From Eurocentrism to Epistemological Internationalism:
power, knowledge and objectivity in International Relations[*]

Abstract

The idea of a discipline called 'International Relations' conveys a notion of a field of knowledge whose scope and constituency is international – about and constructed by peoples all over the world. To date, however, the majority of literature in the discipline of IR is written by and about only some of the peoples of the world – predominantly Americans and Europeans. This paper explores methodological problems associated with the international knowledge/power nexus which must be confronted in order to overcome eurocentricity in IR – in other words, in order to 'decolonise' the discipline of International Relations. Rather than privileging marginalised perspectives on the basis of normative commitments, it is argued that critical social inquiry should retain a commitment to objectivity, taking the form of explanatory critique which exposes the flaws in dominant ideologies through providing more adequate accounts of the global historical constitution of social realities throughout the world.

None of the major fields in the theoretical physical sciences is dominated by the investigations of only two countries. Hierarchy, however, seems to be a hallmark of international politics and theory. Most of the mutually acknowledged literature has been produced by scholars from only two of more than 155 countries: the United States and Great Britain. There is, in brief, a British-American intellectual condominium.
(Holsti 1985: 102-3)

Of all the students of a social science taught in universities, those concerned with IR probably encounter the greatest degree of misunderstanding and ignorance
(Halliday 1994: 5).

To a newcomer, the idea of a discipline called 'International Relations' might convey a notion of *international* which is broader than that contained within conventional definitions of the field as the study of diplomatic relations between states, the causes of inter-state conflict, possibilities of collective security and international cooperation, important though such questions undoubtedly are. The term international could imply a field of knowledge whose scope and constituency is international – an area of social inquiry which is about and of relevance to peoples, places and conditions all over the world, constructed by peoples all over the world. The new student might then be somewhat disappointed to discover that, to date, the majority of literature in the

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discipline of IR is written by and about only some of the peoples of the world – predominantly Americans and Europeans. This was certainly the case for most of the twentieth century. Over the past couple of decades IR has opened up in various critical directions, and a number of silences and biases have come under scrutiny. In addition to critiques and alternatives elaborated from the perspectives of feminism, post-modernism, environmentalism and critical theory, IR's narrow Euro/Western-centric focus and heritage is now being exposed[1]. Jim George has characterised the discipline as having:

> an intellectual and policy agenda that, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, still resonates with cultural, political, and gendered privilege and narrowly conceived images of global reality. Its critical status, consequently, is related to a discursive regime of exclusion, silence, and intolerance that, as "International Relations", reduces a complex and turbulent world to a patterned and rigidly ordered framework of understanding, derived from a particular representation of post-Renaissance European historical experience, articulated in orthodox Anglo-American philosophical terms.
>
> (George 1994: ix)

The problem of eurocentricity in International Relations is not straightforward or easy to over-come, and different perspectives and underlying assumptions lead to different solutions. It is therefore helpful to reflect systematically on underlying questions of method in social inquiry, before embarking on the moment of substantive critique and reconstruction of a 'decolonised' non-eurocentric knowledge of the world and the international. This paper engages in such reflection, exploring methodological responses to the problem of the relationship between power and knowledge underlying IR's eurocentrism.

The problem of eurocentricity in IR is a historical outcome of the relationship between power and knowledge on a world scale. The power-knowledge nexus has received considerable scrutiny in the discipline of IR in recent decades, from critical post-positivist perspectives. To date most of the attention has focused on knowledge as a social product, and the inherent relationships between ideas, power and interests. This has been a crucially important response to the decades of positivist hegemony when knowledge, especially 'social scientific' knowledge, was seen to be neutral and impartial. Yet the problem of eurocentricity is not only about who speaks, but also what is said. It is argued here that the production of non-eurocentric IR requires a commitment to objectivity in social inquiry. The critiques of IR's positivist mainstream rehearsed over the past couple of decades have, by common consensus, rejected objectivity along with positivism. This paper outlines why we need to reclaim objectivity from its abandonment by post-positivism, in order to realise the possibility of non-eurocentric, internationalist IR knowledge.

The first section examines how and why IR's eurocentricity is a problem. It is argued that it is not enough simply to apply existing IR theories and conceptual frameworks to those regions of the world which have been hitherto ignored. Rather, it is necessary to begin a more fundamental critique of the foundational categories and histories upon which most thinking about international relations is built, and which remain inscribed in current practices of international relations. This leads to the second feature of IR's eurocentrcity – the relationship between the production of knowledge and international power inequalities. Different ways of responding methodologically to the knowledge–power–interests nexus are outlined. It is argued that rather than privileging the voices and knowledge of the oppressed and marginalised as a matter of normative principle, as many critical approaches advocate, it is necessary to retain a commitment to objectivity in social inquiry. This is a difficult path to tread, however, because recent philosophical

discussions in the discipline have given rise to a post-positivist 'common-sense' view that objectivity entails value-free neutrality. The third section therefore moves to the level of philosophical underlabouring, to qualify and clarify the particular, critical realist notion of objectivity defended here. The implication of this notion of objectivity can be summarised as follows: to the extent that dominant – including eurocentric – understandings of the world (the knowledge produced and propagated by the powerful) are flawed and ideological, a critique of ruling ideologies requires providing a more adequate account of the world. By providing better accounts of the nature and production of social phenomena which expose the flaws in dominant ideologies, objective social inquiry has an inherent tendency to be critical. The implication of this, in even simpler terms, is as follows: it is not necessary to be non-European, to produce non-Eurocentric knowledge. Eurocentric accounts of international relations are flawed not because they are produced by Europeans, but because they are historically inaccurate. It is therefore just as much (even more so!) the responsibility of European scholars, as it is of non-European scholars, to embark on the urgent project of 'decolonising' the discipline of IR, by providing more adequate accounts of the making of the modern world.

To defend a commitment to objectivity in social inquiry is not to ignore the various social and material constraints that undermine such a possibility, however. The final section therefore considers how social factors constrain the production of objective knowledge about international relations. It is vital to be aware of and sensitive to potential biases and prejudices affecting the production of knowledge which arise from the researcher's position in society and location in the world. However the commitment to objectivity defended here entails that we are not condemned to remain forever trapped in a perspective determined by our social position; rather, all scholars have a responsibility to seek to overcome such biases as far as possible, in the quest for more adequate accounts of social phenomena. This necessarily requires historical knowledge. The task of overcoming the biases of historical ignorance is significant and cannot be underestimated.

IR : AN ANGLO-AMERICAN SOCIAL SCIENCE

It is now fairly widely acknowledged that the modern discipline of International Relations, institutionalised in the early years of the twentieth century, is largely an Anglo-American social science[2]. What is perhaps less widely acknowledged is how and why this could be a problem[3]. IR's narrowness is manifest in at least three different respects.

In its focus, the mainstream of IR has been concerned predominantly with relations between and issues of concern to the great powers, the hegemons, the large and powerful in the global political economy – in short, the West. This is apparent for example when we consider the discipline's treatment of war and conflict. The discipline of IR has centrally concerned with the problems of war and peace, international order and stability. Yet it is clear that the conception of what constitutes 'war' as far as IR is concerned is contained within certain limits. While centrally concerned with two world wars, IR has paid scant attention to the devastating wars which took place during the preceding decades of the mid 1880s-1914 – the wars of colonial conquest in Africa, during which FIGS OF AFRICAN DEATHS; or the colonial origins of many practices of modern war (see Lindqvist 2002). IR has paid little attention to the role of Europe's colonies during two world wars, despite the major reliance of European powers on their colonies in financial, material and human terms. Apart from the Vietnam war, IR has paid little serious attention to the anti-colonial wars fought for independence, and Europe's brutal efforts to crush these anti-colonial resistances[4]. With some notable exceptions (Klare, Kolko, Chomsky and Herman, Mamdani, Stokes) IR has paid insufficient attention to the systematic strategy of counter-insurgency throughout the Third World during the Cold War. Finally, while devoting considerable attention to the Balkan wars of the 1990s,

sustained analyses of the major wars in Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Chad, the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone have been glaring in their absence. It would appear, certainly when it was founded, that IR was only concerned about wars between European powers; this narrow range of concern had been unwittingly reproduced over decades.

In its intellectual heritage, the acknowledged disciplinary 'canon' of modern IR consists of the European classical thinkers – Thucydides, Machiavelli, Bodin, Grotius, Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, and so on[5]. The more recent critical IR scholarship has not improved on this omission to any significant extent. Radical critical theorists in IR have turned to Gramsci, Marcuse, Adorno, Habermas, and so on, in order to develop their insights into questions of resistance and emancipation, the important relationship between theory and practice and the emancipatory intent of critical theory. Is it not strange, therefore, that they have not also turned to the considerable works of radical theorists who have been central to historical emancipatory struggles in the 'Third World' – Amílcar Cabral, Samora Machel, Kwame Nkrumah, Frantz Fanon and so on[6]. Mattelart has observed:

> the same kind of hegemony exercised by Marxist theoreticians of the central countries may be observed… [in ignoring] the fundamental contribution to revolutionary theory and practice by struggling peoples in peripheral countries. For example, we may cite Jose Martí, a contemporary of Lenin, without whom it would be difficult to understand the uniqueness of the Cuban Revolution. Another example would be that of the Peruvian, José Carlos Mariategui, a contemporary of Gramsci, who remains relatively unknown to marxists in the central counties, as is the case with numerous other militant theoreticians from Africa and Asia. Once again, we should point out the urgent need to begin questioning the law of unequal exchange, operating even within the revolutionary camp. (Mattelart 1979: 39).

In terms of knowledge production, for much of the twentieth century and into the twenty first the field of IR has been dominated by North American and European scholars.

The implications of eurocentric biases in the production of historical and theoretical knowledge have been the subject of considerable debate for some time in anthropology, history, geography, development studies, the study of Africa and of Asia, and social science in general[7]. Yet, until recently, such debates have had little impact on the discipline of IR. This is surprising given that IR is not lacking in self-reflection. A number of surveys, histories and genealogies of developments and debates in the discipline have been produced in recent years[8]. Such accounts routinely observe that IR was formally established in the aftermath of the first world war, often pin-pointing the moment to the establishment of the first Chair in International Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth in 1919. This was at the height of imperialism, when the European powers were occupying and controlling vast areas of the world through direct colonial rule. At this time and during the preceding centuries from which IR draws its heritage, a whole set of profoundly ideological and racist notions were held by the colonisers about the colonized peoples, lands and histories[9]. As the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has commented, "In their racist books and in their colonial and bourgeois schools were the poetic and intellectual exultation of our humiliation and degradation. The best minds of Europe, Hume, Carlyle, Gustav Lebon, Froude, Hegel abetted in these cultural falsehoods. They sang of us as a people without history, and without meaningful values." (1981: 102, cf Eze 1997). If a discipline was born in such a historical context, and in the heartlands of colonial imperialism, then ideological assumptions are likely to have been embedded in early IR thought and practice. The formerly held notions of civilised and uncivilised, savage, barbarian and backward peoples were not merely racist views, they were integral to doctrines and practices of international relations, underlying

the normative and legal rationale for doctrines and practices of war, conquest, property, the definition of statehood and sovereignty. While few today would speak of uncivilised peoples, the concepts and practices which these racist ideologies legitimised remain central to contemporary international relations[10]. As Anghie (1999: 75-6) observes,

> It is doubtful whether a discipline whose fundamental concepts, "sovereignty" and "law", had been so explicitly and clearly formulated in ways that embodied distinctions and discriminations that furthered colonialism could be readily reformed by the simple expedient of excising or reformulating the offending terminology. [11]

It is therefore imperative to examine critically the effect of this historical context on the understanding of international relations and history that emerged. Yet most recent surveys of twentieth century IR have little to say about the implications for the discipline of one of the most profoundly important historical processes of that century – the political liberation from colonial rule of formerly colonised peoples[12]. IR has generally accommodated this historical process in terms of the expansion of international society. A more fundamental questioning of core assumptions about world history and the central conceptual tools of IR is rarely deemed necessary.

BRINGING THE REST OF THE WORLD IN

Various responses to the problem of IR's eurocentricity are possible. The first is to broaden the scope of enquiry, bringing hitherto ignored regions and peoples into central focus. However, this exercise can reveal 'Concepts that do not fit', as Stephanie Neuman discovered in her teaching about Third World security:

> To the surprise of both the students and myself, however, theory has never been borne out by events in the Third World. … Even central concepts such as anarchy, the state, sovereignty, rational choice, alliance, and the international system are troublesome when applied to the Third World. Most perplexing, however, have been the unstated normative and empirically unsubstantiated assumptions that underlie much of what is written in the field. … mainstream IR Theory – (classical) realism, neorealism, and neoliberalism – is essentially Eurocentric theory, originating largely in the United States and founded, almost exclusively, on what happens or happened in the West.

> (Neuman 1998: 2).

Theoretical concepts derived from analysis of social forms and change in one part of the world cannot simply be transferred unproblematically to other parts of the world. To the extent that social conditions and processes have developed differently in different parts of the world, specific conceptual terminology and bodies of theory developed from the study of European history cannot simply be applied to encompass the rest of the world. The problem of orthodox IR's eurocentricity cannot be solved by simply stretching the existing body of knowledge to a broader field of application.

The decolonisation of IR requires recognition that the histories of non-western peoples and regions constitute important objects of inquiry in their own right; they are not just an extended field for the further application of existing IR theory. But what are the implications for the existing body of IR knowledge of the fact that such 'other' histories have for the most part been ignored? If it is assumed that the international system as such consists of an international society of states, and that the nature of relations between states are not in themselves affected by the histories of or conditions within particular

states, then the answer is: not much. Existing theories about the international system, international society, international law, sovereignty, security, state formation and so on remain in place; what needs to be addressed is the effects of the inclusion of a significant number of new states, most of which are smaller and weaker than the original members of international society[13].

This simplistic and ahistorical understanding of what constitutes *international* is in part an extension of 19th century legal positivism which explicitly confined membership of 'international society' to the 'civilised' family of European states (Anghie 1999, 2002). Its routine reproduction derives from an unthinking empiricist reflection of only the surface forms of the way the world appears today. A more historically specific understanding of the notion 'international' refers to a causal relation. Rather than defining international in terms of empirical forms, processes or transactions between or across observable units (states) the notion can refer to the conditions of possibility, the production and reproduction of social conditions and processes in any particular place. This causal understanding of the international (or the global) means that inquiry into social conditions and processes anywhere must include examination of their global constitution – the specific ways and extent to which their historical production and current conditions of possibility and reproduction are extended in time and space[14]. How or whether or not particular social conditions are internationally or globally constituted cannot be decided in advance, but can only be discovered through substantive enquiry; theoretical terminology resulting from concrete historical inquiry will then reflect the globally constituted or otherwise nature of those conditions and processes. To the extent that the existing body of IR knowledge, in terms of its understanding of history and its resulting concepts and theories, has ignored or abused the histories of 'the rest' of the world, it has thereby ignored or distorted important elements of the history and constitution of the *West*, let alone that of non-Western peoples and places. In this respect such knowledge is already more fundamentally flawed: 'the previously excluded histories do not only present new data to be integrated into the larger narrative; they raise questions about the validity of that narrative itself' (Feierman 1993: 169).

The narrow blinkers of the IR mainstream cannot simply be the result of oversight or a basic lack of interest in the rest of the world[15], but arise from the internationally and historically structured relationship between power and knowledge. This suggests a second response which entails addressing who produces dominant forms of knowledge, and whose interests such knowledge serves. Robert Cox's seminal article (1981) pointed out that theories are always *for* someone and *for* some purpose. Knowledge is always produced from a particular standpoint in society, time and space, with a particular perspective; different forms of knowledge serve the interests of differently-situated groups in societies; this is true at all scales, local and global (Cox 1981: 128). Cox's intervention draws attention to questions of knowledge as socially produced, questions of knowledge with respect to its subjects – who writes, who speaks, who claims to know, whose interests are served, whose perspectives are expressed.

Recognition that ideas can reflect the interests of those who produce them, and that competing accounts exist, suggests that all knowledge will be 'partisan and contentious'. In considering what we mean by international relations, 'It follows that having started with the conventional account, we will have to examine its hidden agenda before moving to alternative definitions, which, of course, will in turn have their own hidden agendas.' (Brown 2001: 3). All accounts, being articulated from some point in time and space and thus representing some particular perspective, have 'their own hidden agendas'. Thus one solution is to advocate a pluralist approach which gives space to as many perspectives as possible:

One of the reasons why International Relations is an interesting field of study is because it attempts to produce theory on the widest canvas available to us – not simply a theory of politics in one country or continent, but a theory of global relations. This means any worthwhile theory of international relations is going to have to be able to work with a multiplicity of cultures, with the aim of providing an account of the world that is not ethnocentric. What this involves in practice is the ability to keep in play a number of competing conceptions of how things are. We have to understand that politics often seems very different in the Middle East to the way it seems in Western Europe or Latin America. Even within these broad cultures there are significant differences that block understanding.
(Brown 2001: 13).

Is this enough? Is the problem a question of multiple inter-cultural perspectives and understandings? If certain ideas are dominant because they are the ideas of the most powerful, can the perspectives of the powerful and the less powerful simply be put side by side?

Rather than keeping in play as many perspectives as possible, an alternative response to the question of whose knowledge claims are privileged is to address explicitly the problem of power. Concern with the power/knowledge nexus is central to various approaches in IR which fall under the label 'critical'. Some advocate that the choice of which perspective is privileged is actually a normative commitment. Because all theory is 'for someone and for some purpose', objectivity is not possible. Critical re-appraisals of IR have stemmed from different strands of post-positivist thought[16], and share a rejection of the positivist orthodoxy's posture of *neutrality*. In doing so the notion of objectivity and of science itself is usually also rejected. Indeed, the terms 'neutral', 'objective' and 'scientific' are often treated as more-or-less equivalent[17] and simultaneously rejected, and perspectives are seen inherently to involve normative commitments. Thus behind the façade of neutrality the dominant account's 'hidden normative content' tacitly sides with the interests of the powerful, in technical control and domination (Neufeld 1995: 96-106). Proponents of critical IR argue that we should be explicit about our normative commitments. If, recognising the enormous inequalities in the world today, we are in favour of emancipatory change and support the struggles of the oppressed then we should be explicit, stating this up front; these values should guide our social inquiry. A critical approach to the study of international relations which counters the exercise of power therefore entails explicitly siding with the oppressed and excluded, and an explicit commitment to change[18]:

> one of the hallmarks of critical interpretative theory is a very pronounced normative emphasis which, it is held, is inextricably entwined with the task of explanation and which is also precisely the point most obviously ignored or down-played by the mainstream. Thus central to critical interpretative theory is the emphasis on a knowledge-interests nexus which, it argues, needs to be radicalised in the pursuit of emancipatory rather than technical interests.
> (Rengger and Hoffman 1992: 133)

Critical IPE scholars have turned to the work of Gramsci because of the explicit ethical commitments of his approach:

> Gramsci does not believe that adherence to any 'scientific' method can assure 'objectivity'. As far as he is concerned, real science always involves the viewpoint of human beings in specific cultural contexts. … *An inquirer's real desire to change something is the guarantee of her honest search for truth, the source of her 'objectivity'*.
> (Augelli and Murphy 1997: 16, emphasis added).

> Thus by linking the theory of knowledge production to a theory of identity and interests, Gramsci was able to show how, at least in this sense theory is always for someone and for some purpose.
> (Gill 1991: 56).

Roger Tooze and Craig Murphy (1996) have addressed the nexus between global power and the production of knowledge in IR in this way, in their examination of IR's exclusion of issues of global poverty and the perspectives of the poor. In order to counter the hegemonic exclusion of the poor from IR knowledge, they advocate that the poor must be listened to, that IR must include the specific knowledge of the poor.

Critical attention to the relation between who speaks and what is said, in a context of unequal power relations, thus suggests that in order to counter hegemonic Western-centric discourses, we should seek the authentic, dissident voice of the marginalised, 'The Other', which is routinely silenced and excluded from the discourse of the powerful. We must problematise and deconstruct the universalising, totalising, Western, orthodox discourse of modernity, and in so doing provide 'an 'ethical space' for the Other to speak with its own cultural specificity', and 'create a space for those whose experiences have been marginalized and served simply as an object of theory to act as active subjects of political economic research' (Keyman 1995: 71, 94).

Embedded in the logic of this argument is an unspoken assumption that only 'the marginalised' or 'the indigenous' can have a true, authentic claim to knowledge – only women can speak about women, only Africans can produce adequate or authentic knowledge about Africa, and so on. This logic results from addressing the nexus between power and knowledge in International Relations by focusing only on the subjective aspects of knowledge and ideas – the relation between ideas and their author. The notion of *truth*[19] – in terms of a relation between an idea and its object, what it is about – is conflated with or reduced to (or abandoned and replaced by) the question of who produces the knowledge. The criteria for privileging a specific form of knowledge or perspective are then seen to derive from the status of the person or group whose knowledge it is – their knowledge is to be privileged because of their status as oppressed, marginalised, excluded, poor; as subaltern, African, indigenous, female, and so on.

In rejecting the possibility of objectivity in social inquiry, many post-positivist critiques replace truth with political and normative commitments as the criterion for choosing between competing perspectives[20]. However this solution to the knowledge/power nexus tends to lose sight of the 'aboutness' of ideas[21] – the relationship between ideas and their *objects* (what ideas are about); and focuses only on who produces knowledge. But the question of who speaks is not the same as, and does not wholly determine, the question of what is said. A critique of a dominant discourse must therefore ultimately focus not only on who produces it but also on *why it is wrong* – not just what is wrong with who does the speaking (that they are powerful), but what is wrong with what is said *about the world* (how it is flawed). These two questions can be causally related but they are not reducible nor mutually determining. Overcoming eurocentricity in IR requires a commitment to objectivity in social inquiry, to providing more adequate accounts of the world, in addition to normative solidarity with the oppressed. However the widespread consensus of hostility to the notion of objectivity among post-positivist critics in IR means that defending objectivity requires careful qualification. The next section attempts such qualification at the level of philosophical underlabouring.

TOWARDS OBJECTIVE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL INQUIRY: SOCIAL SCIENCE AS EXPLANATORY CRITIQUE

The rejection of positivism which is a central element of recent critiques of mainstream IR has tended to extend to rejection of the notion and possibility of science itself. Science, often written in quotation marks 'science', is seen as inherently part of the project of Enlightenment-modernity, a mode of technical instrumental knowledge which is necessarily a means of control and domination of both society and nature[22]. An important component of the critique of the positivist orthodoxy is exposure of its coincidence with the interests of the powerful. Dominant ideas and methods which rest on claims of value-free scientificity and neutrality are shown to mask or legitimise the interests of the powerful and the exercise of power and domination. The very claim to be able to produce value-free, neutral scientific truth is rejected in a world of inherently conflicting interests. Instead, the 'illusion of objectivism must be replaced with the recognition that knowledge is always constituted in reflection of interests' (Ashley 1981: 207).

There are two kinds of conflation which are embedded within this critical stance. The first conflates the *contents* of natural scientific knowledge with the uses to which it is put in society. Much scientific knowledge, in both natural and social sciences, has indeed been produced by and in the explicit interests of the powerful, an integral part of the construction and maintenance of unequal and oppressive social orders, and the administration of accumulation and imperialism. But it is important not to conflate the contents of knowledge with its social conditions of production and use. When scientific knowledge is developed for and utilised in the service of oppression or commercial profit as opposed to the increased satisfaction of human needs, the oppression results from social forces, not from the cognitive properties of scientific knowledge[23]:

> Even assuming all the results of a research project are objectively true, the area chosen for investigation may be determined by contentious ideological assumptions or practical interests. Thus it is likely that drug companies have concentrated on artificially synthesized drugs to the detriment of research into those occurring naturally in plants; and it is certain that military might and commercial profit are the chief determinants of which secrets of nature get uncovered. In a world where science was funded with a view to satisfying human needs and conserving planetary resources, quite different discoveries might be made – neither more or less objective than the findings of modern science, but useful for different purposes.
> (Collier 1994: 180; see also Collier 1979).

The second conflation reduces scientific method to a positivist approach, equating positivist social science with social science *per se* with technical instrumentality. It is often asserted that the problem with positivist IR is that it applies the method of natural sciences or 'the scientific method' to the study of social phenomena[24]. This is a mischaracterisation of the real nature of the problem, which is that positivism first misunderstands the method of natural science, and then applies these misunderstood methodological principles to the study of social phenomena (Bhaskar 1997). Recognition of this enables us to retrieve the *possibility* of a particular form of social inquiry which can be called scientific or objective from abandonment along with positivism[25].

A positivist understanding of scientific inquiry rests on a Humean notion of cause as constant conjunction between empirical variables or events, and explanation as the discovery of empirical regularities and correlations. When such empirical regularities are discovered they can be used to make predictions. This assumes an empiricist ontology and epistemology: the world consists only of that which is available to direct experience,

and the only source of knowledge is through direct sensory experience. Critiques of positivism are correct to question these assumptions about knowledge and the world, but they are not correct in equating this with scientific method. Positivism consists of philosophers' misunderstanding of the actual practice of natural science. The practice of experiment is central to the method of some natural sciences. A scientific experiment involves establishing closure: creating an artificial environment where the external and internal conditions are controlled so as to isolate particular features and mechanisms. This enables scientists to discover about aspects of reality which are not empirical : the causal properties and necessary ways-of-operating of specific mechanisms in nature which are real because they have the capacity to bring about change, given appropriate conditions and inputs, but are not empirical – they cannot be seen, only the effects of their operation can be seen. This non-positivist, philosophical realist theory of science, epistemology and ontology is very different from the positivist misunderstanding of scientific method and explanation. Scientific theories and the discovery of natural laws refer to real properties and causal powers of structured entities, not empirical events and regularities (Bhaskar 1997).

What are the implications of this non-positivist theory of science for social inquiry? The fact of human reflexivity rules out the possibility of experiment and prediction in social inquiry, because it is impossible to establish closure in the social world[26]. Ideas are causally efficacious: through informing social action ideas have causal efficacy in co-determining or influencing what actually happens, including (usually as an unintended outcome) the reproduction of social relations. This means that ideas are part of the object of social inquiry, as is fore-grounded by all variants of so-called reflexive approaches in International Relations (Keohane 1988). When we study society part of what we study includes the ideas that are held in that society. But we also study other aspects of society which are irreducible to ideas or individuals – real but non-empirical structures of social relations, historically-specific socially-produced material conditions, and so on.

This non-positivist theory of knowledge and the world gives rise to a notion of objectivity which does not entail the positivist commitment to value-free neutrality. Philosophical realism holds that the world consists of natural and social objects or entities which exist and have particular properties and causal powers independently of what, if anything, is known about them[27]. Knowledge about different aspects of the material and social world can be non-existent, partial, more or less adequate, more or less right or wrong. This informs a notion of objectivity which refers to what is the case, regardless of what is thought or believed to be the case:

> The first and central use of the word "objectivity" is to refer to what is true independently of any subject judging it to be true. To say that it is an objective fact that the Earth is the third planet from the Sun is to say that this is so whether or not anyone knows or believes it, or even is able to formulate the statement. To say that kindness is an objective value is to say that it is a value, whether or not anyone judges it to be a value; it would be a value even if the whole of society regarded it as a culpable weakness and it was only practised shamefacedly as a private foible. (Collier 2003: 134-5).

This notion of objectivity does not entail a belief that human beings can acquire absolute truth and certain knowledge about either social or natural phenomena. It is possible to acknowledge that knowledge is always inherently fallible and socially constructed while retaining a notion of the objective reality which ideas are about. This allows commitment to judgemental rationality – the possibility of judging between different ideas on the basis of their relative adequacy, in terms of their relation to objective reality[28]. In social inquiry objectivity does not imply some form of external position of independence 'outside' society[29]. All knowledge is socially produced; but all knowledge is also *about*

something which exists independently of the knowledge about it. (This is the case even for knowledge about ideas).

The 'common-sense' view pervading recent discussions of epistemology, ontology and methodology in IR asserts that objectivity implies value-free neutrality. However, objective social inquiry has an inherent tendency to be critical, in various senses. To the extent that objective knowledge provides a better and more adequate account of reality than other ideas, such knowledge is inherently critical (implicitly or explicitly) of those ideas[30]. In other words critical social inquiry does not (or not only) manifest its 'criticalness' through self-claimed labels of being critical or siding with the oppressed, but through the substantive critique of prevailing ideas. Objective social knowledge constitutes a specific form of criticism: explanatory critique. The critique of dominant ideas or ideologies is elaborated through providing a more adequate explanation of aspects of the world, and in so doing exposing what is wrong with the dominant ideology. This may also entail revealing the social conditions which give rise to ideologies, thus exposing the necessary and causal relation between particular social relations and particular ideological conceptions.

In societies which are constituted by unequal structures of social relations giving rise to unequal power and conflicting interests, the reproduction of those structured relations is in the interests of the powerful, whereas transformation of existing structured relations is in the interests of the weak. Because ideas inform social action they are casually efficacious either in securing the reproduction of existing social relations (usually as an unintended consequence of social practice), or in informing social action aimed at transforming social relations. This is why ideas cannot be 'neutral'. Ideas which provide a misrepresentation of the nature of society, the causes of unequal social conditions, and the conflicting interests of the weak and powerful, will tend to help secure the reproduction of prevailing social relations. Ideas which provide a more adequate account of the way society is structured and how structured social relations produce concrete conditions of inequality and exploitation can potentially inform efforts to change those social relations. In this sense, ideas which are false are ideological and, in serving to promote the reproduction of the status quo and avoid attempts at radical change, are in the interests of the powerful. An account which is objective will contradict ideological ideas, implicitly or explicitly criticising them for their false or flawed accounts of reality. The criticism here arises not, or not only, from pointing out the coincidence between ideologies and the interests of the powerful, nor from a prior normative stance of solidarity with the oppressed, but from exposing the flaws in dominant ideologies through a more adequate account of the nature and causes of social conditions[31].

A normative commitment to the oppressed must entail a commitment to truth and objectivity, because true ideas are in the interest of the oppressed, false ideas are in the interest of the oppressors. In other words, the best way to declare solidarity with the oppressed is to declare one's commitment to objective inquiry[32]. As Nzongola-Ntalaja (1986: 10) has put it:

> It is a question of whether one analyses society from the standpoint of the dominant groups, who have a vested interest in mystifying the way society works, or from the standpoint of ordinary people, who have nothing to lose from truthful analyses of their predicament.

The philosophical realist theory of science, objectivity and explanatory critique thus provides an alternative response to the relationship between knowledge and power. Instead of choosing perspectives on the basis of our ethical commitment to the cause of the oppressed and to emancipatory social change, we should choose between contending ideas on the basis of which provides a better account of objective social reality. This will

inherently provide a critique of the ideologies which, by virtue of their flawed account of the social world, serve the interests of the powerful.

Exemplars of explanatory critique in International Relations are provided in the work of scholars such as Siba Grovogui, James Gathii, Anthony Anghie, Bhupinder Chimni, Jacques Depelchin, Hilbourne Watson, Robert Vitalis, Sankaran Krishna, Michel-Rolph Trouillot [33]. Their work provides critiques of central categories, theories and discourses in the theory and practice of IR and narratives of world history, including assumptions about sovereignty, international society, international law, global governance, the nature of the state. They expose the ideological and racialised nature of central aspects of IR through a critical examination of both the long historical trajectory of imperial ideologies regarding colonized peoples, and the actual practices of colonialism and decolonisation in the constitution of international orders and local social conditions. Their work identifies the flaws in current ideas by revealing how they systematically misrepresent or ignore the actual history of social change in Africa, the Caribbean and other regions of the Third World, both past and present – during both colonial and neo-colonial periods of the imperial world order. Their work reveals how racism, violence, exploitation and dispossession, colonialism and neo-colonialism have been central to the making of contemporary international order and contemporary doctrines of international law, sovereignty and rights, and how such themes are glaring in their absence from histories and theories of international relations and international history.

Objective social knowledge which accurately depicts and explains social reality has these qualities by virtue of its relation to its object, not its subject. As Collier argues, "The science/ideology distinction is an epistemological one, not a social one." (Collier 1979: 60). So, for example, in the work of Grovogui, Gathii and Depelchin, the general perspective and knowledge of conditions in and the history of Africa might be due largely to the African social origins of the authors. However the judgement that their accounts are superior to those of mainstream IR rests not on the fact that the authors are African, but on the greater adequacy of their accounts with respect to the actual historical and contemporary production of conditions and change in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World. The criteria for choosing their accounts over others derives from the relation between the ideas and their objects (what they are about), not from the relation between the ideas and their subjects (who produced them). It is vital to retain explicitly some commitment to objectivity in social inquiry, to the notion that the proper criterion for judging ideas about the world lies in *what they say about the world*, not *whose ideas they are*.

A fundamental problem which underlies the origin and reproduction of IR's eurocentricity is the overwhelming dominance of ideas produced in and by the west, and the wilful and determined silencing of the voices and histories of the colonised. But the result of this fundamental problem is flawed knowledge *about the world*. Eurocentricity is therefore a dual problem concerning both the authors and the content of knowledge, and cannot be resolved through normative commitments alone. It is not only the voices of the colonised, but the histories of colonialism, which have been glaring in their absence from the discipline of International Relations.

Overcoming eurocentricity therefore requires not only concerted effort from the centre to create space and listen to hitherto marginalised voices, but also commitment to correcting the flaws in prevailing knowledge – and it is not only 'the Other' who can and should elaborate this critique. A vitally important implication of objectivity is that it is the responsibility of European and American, just as much as non-American or non-European scholars, to decolonise IR. The importance of objectivity in social inquiry defended here can perhaps be seen as a form of epistemological internationalism. It is not necessary to be African to attempt to tell a more accurate account of the history of

Europe's role in the making of the contemporary Africa and the rest of the world, for example, or to write counter-histories of 'the expansion of international society' which detail the systematic barbarity of so-called Western civilisation. It is not necessary to have been colonised to recognise and document the violence, racism, genocide and dispossession which have characterised European expansion over five hundred years.

A European writing an objective account of European history would discuss, for example, the profits reaped from three centuries of transatlantic slave trade and slaver production; the international significance of the Haitian revolution[34]; the millions killed during two decades of European conquest of virtually the entire continent of Africa; the structural impoverishment of the rural majority of African peoples resulting from provisioning Europe's factories with rubber, cotton, palm oil, sisal, copper; the hundreds of thousands of Africans and Asians who fought and died for Europe during two 'World Wars'; the concentration camps and torture used by the British to suppress the Mau Mau resistance movement in colonial Kenya in the 1950s, when the use of such methods in Europe were deemed 'crimes against humanity'; and so on. These objective historical facts are absent from the historical narratives and conceptual schema of International Relations. As Trouillot has put it, the themes of racism, slavery and colonialism suffer 'relegation to an historical backburner' :

> In spite of their importance in the formation of what we now call the West, in spite of sudden outbursts of interest as in the United States in the early 1970s, none of these themes has ever become a central concern of the historiographic tradition in a Western country. In fact, each of them, in turn, experienced repeated periods of silence of unequal duration and intensity in Spain, France, Britain, Portugal, The Netherlands, and the United States.
> (Trouillot 1995: 98)

The absence of these historical processes and facts from the discipline of IR is not a problem of inter-cultural dialogue, conversation and mutual empathy. European scholars of IR should not have to wait until space is created for the voices of the marginalised (colonised), before providing their own critiques of eurocentric IR through offering a more historically accurate account of their own international relations.

To retain a commitment to the possibility of objective social inquiry is to be committed to finding out how things really are, and not only ever producing knowledge which is determined by its subject, who is producing it. But this is not to disregard the very real difficulties in producing such knowledge. Knowledge is of course always produced by particular people in particular social contexts. Social contexts impinge in various ways on the practice of social inquiry, potentially undermining the possibility of objective knowledge: critique 'is part of the very process it describes, and so subject to the same possibilities of unreflected determination and historical supercession it situates. Hence continuing self-reflexive auto-critique is the *sine qua non* of any critical explanatory theory' (Bhaskar 1986: 210). The final section reflects on some of the actual constraints which undermine the realisation of the possibility of objective international social inquiry.

ACTUAL CONSTRAINTS ON THE CONDUCT OF SOCIAL INQUIRY

The possibility of objective social inquiry in the form of explanatory critique has been defended through philosophical argument about the basic nature of the world and of knowledge (ontology and epistemology). In practice, however, there will always be various constraints which undermine or condition the realisation of this possibility. This is because producing knowledge is a social practice which is not purely cognitive, and is

thus subject to a range of non-cognitive as well as cognitive determinations or influences:

> social science always only happens in a context which is at once always understood, preconceptualised, and codetermined by non-cognitive factors too. So that, on this stance, social theory appears, at its best, in the form of *conditioned critique*. As critique, it presupposes and engages with those preconceptualisations; as conditioned, it is subject in its genesis, reception and effect, to extra-scientific, extra-cognitive and non-ideational, as well as scientific, cognitive and ideational, determinations (whose critical understanding is itself part of the business of theory). This is of course an implication of historical *materialism*.
> (Bhaskar 1986: 170).

Different kinds of constraint can be distinguished analytically (in practice such constraints occur simultaneously or in combination). Like any social practice, the activity of producing knowledge is simultaneously a social and a material practice, subject to both social and material determinations and constraints. The discussion here focuses mainly on the social factors constraining the production of objective knowledge. The significance for knowledge production of the enormous international inequalities in material conditions is a very important area of inquiry, but cannot be included within the scope of the current discussion.

What kinds of social factors might constrain the process of social inquiry into international relations? One set of constraints arise from the ways in which our location in society influences what we know about society. The kind of objective knowledge being defended here is that which provides a more adequate account of the social world, and, in doing so, provides an implicit or explicit critique of prevailing ideas (ideologies) which misrepresent the social world. Although considerable debate within and between social sciences is conducted primarily at the level of theory or method – for example, the so-called 'inter-paradigm debates' in International Relations – where disagreements really matter are ultimately over how we understand and explain concrete events and conditions, and processes of change or lack of change. Here historical knowledge is crucial. Ideologies which misrepresent the world in various ways, and as such are factually wrong, are parasitic for their acceptance on ignorance of what actually is the case. This might sound very simplistic; but how many people are really very well informed about the history and current detail of social conditions in their own country or region – including, very importantly, the international or global constitution of their own history – let alone the histories of 'other places'?[35]. There is nothing straightforward or easy about becoming well informed about concrete histories. Such an enterprise takes time; and for those unfortunate enough only to speak English, probably requires mastering a different language in the process (which, for Anglophones studying African histories and realities, for example, will probably still only be the colonial European language). We should therefore heed Engels' observation made in the nineteenth century:

> The demonstration of the materialist conception even upon a single historical example was a scientific task requiring years of quiet research, for it is evident that mere empty talk can achieve nothing in this context and that only an abundance of critically examined historical material which has been completely mastered can make it possible to solve such a problem.
> (Engels 1859: 221)

To have 'years of quiet research' seems a luxury today in the light of competing demands on our time from teaching, the compulsion to publish and keep abreast of disciplinary debates, not to mention family life. We should therefore also heed the advice

of Aijaz Ahmad: 'the ground reality is that there is no alternative to picking up small chunks and doing them well' (1997: 59-60). Recognising the limits of our knowledge of substantive histories, and attempting to overcome them bit by bit, is surely always better than a false confidence in our authority deriving from lack of awareness of how little we know about the world.

These constraints are relevant in all cases regardless of whether the researcher is examining their own or another society. What more specific problems arise when studying societies other than those we come from? What about for example a European IR scholar doing research about Africa – or an African scholar doing research about Europe?[36] Such questions are especially pertinent to International Relations. Given the basic importance of knowing about a place, its peoples and history, it is arguably likely that local intellectuals might be better informed about their own particular people, country or region than foreigners, especially where the question of language is concerned. There is nothing intrinsic about this however; and of course nationality / place of origin are not the only social influences on what we know. Our class position and gender are especially significant in influencing our general outlook, 'common-sense' understandings, core assumptions about the world, and what we know about our own society through direct experience. A variety of different social factors will combine to influence and condition the perspective of a particular researcher and thus potentially influence the knowledge they produce.

However, initial influences deriving from our social position (in a particular society and in the world), once recognised, can be countered. Social position influences but does not determine the production of knowledge. We are not trapped forever to only produce the viewpoint consistent with our particular social origin or location. A commitment to objectivity in social inquiry, or what I have called 'epistemological internationalism', implies 'attempts to escape from the bias of one's own subjectivity and one's own historical place'" (Collier 2003: 137). A careful scholar from any part of the world, when studying a society other than their own, must ensure they do not assume that theoretical categories deriving from some particular historically specific process of social change can automatically be applied to the analysis of a different society with its own history; still less should the categories referring to historically specific social forms developed in one society be used as a norm with which to compare and, implicitly or explicitly, evaluate historically specific social forms of another society. Yet these are standard methodological procedures in Western social inquiry. The researcher should endeavour to find out as much as possible about the historical production and current conditions in that society from a variety of sources – by consulting people in that society, by reading literature of that society, local newspapers, and, importantly of course, by reading work produced by that society's intellectuals. This seems so obvious as not to be worth mentioning; yet it is surprising, for example, how many Western Africanist scholars appear to pay little attention to the work of African intellectuals.. Mahmood Mamdani has criticised:

> Eurocentrism … has a tendency to view its object as lacking in a capacity to comprehend their own history as a step in taking the initiative to making it. While reading some of the better known Africanist works during a teaching job in the US in 1989, I was struck by how little attempt most Africanists made to read African intellectuals. For I had always taken it for granted that, should I want to study North American society, I would approach it through its own intelligentsia, through their writings, their self-reflection. Matters are different with the Africanist who tends to approach Africa as one would a zoo. For the collectivity of animals, no matter how interesting and intricate its internal organisation, has no capacity for self-reflection and self-transformation! In this sense, Eurocentrism

mutilates the experience of both the West and of the rest, mythologizing the former and caricaturing the latter.
(Mamdani 1995: 609).

Similar comments have been made by numerous African scholars. Paul Zeleza has observed that

the marginality of African knowledge is evident even in scholarly communication networks that call themselves Africanist. Overseen by gatekeepers located in well-endowed universities, the Africanist intellectual system, which is firmly rooted in a Western epistemological order and an academic culture driven by a ruthless ethos of 'publish or perish', and consisting of multinational publishing houses, university presses, journals, peer-review networks, citation and bibliographic conventions, has little room for the alien views, voices, and visions emanating from Africa itself. On this scholarly treadmill, Africa appears nothing more than a research object to verify faddish theories that emerge with predictable regularity in the channel-surfing intellectualism of Northern academies.
(Zeleza 1996: 298).

In a survey of five leading Africanist social science journals published in Britain, Canada and the USA, Zeleza found that, over a ten year period between 1982 and 1992 only 15 percent of the articles and 10 percent of the book reviews were by African authors based in Africa. A further 9 percent of articles and 5 percent of reviews were written by African authors based in the West (Zeleza 1996: 298; see also Zeleza 1997). Armand Mattelart has referred to this as the 'law of unequal exchange' operating in the sphere of knowledge production on a global scale, arguing 'it is necessary to examine how researchers from central countries, whether the United States or Europe, act in complicity with the law of unequal exchange. According to this law, ... studies carried out in peripheral countries receive very little attention and it is only with great difficulty that they influence, publicly, research currents at the international level' (1979: 34).

In addition to social factors, the production of knowledge about peoples and places is simultaneously conditioned by non-cognitive, material conditions. The extreme levels of material inequality within and, especially, between societies have very important implications for the process of knowledge production. As Mattelart observes, 'A 'world history' of research permits a clear view of the importance of historical conditions presiding over the production and consumption of knowledge.' (1979: 28). Exploration of how this extra-cognitive factor influences the production, circulation and consumption of knowledge about the world and the international is urgently required. It is a topic in itself which unfortunately lies beyond the scope of the present paper. Of all disciplines this is something which International Relations should be especially aware of, yet recent critical perspectives in IR have tended to focus on questions of knowledge in the ideal, textual or subjective realm to the exclusion of its material aspects (conditions of possibility).

Conclusion

In recent years the discipline of International Relations has begun, in the context of a far-reaching process of critical self-reflection, to expose the limitations of understandings of the world which arise from the entrenched eurocentric nature of the mainstream. In addressing this problem one immediately faces underlying questions about power, truth, the production of knowledge, what it means to be critical, and the role of ideas in the reproduction of unequal relations of social power. We find a glaring manifestation of the reproduction of global inequalities in the discipline of IR when we consider who

produces the majority of published work in IR, and what peoples and regions of the world are considered in the majority of IR work.

This paper has attempted to argue that in countering these historically produced features of IR, and in doing so 'decolonising' the discipline, it is essential to focus on objective as well as subjective aspects of knowledge. The most important task is to provide better and non-eurocentric accounts *of the world*, of the global conditions of historical and contemporary production and reproduction of social conditions all around the world. This is not a call for positivist, neutral, value-free social science. To tell a more adequate account of how things are – in other words, doing objective social inquiry – is inherently to criticise dominant ideologies which misrepresent the world and, by virtue of this misrepresentation, serve the interests of the powerful.

A commitment to objectivity in social inquiry implies both the possibility of, and also a responsibility for, an 'epistemological internationalism'. It is the responsibility of scholars from the West, and not just the 'marginalised', to produce historically adequate, non-eurocentric knowledge about the making and constitution of the modern world; to produce International Relations knowledge by, for and about all the peoples of the world. For the 'narrative of global domination' which silences the histories of colonialism, racism, slavery and non-Western revolutions and wars 'is part of the history of the West and it is likely to persist, even in attenuated form, as long as the history of the West is not retold in ways that bring forward the perspective of the world. Unfortunately, we are not even close to such fundamental rewriting of world history, in spite of a few spectacular achievements' (Trouillot 1995: 107). Of all disciplines, International Relations above all should be told from the perspective of the world.

Notes

[1] See Grovogui 2002, 2001, 1998, 1996, Krishna 2001, 1993, Pasha 2003, Nkiwane 2001, Dunn and Shaw 2001, Agathangelou and Ling 1997, Chowdhry and Nair 2002, Crawford and Jarvis 2001, Darby and Paolini 1994, Darby 1997, Ling 2002, Slater 1998, Jahn 2000, 1999.

[2] E.g. Strange 1995: 165, Brown 2001: 22, Mandaville 2003: 211. Specific examination of the American and British domination of IR is found in Hoffman 1977, Alker and Biersteker 1984, Holsti 1985, Lyons, G 1986, Wæver 1998, Smith 1985, 1987, 2000, Crawford and Jarvis 2001. However, some of this discussion seems only to be concerned with the extent to which American IR is dominant in the field with respect to British IR or, at the most, European and Australian IR. For example, a recent article suggests that Continental Europe's IR theory constitutes the discipline's 'margins' (Jørgensen 2000). Perhaps a more important question is not the relative dominance of American / British / European / Australian IR, but the extent to which mainstream IR remains an imperial social science.

[3] For some the matter is apparently treated in terms of 'political correctness'. In discussing the selection of who to include in the volume *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making?* the problem of Western-centricity in IR is addressed by one of the editors in the following manner: 'The relative dominance of Anglo-American IR might well have led us to include not only a French but also a German (yes, there are a few candidates) and especially some non-western authors. We felt, however, that this could be (read as) the token symbol of political correctness, whereas the present selection includes people who are central to the discipline as it operates today – not only our ideal of who ought to be read. Though it would have been nice to have had a chapter on Mazrui or Inoguchi.' (Wæver 1997: 4). I am grateful to Elly Omondi for drawing my attention to this remark.

[4] Britain conducted counter-insurgency campaigns against anti-colonial movements in Palestine (1946-1948), Malaya (1948-1960), Kenya (1953-1960), Cyprus (1955-1959), South Yemen (1963-1967), Borneo (1961-1965). See Gordon 1987.

[5] See for example Brown, Nardin and Rengger 2002, Olson and Groom 1992; Williams 1992, who finds IR in the political thought of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Clausewitz and Marx; Knutsen 1992, who looks at the thought of Thucydides, Bodin, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Hegel; Gabriel 1994, who traces 'world views' to the thought of Gentz, Clausewitz, Bernhardi, Kant, Hobson, Angell and Wilson. For a critique see MacLean's excellent examination of the procedures of reproducing orthodoxy in International Relations (2000).

[6] Again with a few notable exceptions, for example Randolph Persaud (1997).

[7] Some of the literature includes Wolf 1982, Blaut 1993, 2000, Amin 1988, Abu-Lughod 1989, Gran 1996, Dirlik et al. 2000, Lach and van Kley 1998, Wallerstein 1997, 1991, Halperin 1997; with specific reference to Africa and African studies, Temu and Swai 1982, Mamdani 1990, 1995, 1996, Feierman 1993, Emeagwali 2002, Mudimbe1994, 1988, Zeleza 1997, Depelchin 1992a, Martin and West 1999.

[8] For example Dyer and Mangasarian 1989, Smith, Booth and Zalewski 1996, Booth and Smith 1995, Rengger 1999, Dunne, Cox and Booth 1999.

[9] See for example Hammond and Jablow 1970, Mignolo 1995, Lyons, C 1975, Miller 1985, Rigby 1996. Grovogui (1996 chapters one and two) examines the ideologies which constructed the inferiority and lack of humanity of non-European peoples and thus legitimised their subjugation and systematic dispossession by European powers over centuries.

[10] See Grovogui 1996, Anghie 1999.

[11] Anghie is referring more specifically to the discipline of international law but his argument applies equally to the broader discipline of IR.

[12] Halliday has observed 'The development of IR, like that of all social sciences, is in fact a product not just of two, but of three concentric circles of influence: change and debate within the subject itself, the impact of developments in the world, but also the influence of new ideas within other areas of social science. While straightforward academic genealogies are common, these latter two influences receive less attention. IR has a very limited 'self-knowledge', let alone an adequate account of the extra-disciplinary factors acting on it. ... More generally, the very 'historicity' of its concepts, their generation in particular contexts and, in analytical terms, their relevance to specific periods, is denied.' (1994: 7-8)

[13] See for example Ayoob 2002. Remarkably, after correctly pointing out the overwhelming dominance of Anglo-American scholarship in the discipline, Ayoob turns to the work of Hobbes, and historical sociologists' analyses of state formation in Europe, in order to find insights into the specific conditions and predicaments of Third World states.

[14] See Halliday 1994 chapter one, Saurin 1995, 1996, MacLean 2000.

[15] However, the existence of an arrogant parochialism in some North American IR scholarship has been noted. Susan Strange has commented upon the 'observable introversion of American perceptions': 'academic writing by the great majority of American scholars is blissfully and habitually deaf and blind to the ideas and perceptions of the outside world.' (Strange 1995: 164-5). This charge is substantiated in Kim Richard Nossal's detailed examination of the American-centric nature of IR teaching in American universities, as manifest in fourteen introductory IR textbooks published in America. He found not only an overwhelming lack of reference to non-American scholarship and an American-centric portrayal of world politics, but also frequent factual errors when 'the rest of the world' was discussed, concluding that : 'a common phenomenon in American IR texts [is]: the representation of an assertion as authoritative fact based on little, no, or erroneous knowledge.' (Nossal 1998: 7). Meanwhile Richard Higgott (1991) provides anecdotal evidence of the perceptions of some American scholars. In his discussion of what a 'non-hegemonic IPE' might look like, he describes a round table discussion about the question of hegemony and hegemonic stability theory which took place at the 1990 meeting of the American Political Science Association: 'notwithstanding the large number of non-Americans in the audience and Keohane's lost attempt to suggest the importance of a plurality of ideas and actors in structuring the contemporary international political economy, the discussion was obsessively Americo-centric. Stephen Krasner, all too typically unfortunately, captured the essence of the present state of theorizing about international relations in the United States: "Sure people in Luxemburg have good ideas," he said, "… but who gives a damn? Luxemburg ain't hegemonic," ' (Higgott 1994: 98-99).

[16] See Smith 1996, Neufeld 1995, Vasquez 1998 chapter 10, George 1988, Ashley 1984.

[17] For example: 'the post-empiricist critique, looks at a number of criticisms made by philosophers of science such as the impossibility of a value-free, neutral and objective science' (Vasquez 1995: 217).

[18] See George and Campbell 1990.

[19] Or, in case the very use of the term 'truth' is taken to signify commitment to a non-fallibilist notion of absolute truth, let us say adequacy. See Sayer 1992 chapter 2.

[20] See for example Linklater 1992; Patomäki 2001 pp. 154-5; Neufeld 1995: 68; Burchill (2001: 20) summarises: 'According to critical theorists ... methodology should be grounded in an emancipatory interest in freeing human beings from unnecessary social

constraints and not a technical interest in social control'. On the other hand post-structuralists or post-modernists are more likely to celebrate a multiplicity of perspectives and multiple realities.

[21] Collier 1999a. 'A desire is a desire for something, a belief is a belief in something, a sensation is a sensation of something. It is what a mental act or idea aims at or is about that makes it the idea that it is: you cannot just believe, you can only believe something, you cannot just love, you can only love someone. And it is an idea and not some other kind of entity just because of its aboutness. But this is not just like the fact that a tree-trunk cannot just be lying, it must be lying on something. For an idea is defined by what it is about. If I want a glass of beer, that want can only be described in terms of a glass of beer; if I believe in God, my belief cannot be described without mentioning God. In this way an idea and what it is about are internally related.' (Collier 1999a: 2).

[22] This form of critique is influenced in particular by Critical Theory which is rooted in the thought of the Frankfurt School. See for example Ashley 1981, Cox 1981, Neufeld 1995, Linklater 1992.

[23] Vasquez (1998: 223) points out this distinction.

[24] For example: 'Positivism has involved a commitment to a unified view of science, and the adoption of methodologies of the natural sciences to explain the social world.' (Smith 1996: 11, 17). See also Hollis and Smith 1990; Burchill 2001: 1 and 20; Brown 2001: 36; Devetak 2001: 159.

[25] See Bhaskar 1998, 1986, Collier 1989. What follows is a short summary account of the arguments of critical realism as developed by Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Collier, Andrew Sayer and others. See Bhaskar 1997, 1998, Collier 1994, Archer et al. 1998, Sayer 1992.

[26] Bhaskar 1998, Collier 1994, Bhaskar and Collier 1998.

[27] Bhaskar 1997, Collier 1994, Sayer 1992.

[28] See Collier 1994, Bhaskar 1989.

[29] Cf Ashley's conception of 'the goal of 'apocalyptic objectivity'', 'a totalizing standpoint outside of time and capable of enclosing all history within a singular narrative, a law of development, or a vision of progress toward a certain end of humankind' (1987: 408), Cited in Neufeld (1995: 61).

[30] This is premised on acceptance that, other things being equal, it is desirable to know what is true. See Bhaskar 1998: 63, 1986, Collier 1994, 1999b.

[31] See the very important argument set out in Collier 1990.

[32] "There is one answer which could be given here: that our acceptance of historical materialism flows from a prior commitment to the proletarian class position. But this is to abandon the 'materialist thesis of objectivity', to substitute war cries for knowledge of how to shoot, to disarm the workers' movement theoretically. It was not for this that Marx slammed the door on Weitling." (Collier 1979: 68).

[33] See Grovogui 1996, 2002, Anghie 1996, 1999, 2000, 2002, Gathii 1999a and b, Watson 2001, Vitalis 2000, Krishna 2001, Chimni 1993, 2002, Depelchin 1992b, Trouillot 1995.

[34] See Michel-Rolph Trouillot's examination of the procedures of silencing and ignoring the histories of peoples, places, and processes in the construction of dominant narratives of the modern world (1995).

[35] Ofuho 2003 provides an insightful discussion of the historical accumulation of ignorance about social realities in Africa. He argues that most works about Africa written in the West 'have been written with insufficient rigor and empirical research and are substantially ill-informed about the realities facing the continent. In fact, surprisingly

little serious work has been done to unlock the reality(ies) of the continent.' (Ofuho 2003: 153). Halliday emphasises that "'Nowhere in the broad spectrum of human activity does the mythical and the imagined play such a role in everyday discourse as in the field of the international. One has only got to think of the strengths of national identification and antipathy, the almost universal incidence of conspiracy theory and suspicion about 'foreigners', the extraordinary ignorance, even among the better educated, about other countries ... Of all the students of a social science taught in universities, those concerned with IR probably encounter the greatest degree of misunderstanding and ignorance ... than any other'" (1994: 5).

[36] In principle, in epistemological terms, these two questions are equivalent. In historical terms however, it is clear that the international political economy of knowledge production, situated within the highly unequal global distribution of material resources, determines that far more Europeans go to do research in and about Africa than vice-versa. As Amadiume has observed, 'I do not know one single case in which Africans wrote the social history of any other nation' (1997: 5). It is more likely that an African student will gain funding to attend university in Europe in order to study Africa! Meanwhile there is more funding available for Europeans or Americans to conduct research in Africa than for Africans. This situation has crucial implications for the reproduction of hegemony or imperial/neo-colonial relations of domination, both intellectual and material.

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