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# Dealing with Difference: Problems and Possibilities for Dialogue in International Relations

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## Abstract

This address suggests some avenues through which IR scholars from a variety of methodological approaches and different geographical locations might better dialogue with each other in mutually respectful ways. It begins by briefly revisiting IR's great debates since they represent the way the discipline has traditionally defined itself. It claims that these debates have centred on challenging the predominance of a US-centred discipline and its commitment to neo-positivist methodologies. Drawing on postcolonial and feminist literatures, it then offers some suggestions as to how might envisage an IR that is built on more global foundations and on a more pluralist understanding of what we define as scientific knowledge. It concludes with some thoughts on possible paths towards placing different scientific traditions on a more equal and mutually respectful footing.

## Keywords

feminism, international theory, inter-paradigm dialogue, methodology, postcolonialism, reflexivity

*The purpose of religious communication among human beings of different commitments is mutual enrichment and enhancement of respect and appreciation rather than hope that the person spoken to will prove to be wrong in what he regards as sacred. Dialogue must not degenerate into a dispute, into an effort on the part of each to get the upper hand.<sup>1</sup>*

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1. Abraham Joshua Heschel, quoted in Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 188.

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Patrick Jackson uses these words of religious scholar Abraham Heschel to open the concluding chapter of his recent book, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, which he titles 'A Pluralist Science of IR'. Just as Heschel was seeking inter-faith dialogue that respected all religious traditions equally, the purpose of this address is to assess the possibilities, as well as the problems, for reaching a mutually respectful dialogue among IR scholars from different methodological persuasions and from different geographic locations. I believe that this would involve envisaging a discipline that is more genuinely international and more pluralist in its methodological commitments than the one we have today.

In the introduction to their recent book *International Scholarship around the World*, Ole Waever and Arlene Tickner describe an IR that still speaks from the centre about the whole, an IR where there is scant dialogue among competing perspectives; they see a discipline that is neither international nor reflexive about its own practices.<sup>2</sup> The various chapters of this important book provide a valuable and unusual look at IR theory from the perspective of scholars in different geographical locations. In the final chapter, Tickner and Waever conclude that while IR is still dominated by the West, particularly by the United States, Western IR does translate into something different when it travels to the periphery.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, as they argue, true dialogue can only begin when there is more than one voice and, I would add, when there is mutual respect across geographical and methodological boundaries and when communication is among equal conversational partners. Tickner and Waever signal that this volume is the first of three; the aim of the third yet unpublished volume is, in their words, 'to seek out more explosive mechanisms for exposing IR's claims of universality ... and to explore the role of non-core thinking in creating a post-Western discipline'.<sup>4</sup> Although I cannot claim to speak from a non-Western perspective, I shall offer some thoughts on how those of us in the West, who speak from a critical perspective, might contribute to this post-Western vision.

Drawing on the observations of scholars who have reflected on the origins and development of what many claim is still a US-dominated field, I shall begin by briefly revisiting IR's great debates since they represent the way the discipline has traditionally defined itself historically. Disciplinary history is rarely a neutral or impartial undertaking. Rather, it is tied to the intellectual struggles to legitimate the contemporary identity of the field.<sup>5</sup> For the most part, these debates have been about challenging the predominance of a US-centred discipline and its commitment to neo-positivist methodologies. Drawing on postcolonial and feminist literatures, I shall then offer some suggestions as to how we might envisage an IR that is built on more global foundations and on a more pluralist understanding of what we define as scientific

2. Ole Waever and Arlene B. Tickner, 'Introduction: Geocultural Epistemologies', in *International Relations Scholarship around the World*, ed. Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Waever (New York: Routledge, 2009), 3–4. Waever and Tickner claim that, the extent to which there is reflection about IR's practices, it is mostly limited to the context of comparisons between the United States and Europe.
3. Tickner and Waever, 'Conclusion: Worlding Where the West Once Was', in *International Relations Scholarship*, ed. Tickner and Waever, 338.
4. *Ibid.*, 340.
5. David Long and Brian C. Schmidt, 'Introduction', in *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations*, eds Long and Schmidt (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 5.

knowledge. Since women, and marginalised people more generally, have rarely been the creators or subjects of knowledge, postcolonial and feminist scholars have been on the forefront of critical disciplinary self-reflection.<sup>6</sup> As Waever and Tickner observe, postcolonialism and feminism have been pioneers in articulating the influence of geocultural factors in shaping epistemological perspectives.<sup>7</sup> In conclusion, I shall offer some thoughts on possible paths towards placing different scientific traditions on a more equal and mutually respectful footing.

## Revisiting the Great Debates

As Ole Waever claimed in his 1998 article, 'The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline', IR scholars have tended to write about the history of the discipline as a series of methodological debates about who is right and who is wrong, about how we construct knowledge.<sup>8</sup> As he points out, issues of power and privilege are at stake; the winners, many of them located in the mainstream of what he describes as a US-dominated social science, have rarely been willing to engage the losers – not a very promising path to dialogue.

The first debate, between realists and idealists, traditionally portrayed as the founding moment of the discipline, was well suited to the emergence of realism as the dominant paradigm, and the United States as the dominant site, for IR in the post-World War II era. The second debate, between traditionalists, whose main protagonist was English School founder, Hedley Bull,<sup>9</sup> and (mostly) US-based social scientists, seemed, in the United States at least, to signal victory for the scientists where quantification, formal modelling and rational choice have become methodologies of choice. Early self-identified 'scientists', such as J. David Singer and Marion Levy, made reference to physics and economics, expressing the hope that IR could enjoy similar success by becoming equally scientific.<sup>10</sup> While this shift was less evident in Europe, it did grant American IR a 'scientific' legitimacy.

Naming Hans Morgenthau as the founding father of the discipline, Stanley Hoffmann, in his much-cited 1977 article, asked why it was in the United States that *Politics Among Nations* received such widespread attention and why henceforward IR became what he,

6. For some examples, see A.M. Agathangelou and L.H.M. Ling, 'The House of IR: From Family Power Politics to the Poises of Worldism', *International Studies Review* 6 (2004): 21–49; Branwen Gruffydd Jones, ed., *Decolonizing International Relations* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006); Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998); Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (London: Routledge, 2004).

7. Waever and Tickner, 'Introduction: Geocultural Epistemologies', 3.

8. Ole Waever, 'The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations', *International Organization* 52 (1998): 687–727.

9. See Hedley Bull, 'International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach', in *Contending Approaches to International Politics*, eds Klaus Knorr and James N. Rosenau (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 20–38.

10. Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry*, 6.

somewhat ironically, termed ‘an American social science’.<sup>11</sup> According to Hoffmann, the realist view of the world was well suited to America’s new role as emerging global superpower. Although Morgenthau himself was ambivalent about a ‘science’ of international politics,<sup>12</sup> the post-war United States provided a favourable institutional climate for the receptivity of the scientific tradition, as well as a peculiarly American conviction that all problems can be resolved and that the way to solve them is to apply the scientific method – assumed to be value-free – combining empirical investigation, hypothesis formation and testing.<sup>13</sup> The aura around this very limited and narrow definition of science has placed an enormous burden on other approaches to demonstrate their scientific credibility and has, in my view, been the greatest barrier to constructive dialogue across paradigms.

Hoffmann did note that the popularity of scientific methodologies in the United States did not travel well to other parts of the world. What he saw as the failure of IR to become a truly international discipline has remained a dominant theme among those who have reflected subsequently on the evolution of the field. In 1998, almost 10 years after the third, or what some have termed the fourth, debate variously described as one between positivists and post-positivists, or rationalists and reflectivists, Ole Waever noted a continuation of US hegemony and its continued bias towards rational choice theory.<sup>14</sup> Four years later, Steve Smith claimed that US IR, which he still regarded as hegemonic, had narrowed rather than broadened in spite of the inability of rational choice theory to explain the events of 11 September 2001. He warned that a discipline dominated by rational choice and positivist methodologies more generally ‘runs the risk of failing to understand other cultures and identities and thereby becoming more and more a US discipline far removed from the agendas and concerns of other parts of the world’.<sup>15</sup> For Smith the most irreconcilable divide, and hence the greatest barrier to productive dialogue, was over questions of epistemology, a position with which I strongly agree – at least from my location inside the United States. According to Smith, reflectivists or post-positivists, a category that encompasses a rich array of theoretical approaches, all of which offer a series of alternatives to rationalism, are presented by the mainstream as operating outside the acceptable realm of academic study and not part of the social-scientific enterprise.<sup>16</sup>

While I recognise that there is a much more methodologically pluralist IR scholarship outside the US – in Europe and elsewhere – it is the case that US theoretical traditions and American foreign policy concerns have shaped, and continue to shape, to a disproportionate degree, the agenda of IR as well as its methods of analysis. Following Hoffmann, Thomas Biersteker, in his chapter in the Tickner and Waever volume, suggests that the

11. Stanley Hoffman, ‘An American Social Science: International Relations’, *Daedalus* 106, no. 3 (1977): 41–60.

12. Hans J. Morgenthau articulated this ambivalence most forcefully in *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1945).

13. Hoffman, ‘An American Social Science’, 45.

14. Waever, ‘The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline’.

15. Steve Smith, ‘The United States and the Discipline of International Relations: Hegemonic Country, Hegemonic Discipline’, *International Studies Review* 4, no. 2 (2002): 67–86 at 68.

16. *Ibid.*, 72. I am defining ‘mainstream’ in methodological terms – IR scholars who self-identify as neo-positivists.

insularity of American IR prevents US scholars from recognising the extent to which IR's theoretical constructs, frameworks and debates are driven by American foreign policy concerns.<sup>17</sup> He points to the interface between the US role of managing and controlling the international system and the preference of IR theorists for causal models and analysis. Biersteker is not making an argument against causal analysis, but for the recognition of the legitimacy of interpretive understanding and critical theory also, both of which he finds lacking in US postgraduate education.<sup>18</sup> He asserts that the absence of critical theory contributes to the reproduction of American hegemony since the kind of analysis produced in the academy reciprocally feeds back into the formation of policy itself.<sup>19</sup> He claims that everyone, including critics, appears to be engaged in US-dominated debates, an engagement that is not reciprocated by the mainstream. Citing his 1984 article co-authored with Hayward Alker, Biersteker claims that it is not the false universalism of US-dominated discipline but 'the oppositions and penetrations (of different theoretical traditions from different parts of the world) [that] make up both the substance and the promise of a truly global "interdiscipline" of IR'.<sup>20</sup> Building on this vision, evident in the Tickner and Waever volume more generally, I will next offer some thoughts as to how we might get beyond these unproductive debates that I have outlined and move towards a more international and pluralist discipline that is built on less West-centric foundations and is more respectful of multiple ways of understanding our complex world.

## Building More Inclusive Foundational Stories

As Sandra Halperin has claimed, the historical accounts on which much of mainstream IR theory depends are shaped by a profound mythology about modern European history, one that wrongly places Europe at the centre of modernity and transforms Europe's imperial expansion into a story of enlightenment and progress.<sup>21</sup> IR dates the beginnings of modern international politics to the treaty of Westphalia in 1648 and the rise of the modern nation-state in Europe. This Eurocentric account portrays a linear progression towards modernity whereby values of liberty and democracy and economic development were spread around the world through the power, knowledge and agency of European

17. Thomas J. Biersteker, 'The Parochialism of Hegemony: Challenges for "American" International Relations', in *International Relations Scholarship*, eds Tickner and Waever, 321.

18. Biersteker also notes that, according to the survey he conducted of assigned or required readings for PhD candidates, concentrating in International Relations in the leading departments of political science in the United States, an average of 94 percent of readings assigned were written by scholars who have spent most or all of their careers in the United States. *Ibid.*, 319.

19. *Ibid.*, 322–3.

20. *Ibid.*, 322. See also Hayward R. Alker Jr and Thomas J. Biersteker, 'The Dialectics of World Order: Notes for an Archeologist of International Savoir Faire', *International Studies Quarterly* 28 (1984): 121–42.

21. Sandra Halperin, 'International Relations Theory and the Hegemony of Western Conceptions of Modernity', in *Decolonizing International Relations*, ed. Gruffydd Jones, 57–8. Halperin notes the differences between Western historical stories and those of Islamic scholarship. She claims that Western thinkers have promoted the view that Europe's rise to modernity was a radical disjuncture with all that had happened previously, whereas Islamic scholars have been more ready to embrace a view of history as transcending the history of a particular culture or period.

states. After the collapse of the colonial empires during the 20th century, the European state system became universalised.

As Halperin reminds us, missing from this story is Europe's brutal expansion that began in 1492 with the so-called 'voyages of discovery'. Although IR has focused on relations between the great powers in a world of nation-states, it is European colonisation and imperialism that have shaped the present and future of more than two-thirds of the world's population. Curiously missing, both from the progressive Eurocentric Westphalian narrative and from the contemporary discipline which describes and analyses it, are issues of imperialism and race, subjects which were of vital concern to IR scholars at the discipline's founding moments in the early 20th century. A discipline that claims to be international, of relevance to all peoples and states, traces its modern origins to a time at which imperialism was at its height; yet most recent surveys of IR have little to say about the history of four hundred years of European colonisation or of decolonisation, one of the most important historical processes of the 20th century.<sup>22</sup>

Any attempt to construct a global IR must recognise this historical legacy of imperialism. While they acknowledge that it has been the great debates that have provided the most dominant self-image of the field, David Long and Brian Schmidt claim, in their revisionist account of the early discipline, that it was actually the dynamic interaction between imperialism and internationalism, not the realist–idealist debate, which initially drove IR theory. Long and Schmidt point out that many of the IR texts of this early period, at the beginning of the 20th century, evidenced a preoccupation with imperialism and the administration of the empire; it was this preoccupation that drove the inter-war period of the field's history also.<sup>23</sup> Relatedly, Robert Vitalis claims that white supremacy had a central place in the origins and development of IR. Races as well as states were the early discipline's two most important units of analysis. The first IR journal in the United States, founded in 1910, was called the *Journal of Race Development*; in 1919 it was renamed the *Journal of International Relations* and, three years later in 1922, it became *Foreign Affairs*, the official journal of the Council on Foreign Relations. The lead article of the first issue made the case for a research agenda focused on the progress of backward races and states. As the journal's original title makes clear, boundaries that we draw today between what is inside and outside the national space, were not made in the same way in 1910. The question as to who was inside and who was outside the national space was not so much a territorial question as a biological one. An imperialist world order produced administrative problems for the colonisers that begged for scientific study and solutions – an important motivator for the young discipline of International Relations.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the importance of the scientific study of global issues was recognised well before post-World War II realism.

Postcolonial historians and philosophers of science have long recognised the intimate relationship between Western science more generally and the imperial project. Philosopher Sandra Harding claims that, traditionally, science has typically asked questions about nature and social life that certain men (usually privileged men) want answered. She

22. Branwen Gruffydd Jones, 'Introduction: International Relations, Eurocentricism, and Imperialism', in *Decolonizing International Relations*, ed. Gruffydd Jones, 2.

23. Long and Schmidt, 'Introduction', 14.

24. Robert Vitalis, 'Birth of a Discipline', in *Imperialism and Internationalism*, eds Long and Schmidt, 162.

traces the relationship between the development of modern Western science and the history of European expansion. Challenging the claims to value-neutrality that modern science makes with respect to the questions it asks, she argues that the voyages of discovery, to which Halperin refers as one of the founding moments of modern international politics, went hand in hand with the development of modern science and technology: Europeans who were colonising the world needed to know about wind, tides, maps and navigation as well as botany, the construction of ships, firearms and survival in harsh environments. Such questions became intellectually interesting in order to solve colonialism's everyday problems.<sup>25</sup>

Geographer John Willinsky has also linked the way we construct modern knowledge to European imperialism.<sup>26</sup> Willinsky claims that five centuries of learning, although generally helpful for humankind, has divided it in certain ways that give certain people agency and authorship while denying them to others. The Cartesian revolution of the 17th century shifted knowledge based on resemblances to knowledge based on difference – such as the differences between mind and body, men and women, West and East, and colonisers and colonised. Studying, classifying and ordering humanity within an imperial context gave rise to peculiar and powerful ideas about race, culture and nation that were conceptual instruments that the West used to divide up and to educate the world.<sup>27</sup> Like the natural sciences, geography, particularly map-making, was an important aspect of imperial knowledge. Geography played a large role in dividing the world in ways that objectified those who are not white and who reside outside the West.<sup>28</sup> Willinsky argues that the lessons that were drawn from centuries of European expansion continue to influence, even if subconsciously, how we see and interpret the world today. While Willinsky is not engaging specifically with IR, evidence of these differences can be seen in Westcentric modernisation stories, clashes of civilisations and gendered and racial assumptions about who are the creators of knowledge.

Branwen Gruffydd Jones, in the introduction to her edited text *Decolonizing International Relations*, claims that a discipline rooted in European history and classical thought, and largely written by and about Americans and Europeans, has forgotten its imperial roots. Echoing Willinsky she suggests that the way to a more truly 'international' understanding of the world is to confront the colonial heritage that modern IR has failed to shed.<sup>29</sup> Gruffydd Jones does not believe that this can be accomplished by simply applying existing IR knowledge to the rest of the world or by Eurocentric critics: the dispossessed must tell their own history. Authors in the volume consider the question as to how best puncture the myth of Europe and produce knowledge that is both of and

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25. Harding, *Is Science Multicultural?*, 39–54.

26. John Willinsky, *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

27. *Ibid.*, 27.

28. *Ibid.*, 137–40.

29. Gruffydd Jones, 'Introduction', in *Decolonizing International Relations*, 6. Gruffydd Jones signals that the volume is not situated within a postcolonial perspective; rather its aim is to get beyond the narrowness of a Eurocentric perspective and contribute to the study of international relations from the perspective of the world.

about the international. Too frequently critical voices are still speaking out of Western knowledge traditions.

Agreeing that one can be Eurocentric at the same time as being critical of the West, John Hobson has observed that many critical IR theorists end up reiterating the conventional Western narrative.<sup>30</sup> Focusing on Gramscian IR, Hobson claims that examining the economic and political hegemony of the West by reasoning backward, critical theorists end up imputing inevitability to the rise of the West as endogenously self-generating. He suggests that the way out of this dilemma is to shift towards dialogical thinking that transcends the either/or logic that Willinsky attributes to modern knowledge. Drawing on the work of Jan Nederveen Pieterse, he suggests using the term *hybridity*, a co-constitutive process that recognises that histories of different civilisations are mutually constitutive of each from other. Instead of a clash of civilisations he suggests a dialogue that demonstrates the multiple non-conflictual ways that each civilisation borrows and emanates from others. This happens at what he calls the edges of civilisations, conceptualised as *imperial dialectical frontiers* where a bottom-up logic of emancipation/resistance is intertwined with a top-down logic of imperial domination.<sup>31</sup> Hobson talks of the pressing need for the creation of political dialogue between West and East, which he defines as all parts of the world outside the West. This would be accomplished by an empathetic approach where all peoples of the world can communicate together as equal partners, where Self and Other are not separate and exclusive, but intimately intertwined.<sup>32</sup>

Of course there are major stumbling blocks to Hobson's call for a mutually respectful dialogue among equal partners who respect each other's foundational stories and knowledge traditions. First and foremost is whose knowledge is considered legitimate and whose gets ignored when we decide what counts as knowledge about global politics? Also there are enormous inequalities in material resources that determine where, and by whom, that knowledge gets produced. Forgetting the imperial roots of one's disciplinary history only reinforces IR's ability to protect the status of the detached neutral observer with layers of distance-enhancing effects.<sup>33</sup> The problems of creating mutual dialogue in the face of these hierarchies of power and lack of disciplinary self-reflection, even within the West, have been of central concern to feminist theory. Drawing on some recent feminist contributions to IR, I shall now suggest some ways that we might envisage a more pluralist discipline that is open to different knowledge traditions.

## Building a More Methodologically Inclusive IR

As Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True remind us, developing feminist methodologies and conducting feminist research have presented major challenges in a state-centric discipline that is notorious for its lack of self-reflection on its own

30. John M. Hobson, 'Is Critical Theory Always for the White West and for Western Imperialism? Beyond Westphalian to a Post-Racist Critical IR', *Review of International Studies* 33 (2007): 91–116 at 93.

31. *Ibid.*, 107–8.

32. *Ibid.*, 115.

33. Vitalis, 'Birth of a Discipline', 162.

origins.<sup>34</sup> Yet I believe that the ways feminists have gone about meeting these challenges are instructive for thinking about possibilities for constructing a more genuinely pluralist discipline of International Relations. IR feminist scholarship has built on a variety of methodologies and methods, both mainstream and critical, and both from inside and outside the discipline. What makes feminist methodologies distinctive is their commitment to constructing knowledge from multiple locations, and from the perspective of both marginalised and non-marginalised subjects. Emerging in the 1970s as a critical theory sensitive to the relationship between the production of knowledge and the privileges of power, feminist standpoint theory has suggested that if we start thinking from marginalised lives, we are likely to get less partial and distorted accounts, not only of their lives, but of the whole social order as well.<sup>35</sup> Since it offers us a more complex picture of reality, knowledge from below has the potential to extend the boundaries and even transform the discipline in ways that are beneficial to everyone.

Feminists have long held a deep scepticism about the claims to universality of knowledge that, in reality, is based largely on certain privileged men's lives and men's experiences. Unlike the 'view from nowhere' to which empirical social science aspires, most feminists insist that the inquirer be placed in the same critical plane as the subject matter. Most IR feminists claim that, as social scientists, we are part of the world we are trying to understand and that the world is always changing and affected by the way we study it.<sup>36</sup> Sandra Harding suggests that acknowledging the subjective element in one's analysis that, in reality, exists in all social science research, actually increases the objectivity of one's research.<sup>37</sup> Acknowledging that all human beliefs are socially situated, it requires critical evaluation to determine which social situations tend to generate the most objective knowledge claims. Harding argues for what she calls 'strong objectivity' which extends the task of scientific research to include a systematic examination of powerful background beliefs and making strange what has hitherto appeared as familiar.<sup>38</sup>

Feminism alerts us to the importance of studying silences and absences, as well as studying marginalised peoples' experiences, in order to better understand our local and global world.<sup>39</sup> Ackerly and True conceive of feminist methodologies as involving self-conscious reflection on the purpose of one's research, one's conceptual frameworks, one's ethical responsibilities, one's methods choices and one's assumptions about what it means to know rather than just believe something.<sup>40</sup> They describe this set of practices as a feminist research ethic – 'a methodological commitment to any set of practices that reflect on the power of epistemology, boundaries, dimensions of the researcher's own location and to a normative commitment to transforming the social order in order to

34. Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True, eds, *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

35. Sandra Harding, ed., *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 128.

36. Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.

37. Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, 136.

38. Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 142, 149.

39. Ackerly and *Doing Feminist Research*, 7.

40. *Ibid.*, 6.

promote gender justice'.<sup>41</sup> A feminist research ethic alerts us to the power of disciplinary boundaries that operate in the way that researchers construct boundaries about what is acceptable and not acceptable in a discipline. IR's frequent dismissal of scholarship deemed unscientific is an example of such disciplining.

Patrick Jackson acknowledges the importance of feminism in introducing reflexivity into IR and also cites Tickner and Waever's call for a global sociology of IR as an example of reflexive scholarship.<sup>42</sup> Reflexivity has a long history in the social sciences more generally. The capacity of human beings to reflect on their own situations has served as the foundation for arguments for separating the social from the natural sciences. Human beings, unlike inanimate objects, have cultures and identities and volition and, therefore, cannot be studied in the same way as inanimate objects. The knowing subject is located in a variety of hierarchical social structures, such as race, class and gender, and knowledge of the world begins with the socially situated self, not with a world that can ever be independent of the researcher. Reflexivists are committed to the proposition that a systematic effort to analyse their own role as knowledge producers and to locate themselves within their broader social contexts will yield knowledge, not merely of things experienced, but valid knowledge of the social arrangements that order and give rise to those experiences. Knowledge of the social world begins not with that world, but with the self, a claim with which many feminists would agree.<sup>43</sup> Reflexivity then is deeper than reflection or what mainstream scholars mean when they use the term reflectivist.

## Possibilities for a Pluralist 'Science' of IR

Jackson offers one possible way out of these methodological disputes that have inhibited a genuinely international dialogical IR and contributed to the dominance of an 'American discipline'. Like Steve Smith, Jackson claims that science has been a powerful resource among IR scholars, since accusing work of being 'non-scientific' carries very negative connotations.<sup>44</sup> Frequently, it is used as a disciplining function that renders the approach in question unworthy of serious consideration.<sup>45</sup> Although it is lauded in the discipline, there is considerable ambiguity as to what 'science' actually means, although, in IR, it has come to be identified with positivism's goal of formulating testable hypotheses. Jackson argues for a broader Weberian definition that equates science with any empirical inquiry designed to produce systematic and valid knowledge about the world, a definition that allows for a variety of 'scientific' approaches.<sup>46</sup> Rather than the usual dualistic divide between 'scientific' and 'non-scientific' approaches that has characterised the great debates, Jackson suggests a fourfold ideal type classificatory scheme for IR scholarship that he labels neo-positivist, critical realist, analyticist and reflexivist. An important distinction between these four traditions, all of which he calls 'scientific', is the relationship between the knower and the known or how their practitioners are hooked up to the

41. *Ibid.*, 2.

42. Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry*, 185.

43. *Ibid.*, 157–60.

44. *Ibid.*, ch. 1.

45. *Ibid.*, 18.

46. *Ibid.*, 193.

world – whether as outsiders or insiders. Positivism and critical realism both accept the Cartesian mind–world dualism while analyticism and reflexivity, typical of some of the literature I have discussed, assume a mind–world monism where the researcher is part of the world that she or he is studying. Whatever approach scholars choose to take is up to them; no one approach should be labelled ‘correct’ methodologically, but, importantly, all are granted the status of science. This means that we must all accept that it is not permissible to judge one methodology by standards of evaluation suitable for another; for example, neo-positivists would judge success by their research programme’s ability to generate testable hypotheses about a mind-independent world that exists outside the researcher. For reflectivists, however, such a mind-independent world does not exist; they claim that, since all knowledge is contingent and contextual, it is not possible to evaluate reflectivist scholarship in these terms. For example, one of the goals of reflexive knowledge is emancipation; therefore, for reflectivists, one measure of success would be that their knowledge claims contribute in some way to transforming the social conditions they highlight.<sup>47</sup>

Such very different standards of evaluation for IR scholarship cause a good deal of misperception and misunderstanding. Nevertheless, as I have argued elsewhere, dialogues about different ways of knowing will never be productive until methodologies that are labelled ‘unscientific’ by the mainstream are accorded their scientific legitimacy and those who work outside positivist scientific traditions are not asked to redefine their research in positivist terms.<sup>48</sup> Labelling research as ‘non-scientific’ is a disciplining function and serves as a reason for not engaging claims at odds with one’s own ‘scientific’ tradition. While still speaking from a Western scientific tradition – albeit one that is more broadly defined – Jackson’s wider definition of science offers a useful path to more productive dialogues. However, it is difficult to have productive conversations when power differentials are so great. In the United States at least, inequalities between the mainstream and critical approaches, broadly defined, allow for greater ignorance by the mainstream about other approaches than is possible for critical scholars if they are to be taken seriously. Academic placement, resources and access to publication in top journals are often awarded on the basis of one’s methodological preferences rather than strictly on merit.

As I stated earlier, we also need to think about how we could construct an IR that is more conducive to dialogue across geographical as well as methodological boundaries.<sup>49</sup> We live in a world in which the majority of the world’s population does not live in the West. Yet most of us do not feel any responsibility for reading and assigning texts that are not authored in the West or by non-English-speaking scholars. For IR to become a more

47. *Ibid.*, 173.

48. An example of this evaluation problem can be found in my article ‘You Just Don’t Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminist and IR Theorists’, *International Studies Quarterly* 41 (1997): 611–32 and my subsequent exchange in *International Studies Quarterly* with Robert Keohane. See ‘Beyond Dichotomy: Conversations between International Relations and Feminist Theory’, *International Studies Quarterly* 42 (1998): 193–8 and Tickner, ‘Continuing the Conversation ...’, *International Studies Quarterly* 42 (1998): 205–10.

49. As Waever and Tickner claim, little work has been done on combining what they call two increasingly dynamic areas of research – critical disciplinary self-reflection in the core and the periphery’s revolt against core concepts. See Waever and Tickner, ‘Introduction: Geocultural Epistemologies’, 3.

truly international discipline, it will need to acknowledge the importance of the non-West in contributing to the knowledge that we call International Relations. IR continues to rely on a highly idealised account of Western political history. I have suggested some ways in which revisionist histories and feminist and postcolonial scholarship are beginning to critically explore the assumptions that have shaped this Western self-understanding. While we in the West have the responsibility to be reflective about our own knowledge and the power implications of our choices in how to conduct our research, in Abraham Heschel's words, we must also seek out ways for mutual enrichment and dialogue, and show respect for a variety of knowledge traditions, outside our own, each of which can illuminate paths to less conflictual and more just futures.

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### **Author Biography**

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