, the imposition of psychological diagnoses influenced by colonial biases reinforces and/or imposes a sense of inadequacy, inferiority, and/or regressivity. For the captive psychoanalyst, if the psyche at its core is universal, and the psychoanalytic treatment proves to be wholly ineffective, it cannot be because it is insensitive to, or ignorant of, authentic cultural differences, it must be because the analysand resists escape from their "primitive" (non-Western) frame of mind. At this moment, the false claim of psychological "universality" as well as cultural chauvinism converge, with potentially devastating effects on the analysand. Psychoanalysis in this scenario offers no relief and can even reinforce the already internalized self-loathing instilled by colonialism.

For the captive psychotherapist, they are giving the best care possible based on the education they received from psychoanalytic training. And yet their imitative analysis remains ineffective, for they are often "not familiar with the historical and cultural background of their own societies" (Alatas, 2002, p. 152). For the non-Western analysand (and society), they are being subjected to strictures and norms that are colonial in origin, that are inherently demeaning to the other, and are mostly ignorant of the indigenous culture's impositions on the analysand's psyche. As such, in the therapy session, psychoanalysis speaks to a manufactured analysand, a false semblance of the person under analysis. It is not the person in all their authenticity who sits before the analyst. Rather, it is the person whom Eurocentric psychoanalysis has trained the captive analyst to see: the "universal man" rooted in the assumed universality of the Western man.

For Alatas, captive psychoanalysts subject their analysands and their societies to Western biases primarily because they systematically ignore psychological materials that contradict their training, especially if those materials derive from non-Western sources. Alatas writes,

> When a captor mind teaches psychology, for instance, he does not use materials from non-Western cultures though these are extremely relevant to his theme. He is usually not interested in the philosophical foundation of psychology which would make his students appreciate the cultural biases of psychology. He is not interested in the problems of the non-Western world even from the point of view of limited comparative reference. In the case of the Asian disciple, if he functions as the captor mind, he is at the same time a captive mind. (1974, p. 698)

In line with Alatas's analysis, captive psychoanalysts reproduce the same claims they learned from "captor minds." Nevertheless, captive psychoanalysts are not necessarily at fault for their captivity: "they are the instruments of a gigantic and imposing intellectual superstructure" (Alatas, 1974, p. 698). If psychoanalysis proves ineffective outside of the West, it is assumed it cannot be because it has systematically failed to enculturate; rather, it is because non-Western societies fail to escape their primitivity. Once again, the falsely assumed "universality" and the colonial-derived stereotypes and prejudices collide, resulting in a political export:

the "primitive" others are still in need of civilizing. Captor psychoanalysis confirms this falsity.

An Autonomous Psychoanalysis

While Syed Hussein Alatas suggests that the captive mind is "an instrument of the reigning ideology," he argues that a different approach to Western knowledge is possible, and this alternative approach can help develop an autonomous school of psychoanalytic knowledge (see Syed Imad Alatas, 2023). He writes,

> As I see it, the problem is not to avoid the Western world of learning but to assimilate it in a selective and constructive manner. The sciences have been developed in contemporary Western civilization. The generally valid, universal aspects of these sciences have to be separated from their particular association with Western society. To take an example from psychoanalysis, the Oedipus complex is a generally valid scientific concept, but its incidence and manifestation differ in different societies. Thus, if an Asian student studies Freudian psychoanalysis in Amsterdam he should adopt the following attitude: to learn psychoanalysis as a system; to understand its application to Western society; to distinguish critically the components of psychoanalysis, those which are universally valid and those which are derived from the cultural background of the West; to consider what aspects of psychoanalysis can be applied at home in Asia; to increase the conceptual and methodological repertoire of psychoanalysis based on the Asian setting as to make it at home and effective in Asia. (Alatas, 1974, p. 697)

For Alatas, anything less than this form of critical discernment towards Western knowledge risks the possibility that the truly universal will be foreclosed on, either because Western particularity is falsely presented as the universal, and thus is inapplicable within non-Western societies, or because some will take a reactionary stance against Western knowledge in total, and thus reject it as a whole, assuming that it is all tainted with Eurocentrism. From this reactionary logic, to entertain any of the Western sciences is to risk losing one's own indigenous culture and autonomous sciences via Western intellectual imperialism. Alatas wants to avoid both the extremes of the captive mind's *xenophilic* mimicry and the reactionary's *xenophobic* rejection, for neither are beneficial to non-Western societies. Rather, the appropriate stance to take regarding Western thought is dialectical (*Aufhaben*): one must reject those aspects that derive from particularity and preserve that which is truly universal, or at least can be applied to a particular non-Western society.

Psychoanalysis cannot be rejected flippantly as a so-called "Western invention." As Alatas writes: "ignoring a valuable contribution from the West is as negative as uncritically accepting whatever is served on the academic platter" (2002, p. 150). Rather, psychoanalysis must surrender to a two-part "decolonization" process: first, psychoanalysis must be subjected to a rigorous interrogation, from its original articulations by Breuer and Freud to their successors today, with the intention of systematically identifying and purging (when necessary) those aspects that are

solely "derived from the cultural background of the West" (Alatas, 2002, p. 150). If psychoanalysis is to be relevant to non-Western analysands, it cannot impose Western norms and values upon those who are not subject to such norms and values. Second, psychoanalysis must be made amorphous enough—without losing its critical infrastructure—to enculturate various civilizational particularities of the peoples and cultures it is meant to aid, with an understanding that such particularities are not, and cannot be made into, universals, but rather remain relative to their originating cultural context. The "original sin" of psychoanalysis, its augmentation of the Western man into the model of the "universal man," must not be made again with another people and/or civilization.[9] This inevitably means creating a new "conceptual vocabulary," a psychoanalytic vocabulary that corresponds to the psychological dynamics of the subject population, which can contribute to the production of autonomous and encultured forms of psychoanalysis (Alatas, 1974, p. 697).

Additionally, the development of novel forms of psychoanalysis within psychoanalytic institutes can foster the growth of psychoanalysis in many cultural idioms, thus contributing to its effectivity—and relatability—beyond the West. Humility in the face of global diversity, and the abandonment of the "White Man's Burden" regarding the education of the "other," are both necessary for the art and science of psychoanalysis to become truly global and truly effective outside of its originating civilization.

On a global scale, the enculturation of psychoanalysis fertilizes its own potentials as a liberating force, both socially and individually. A psychoanalytic understanding of societies and cultures from *within* their own civilizational resources, as opposed from the outside, can aid in the furtherance of psychoanalysis's effectivity, for the analyst and the analysand will "speak a common language"—a shared understanding of cultural dynamics, historical contexts, civilizational pressures and demands, etc. In essence, for Alatas, both the captive mind and the captor mind must be systematically deconstructed if psychoanalysis, in its plethora of encultured forms, will be an emancipatory force outside of the West.

Conclusion

Before psychoanalysis became conscious of its need to decolonize, Syed Hussein Alatas was already sounding the alarm. As a subject of British colonial education, Alatas's early engagements with psychoanalysis led him to believe that it too was tainted with the stain of colonialism, and when taught to colonial subjects it became a means to reinforce mental captivity, as opposed to being an emancipatory force that its Eurocentric proponents promised it to be. Throughout the decades, he argued for the construction of an autonomous social science tradition in non-Western

[9] The notion of the "universal man" is inherently patriarchal, and thus does violence to the notion of humanity in all its diversity and complexity. We must not limit our universal conceptions of humanity only to cis men of the Western world; it must also include the whole variety of humanity in all its rich diversity and complexity. However, I use this term "universal man" here to reflect the historical nature of that concept, including its patriarchy.

countries, traditions that would chart on their own developmental path, both with and distinct from Western social sciences. They would neither wholly reject nor blindly imitate the West but would rather enter a dialogue of equals regarding scientific knowledge, with the understanding that the assumed "universality" of Western thought was inherently false and imperial by nature. This pursuit of an autonomous social science tradition included psychoanalysis, as it was understood by Alatas to have a humanistic core that was universally and scientifically valid, but as it was taught, practiced, and theorized, held within it subconscious Western chauvinism, cultural particularities, and unarticulated biases. Although Alatas did not leave a blueprint as to how psychoanalysis was to be "decolonized," or how the "captive psychoanalyst" would be liberated from his false consciousness regarding his own societies and his reliance on Western ways of thinking, he did nevertheless leave behind an important conceptual compass that points us in the direction of how, and why, such a decolonization of psychoanalysis ought to be done.

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