

MODERNITY, ORIENTALISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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The assertion that the post-Cold War era has witnessed the rise of culture and identity as important factors in world politics has become a truism in much recent International Relations (IR) literature. However, this obscures the extent to which a specific culture, that of the post-Enlightenment West, has shaped the development of IR as a discourse and a discipline from its inception. The premise of this paper is that IR's origins in this particular cultural context has fashioned its key analytical concepts and categories in a way that serves to justify and perpetuate the hegemony of the West. In order to historicize the construction of IR it is necessary to interrogate the discipline's relationship with the idea of modernity and in particular, with Western accounts of the modernity which is the source of its historical framework and ideals. In doing so, the notion of modernity and its dominant conceptualizations, which tend to ignore or marginalize the experience of colonialism, will be problematized. Focusing on the foundational idea of the 'anarchical international system', the paper aims to show how IR's use of the concept of anarchy has been shaped by the theory and practice of modern orientalism that emerged from the imperial and colonial encounters between Europe and non-European societies between the end of the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries and remains one of Western modernity's most prominent features. .

Colonialism and Modernity

Innocent Modernity

The concept of modernity is usually defined as encompassing the processes of change and transformation that have ensued since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism in Europe. These include, the advent of large-scale production and consumption of commodities, a decline in religious forms of authority and the religious world-view, the appearance

new class formations and the growth of new ways of producing and classifying knowledge. Moreover, Western modernity is associated with the Enlightenment, a period during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that saw a heterogeneous group of thinkers mainly from France, Scotland, Italy and Germany produce an intellectual movement resulting in a fundamental shift in European social thought. However, the Europe-centered accounts of Western modernity favored by theorists like Marshall Berman tells only part of the story and perpetuates the image of what Paul Gilroy has called an innocent modernity, that emerged “from the apparently happy social relations that graced post-Enlightenment life in Paris, Berlin and London”.¹ Even postmodernists like Zygmunt Bauman, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, though well aware of Western modernity’s not-so-innocent workings, fail to give due weight to the significance of Europe’s violent encounters with the rest of the world through colonialism, imperialism and slavery in understanding modernity’s ethical and intellectual legacy in the West.² Rather, the subjugation of non-European populations is seen as irrelevant or as an aberration resulting from premodern sentiments that were eventually overtaken by Enlightenment rationality.³ Yet, as will become clear, to minimize colonialism as an aspect of Western modernity is to deny the central role that Europe’s contact with its colonial Others has played in determining the meaning of modernity’s key concepts of rationality and civilization, thereby diminishing its ongoing political, economic and cultural legacy to the modern world order. While it may have begun as a pragmatic, haphazard practice driven primarily by economic imperatives, colonialism cannot be understood outside the cultural context that gave it a framework and meaning. Colonialism, then, has a philosophical, historical and theoretical genealogy that can be traced squarely to the Enlightenment and the emergence of modernity in Europe. Western modernity was, therefore, not just complicit with colonialism but was constituted by it.

¹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 44. For Berman’s conceptualization of modernity see, Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988).

² While Zygmunt Bauman’s work encompasses an important interrogation of the violence of modernity he focuses his attention on Europe’s genocidal practices toward its *internal* Others. See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989). Likewise, although Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault both broached the complicity of Western rationality with colonialism, their discussion of the problem was limited. See Jacques Derrida, “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,” *New Literary History* 6, no. 1 (1974). Michel Foucault, “George Canguilhem: Philosopher of Error,” *Ideology and Consciousness*, no. 7 (1980).

³ Modernity theorist Ernst Gellner for instance, regards colonialism to be just another form of oppression brought about by the uneven diffusion of technological advance, and therefore considers it unworthy of particular attention. See Ernest Gellner, “The Mightier Pen? Edward Said and the Double Standards of Inside-out Colonialism,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 February 1993, 3.

Modernity, Orientalism and Colonialism

In their theorization of the relationship between modernity and colonialism Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that European modernity was not a unitary concept but rather, occurred in two modes.⁴ The first of these modes was a radical revolutionary process, the result of the European “discovery of the plane of immanence” between 1200 and 1600, which saw humanity conferred with the powers previously thought to be held by the heavens, thereby opening up new possibilities of freedom, democratic politics and scientific inquiry.⁵ However, the revolution of European modernity provoked a counterrevolution that sought to dominate these new forces in order to “reestablish ideologies of command and authority” by seeking to “transplant the new image of humanity to a transcendent place...and above all oppose the reappropriation of power on the part of the multitude”.⁶ In the midst of this crisis, during the development of Renaissance thought, Europe made the discovery of territories and populations drastically different to its own. This discovery strengthened the revolutionary forces challenging the accepted orthodox Christian history of the world and bolstered the idea of human equality initiated by revolutionary Renaissance humanism. Europe’s outside thus became another front in the counterrevolutionary war of containment in the struggle over the paradigm of modernity. The concept of Eurocentrism was forged precisely for this purpose, coming into being at the moment when the counterrevolutionary forces became conscious of Europe’s ability to subject the newly discovered populations to their domination.⁷ Colonialism, therefore, functioned as a temporary solution to the crisis that marked the emergence of European modernity.

Eurocentrism was crucial to the formation of the concept of ‘the West’ in modern discourse. The discourse of the ‘West and the Rest’ pitted a rational, civilized and progressive West against a stagnant, barbaric and superstitious Rest, and fed into the notion that there is a single (European) path to civilization and social development. This, in turn allowed for the hierarchization of societies,

⁴ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 74-5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

putting the West, which in Kant's terms had "thrown off the yoke of immaturity", at the pinnacle of social development.⁸

At the other end was the lowest stage of development, the state of nature, a concept that came to underlie the development of European political thought during the Enlightenment.⁹ The concept has its origins in the Spanish 'discovery' of native American peoples in the fifteenth century, which posed a fundamental challenge to the Christian conceptions of human nature, history and destiny underpinning European society. Hence, Spanish writers like Las Casas, drew on the old religious concept of the state of nature – the condition of humans before their exit from Eden – and reinvented it as a secular and historical first stage of human development, represented by native Americans. This enabled the Spaniards to explain the existence of societies so different from their own and to develop the political and moral framework to interact with them while pursuing their primary goals of wealth accumulation and religious conversion.¹⁰ The state of nature thus, "brought with it a worldview based on a hierarchy of cultures which served as the basis for a theory of unequal relations between political communities".¹¹ The concept of the Rest was built upon the edifice of this hierarchy of cultures and was intrinsic to the development of the European Enlightenment. Without it, the West would not have been able to recognize and construct itself as the center of its discourse on modernity, civilization and development.¹²

The discourse of the West and the Rest that took shape in the post-Enlightenment period is referred to here as modern orientalism. Ziauddin Sardar argues that orientalism should be treated as a series of discourses changing with historical circumstances but linked by common features, rather than as a monolithic metanarrative.¹³ He locates orientalism's origins in Christian Europe's encounters with Islam in the eighth century, which, he argues, represented the first challenge to the Christian worldview, and produced the "willful misunderstanding and knowledgeable ignorance [that] have remained

⁸ Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'," in *Kant's Political Writings*, Hans Reiss, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 55.

⁹ Beate Jahn, *The Cultural Construction of International Relations: The Invention of the State of Nature* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹² Stuart Hall, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power," in *Formations of Modernity*, Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben, eds. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 311-14.

¹³ Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), 55.

[its] guiding spirit".¹⁴ However, as Edward Said argues, it is only from the late eighteenth century that orientalism can be analyzed as a systematic, institutionalized practice.¹⁵ In its most basic understanding, orientalism is a complex set of dominant representations by which the non-European Other was produced as the West's contrasting image. When used by Said and Sardar, the term orientalism refers specifically to the societies of the Islamic world, China, India or Japan. However, here orientalism will be treated as a general term for the practice of producing non-Western Otherness, thereby making it just as applicable to European discourses about the 'primitive' societies of Africa and the indigenous peoples of Australia, the Americas and the South Pacific. It is true that some Western scholarship compares non-European societies positively with the West.¹⁶ However, on balance, both in its scope and impact, orientalism is a discursive formation that shows the superiority of the West in contradistinction to its Others. In any case, orientalism is about more than just the ability of the West to (mis)represent the non-West, whether positively or negatively. Rather, orientalism "is a form of inward reflection, preoccupied with the intellectual concerns, problems, fears and desires of the West that are visited on a fabulated, constructed object".¹⁷

Orientalism, is not however, a totalizing discourse, for it contains internal divisions that are the manifestation of "an internal dislocation within Western culture, a culture which consistently fantasizes itself as constituting some kind of integral totality at the same time as endlessly deploring its own impending dissolution".¹⁸ The source of this internal dislocation lies in the ontology of Western philosophy, which, according to Emmanuel Levinas, has long been dominated by the concept of totality and the desire for unity and sameness.¹⁹ It is clearly evident in the philosophy that became the hallmark of Enlightenment thought, that of the seventeenth century thinker Rene Descartes, whose self-defining concept of consciousness gives rise to a form of reason that reduces "the unintelligible diversity and material alterity of the world to the familiar contents of our minds".²⁰ Under the influence of Cartesian rationality, difference, in Enlightenment thought, came to be represented as Otherness

¹⁴ Ibid., 19.

¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 3.

¹⁶ Nietzsche, for example, wrote favorably on the 'heroic virtues' of Islam See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 195-96..

¹⁷ Sardar, *Orientalism*, 13. Nietzsche's favorable treatment of Islam, for instance, served to buttress his critique of Christianity, which, he argued, had imparted onto Western society a false piety and a 'slave morality'.

¹⁸ Robert J. C. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 139.

¹⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987).

²⁰ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 36.

and this was taken to constitute a threat to the totality of Western self-identity. Consequently, when it comes to comprehending the Other in theory or knowledge, alterity, and the threat that it poses, is neutralized through the assimilation of the Other into the Self, which can then once again proclaim its universality. Orientalism therefore, is a projection of this dissonance in Western thought onto external geographical or cultural differences.²¹

Orientalism and International Relations

The pervasiveness of orientalist discourse in dominant modes of Western thought has meant that the modern social sciences have been significantly affected by its influence. By tracing the emergence of IR as a modern social science it is possible to see how orientalism has manifested itself in the discipline. In particular, it will be argued that orientalism permeates IR through the concept of anarchy that resides at its core as the basic assumption of many theorists and which was developed through a mixture of social contractarian thought and early British social anthropology.

The Enlightenment and the Social Sciences

The emergence of the modern European social sciences was a legacy of the Enlightenment thinkers and their successors. The Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century produced a fundamentally new way of thinking about human society and its organization and this led to the development of a small group of 'moral sciences', the predecessor of the professionalized disciplines of sociology and the other social sciences in the early nineteenth century.²² The main aim of the moral sciences was to overturn the Christian view of human society. Developing a universal, secular understanding of 'human nature' was vital to this and was achieved by taking a particular understanding of human psychology and giving it a central and strategic scientific position. Specifically, human nature was understood as essentially uniform despite its wide empirical variation. From this came the idea of empiricism according to which, all human knowledge comes only from experience and that by using a

²¹ Young, *White Mythologies*, 140.

²² Peter Hamilton, "The Enlightenment and the Birth of Social Science," in *Formations of Modernity*, Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben, eds. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 36.

scientific method it is possible to explain social phenomena on an objective basis. This concept, along with the notion of progress, the idea that with the aid of reasoned and empirically-based knowledge, social institutions could be developed that would move human society to a more enlightened state, became a pillar on which the founding concepts of the social sciences were to be based.²³ Hence, by the end of the nineteenth century the social sciences came to be defined along the lines of the natural sciences, that is, as being dependent on empirical evidence.

Within the social sciences, Enlightenment ideas about human nature and progress are often treated as abstract, value-neutral, theoretical devices derived from classical Greek and Roman texts. However, the development of these ideas and the emergence of the social sciences took place against a much more concrete social and cultural context than that of ancient Greece or Renaissance Rome, during a “gestation period of European narcissism and imperialism”²⁴ and in an intellectual climate which depended on empirical evidence to explain social phenomena. In this context, and building on earlier orientalist knowledge, the non-European Other, being representative of irrationality and barbarism, came to provide much of the empirical evidence crucial for the constitution of Enlightenment ideas. Indeed, Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova argue that, given the reliance of Enlightenment thinkers, particularly those of the social contractarian variety, on accounts of the ‘natural worlds’ by explorers and missionaries from the frontiers of European imperial expansion, these travelogues ought to be considered Enlightenment texts.²⁵ Moreover, J. Marshall Beier suggests that they be regarded as foundational texts of the Western social sciences since they were among the founding documents of the disciplines of anthropology and sociology and given the ongoing influence of social contractarian thought.²⁶ This is not to say that ideas from ancient Greek and Roman texts did not have a great influence on the construction of these concepts. However, the dominant understanding of the natural and social sciences during the Enlightenment necessitated empirical evidence and the apparently corroborating information provided by non-European societies at the time

²³ Ibid., 37.

²⁴ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Unpacking the West: How European is Europe?," in *Racism, Modernity and Identity on the Western Front*, Ali Rattansi and Sallie Westwood, eds. (1994: Polity Press, 1994), 130.

²⁵ Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova, "Introduction," in *The Enlightenment and its Shadows*, Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova, eds. (London: Routledge, 1990), 8.

²⁶ J. Marshall Beier, "Beyond Hegemonic State(ment)s of Nature: Indigenous Knowledge and Non-State Possibilities in International Relations," in *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class*, Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair, eds. (London: Routledge, 2002), 85.

were crucial in giving credence to ideas in the theoretical and political development of Western thought. Thus, the notion of progress was produced by introducing a philosophy of history based on a linear timescale that located non-European societies further behind those of Europe. Tying into this was the idea of a universal human nature, which led to the naturalization of particular features of the European path of development such as state building, private property and a monetary system.

IR as an academic discipline had its institutional inception in the period following World War I, well after the birth of the social sciences during the Enlightenment. Yet, in its construction it is clearly “a child of modernism, receiving its intellectual sustenance from the nation-state ideals of the Enlightenment and modern Western notions of rationality and progress”.²⁷ The ‘great texts’ of international theory that underpin the discipline conform to the story of the West’s Greco-Roman heritage with Thucydides and Machiavelli taking pride of place alongside thinkers such as Rousseau, Hobbes, Locke and Kant in imparting a supposedly enduring wisdom on matters of human nature and political behavior. On closer examination, however, it becomes clear that the supposedly transhistorical and transcultural theories of IR have been developed using particular interpretations of ancient writings alongside orientalist knowledge about the non-European Other that has permeated Western thought for centuries. IR’s use of political theory is illustrative of the argument that the Western ‘tradition’ of political philosophy, far from being a well-established historical reality, is rather, a retrospective construct and a vital component of orientalist discourse serving to “demarcate and delineate a Western tradition of rationality and liberty from its Eastern Other”.²⁸ In order to demonstrate the complicity of orientalist knowledge and regimes of representation in IR, the genealogy of the concept of anarchy, a basic premise of many IR theorists, will be traced back to its origins in social contractarian thought and early British social anthropology, two branches of knowledge that derived much from, and were deeply implicated in, Europe’s colonial and imperial projects.

²⁷ Albert J. Paolini, *Navigating Modernity: Postcolonialism, Identity, and International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 37.

²⁸ Sanjay Seth, "A Critique of Disciplinary Reason: The Limits of Political Theory," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 26, no. 1 (2001): 75-6.

Images of Anarchy in International Relations

The idea that the international system is anarchical because it has no overarching political authority is central to international theory although what this condition of anarchy means to the system differs depending on whether the theorist subscribes to the realist, liberal or constructivist school of thought. In all cases, however, the image of anarchy in the international system conveys much more than just decentralized political structures. Rather, anarchy in IR is consistently linked to ideas about the state of nature or primitive societies, both of which were heavily dependent on orientalist knowledge for their construction.

As discussed earlier, the state of nature in modern European thought came to be represented by the native American. Both Biblical and Greek writings were reinterpreted in light of the discovery of the native American, who was perceived to an example of man in its original or early form. Subsequently, the empirical study of native American societies replaced the authoritative texts as the basis of social and political thought.²⁹ This was particularly the case in the work of social contractarian thinkers whose arguments rest on the idea of the state of nature. Hobbes, for instance, famously argued that those living in societies in which there is no centralized sovereign power are living in a state of nature in which life is "solitary, poor, nasty brutish and short".³⁰ This was the consequence of the equal and free status of individuals in the state of nature which, in the absence of "a common power to keep them all in awe" leads to a "condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against man".³¹ To buttress his argument Hobbes cites the example of "the savage people in many places of America" who "have no government at all and live at this day in that brutish manner, as I said before".³² With this empirical evidence to apparently back up his arguments, it becomes possible to understand how Hobbes is able to privilege a reading of Thucydides that emphasizes the centrality of fear to human nature so unproblematically.³³

²⁹ Jahn, *The Cultural Construction of International Relations*, 109.

³⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), 64.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 64-65.

³³ It hints at why Hobbes in his essay 'Of the Life and History of Thucydides' is able to accept Thucydides' assertion, in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, that Sparta went to war out of fear, despite, as David Welch points out, the contradictions in the text and the lack of supporting evidence to back up the claim. See David A. Welch, "Why International Relations theorists should stop reading Thucydides," *Review of International Studies* 29 (2003): 305-06..

Hans Morgenthau follows the Hobbesian assessment of human nature and Hobbes' interpretation of Thucydides to fashion his realist theory of international relations, arguing that, "political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature".³⁴ Human nature, for Morgenthau is a result of "elemental biophysical drives" which gives it a timeless and universal essence that manifests itself in the quest for power.³⁵ According to him, "the drives to live, to propagate and to dominate are common to all men" and quotes extracted from Thucydides and the Dead Sea Scrolls are provided as the additional evidence for this transhistorical truth.³⁶ That Morgenthau sees the international system, as a primitive system is clear. The "decentralized structure of international society" he argues, inevitably results in the "decentralized nature of international law" and as such it "is a primitive type of law resembling the kind of law that prevails in certain preliterate societies, such as the Australian aborigines and the Yurok of northern California".³⁷

The ethnographic evidence for this claim comes from a study of 'primitive law' by the British social anthropologist, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, whose work was based on the theory of 'primitive' societies pioneered by early sociologists like Emile Durkheim in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Durkheim derived his theory of primitive society by consulting reports from missionaries and travelers on the indigenous societies of Australia and the Americas and he was influenced in his interpretation of these by Rousseau's conception of the state of nature.³⁸ For Rousseau, the state of nature is a speculative idea of 'natural man' stripped of all societal influences and is thus, a state "which perhaps never existed".³⁹ Consequently, when Rousseau looked to the Americas he did not see Hobbes' state of war for he did not believe native Americans to be in the state of nature. Rather, he found evidence of communities living a fairly peaceful existence because they were held together by "natural compassion".⁴⁰ Quoting from Jean Baptiste du Tertre's *General History of the Caribbean Islands*

³⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: the Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 31- 33.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 265.

³⁸ Emile Durkheim, *Montesquieu and Rousseau: Forerunners of Sociology*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1965).

³⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, trans. Maurice Cranston (London: Penguin Books, 1984), 68.

⁴⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1973), 67.

*Inhabited by the French*⁴¹, Rousseau argued that “it is...absurd to represent savages as continually cutting one another’s throats, to indulge their brutality, because this opinion is directly contrary to experience; the Caribbeans, who have as yet least of all deviated from the state of nature, being the most peaceable of people in their amours...”⁴² For Rousseau, non-European societies may not have represented the state of nature but they did inhabit a position not too far removed from it in his linear timescale of development. Durkheim sought to differentiate primitive from modern societies in a scientific manner, coming up with the idea of ‘mechanical solidarity’. In his view, human beings in primitive societies constitute a mechanical solidarity as they display no individual consciousness whereas advanced societies resemble an organic solidarity because they are characterized by a division of labor.⁴³ The highly speculative nature of theories about primitive society in British anthropology changed in the 1920s when A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and his colleague, Bronislaw Malinowski, started visiting indigenous communities in Australia and the Oceanic region. Their characterization of these groups remained however, much the same as that of Durkheim. Radcliffe-Brown, in particular, was heavily influenced by Durkheim’s theories, which, he felt, could be rendered scientific through his empirical observations.⁴⁴ Thus, primitive societies in early sociology and social anthropology were portrayed as simple and functionally undifferentiated while primitive social systems were seen as decentralized, disorganized and anarchic. It is this image that Morgenthau grafts onto the international system. State behavior is thus said to be governed by certain transhistorical, universal features akin to those found in primitive societies and embodied in Morgenthau’s six principles of political realism.⁴⁵

The combination of social contractarian theory and early British anthropology can also be found in the work of the neo-realist, Kenneth Waltz. Finding the definition of human nature that informs the Hobbesian state of nature too arbitrary, Waltz draws on Rousseau’s idea of the state of nature instead

⁴¹ Peter Hulme, "The Spontaneous Hand of Nature: Savagery, Colonialism and the Enlightenment," in *The Enlightenment and its Shadows*, Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova, eds. (London: Routledge, 1990), 16.

⁴² Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, 71.

⁴³ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1933), Ch. 2, Ch. 3.

⁴⁴ Aaron Beers Sampson, "Tropical Anarchy: Waltz, Wendt, and the Way We Imagine International Relations," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 27 (2002): 433-35.

⁴⁵ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, Ch.1.

and supplements these with anthropological theories of primitive society in deriving his ideas.⁴⁶ As we saw earlier, unlike Hobbes, Rousseau argued that the state of nature is not a state of war because “men are not naturally enemies, if only because when they live in their primitive independence the relation among them is not sufficiently stable to constitute either a state of peace or a state of war”.⁴⁷ In the state of nature then, humans live solitary and peaceful lives because they do not need to cooperate with one another. Waltz draws on this idea but reinterprets it in his theory of international relations, arguing that in the state of nature people *cannot* cooperate because of the absence of government.⁴⁸ He claims that, “by defining the state of nature as a condition in which acting units, whether men or states, coexist without an authority above them, the phrase can be applied to states in the modern world just as to men living outside a civil state”.⁴⁹ However, as a follower of Rousseau, Waltz must qualify his definition of the international system as a state of nature. He argues that “for individuals the bloodiest stage of history was the period just prior to the establishment of society. At that point they had lost the virtues of the savage without having acquired those of the citizen”. Thus “the late stage of nature is necessarily a state of war” and “the nations of Europe are precisely in that stage”.⁵⁰ Consequently, in the international system, “force is a means of achieving the external ends of states because there exists no consistent, reliable process of reconciling the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise among similar units in a condition of anarchy”.⁵¹ This characterization is the result of Waltz transposing onto the international system a theory of ‘primitive’ social structures put forth by the generation of British social anthropologists following Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski, who based their work on African political systems.⁵² Drawing on the work of S.F Nadel, for instance, Waltz argues that “to define a structure requires ignoring how units relate with one another (how they interact) and concentrating on how they stand in relation to one another (how they are arranged or positioned)”, because the arrangement of units is a property of the system.⁵³ Building on both Nadel and his colleague, Meyer Fortes, Waltz characterizes structure as “an abstraction, it cannot be defined by

⁴⁶ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1959), 166.

⁴⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 46.

⁴⁸ Jahn, *The Cultural Construction of International Relations*, 16.

⁴⁹ Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 173.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁵² Beers Sampson, "Tropical Anarchy: Waltz, Wendt, and the Way We Imagine International Relations," 430.

⁵³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), 80.

enumerating material characteristics of the system. It must instead be defined by the arrangement of the system's parts and by the principle of that arrangement".⁵⁴ By defining social structure so abstractly, Waltz, like Morgenthau, is able to transpose the concept of primitive anarchy to the international system, substituting states in place of Fortes and Nadel's 'tribal units'.⁵⁵

Primitive societies and the state of nature also form an integral part of the work of the liberal realist scholar Hedley Bull. Bull is not convinced that the Hobbesian state of nature is relevant to the international system and instead turns to John Locke whose "conception of the state of nature as a society without government does in fact provide us with a close analogy with the society of states".⁵⁶ Like Hobbes, Locke, an Enlightenment thinker who had a close association with private and state bodies responsible for devising colonial policies, rested much of his speculation about the state of nature on ethnographic writings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵⁷ For Locke, the state of nature is "a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of license" since it "has a law of Nature to govern it" which is "put into every man's hands, whereby every one has a right to punish the transgressors of that law".⁵⁸ However, because of "self-love", "ill-nature, passion and revenge" humans are not equipped to judge themselves and each other fairly, "and hence nothing but confusion and disorder will follow".⁵⁹ Citing José de Acosta's *The Natural and Moral History of the Indies* Locke finds exactly this situation in native American societies, leading him to conclude that they are "still in a pattern of the first ages in Asia and Europe".⁶⁰ Following Locke's conception of natural law, Bull argues that "in modern international society, as in Locke's state of nature, there is no central authority able to interpret and enforce the law, and thus individual members of the society must themselves judge and enforce it".⁶¹ However, this being the case, "justice in such a society is crude and uncertain".⁶² As in the work of Morgenthau and Waltz, studies by British social anthropologists on African political systems once again make an appearance. For Bull, "international society is an anarchical society, a society without government" just as in "primitive stateless societies" which "present this spectacle of 'ordered

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Beers Sampson, "Tropical Anarchy: Waltz, Wendt, and the Way We Imagine International Relations," : 444.

⁵⁶ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 48.

⁵⁷ Richard H. Cox, *Locke on War and Peace* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 97-8.

⁵⁸ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London: Everyman's Library, 1924), 119-20.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 123.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 167, 71.

⁶¹ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 48.

⁶² Ibid.

anarchy”.⁶³ Mentioning the work of Meyer Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard among others, Bull constructs many similarities between primitive societies and in international society. In both for example, “the politically competent groups may legitimately use force in defense of their rights, while individuals and groups other than these must look to the privileged, politically competent groups for protection, rather than resort to force themselves”.⁶⁴ He also however, finds a much greater degree of social cohesion in primitive societies due to their “less exclusive and self-regarding nature...their cultural homogeneity, the underpinning of their rules by magical and religious belief, and their small and intimate nature”.⁶⁵ Because international society does not display this type of “wholeness and unity” Bull rejects the use of structural-functionalism in his analysis and admits that to a large extent “international politics is better described as a state of war”.⁶⁶

The notion of the anarchical international system is also deeply embedded in the work of liberal IR scholars many of whom take Immanuel Kant as their philosophical inspiration.⁶⁷ Kant agreed with Hobbes that humans living in a state of nature exist in a state of war and also finds evidence of this “in the wilds of America”.⁶⁸ Subsequently, Kant argues that in their “external relationships with one another, states, like lawless savages, exist in a condition devoid of right” and that “this condition is one of war”.⁶⁹ The acceptance of the state of nature as a central tenet has flowed into the work of contemporary liberal IR proponents of Kant like Stanley Hoffmann who argues that, “the ‘Hobbesian situation’ must be our starting point. In international relations, there is an essence of political behavior, what philosophers have called the ‘state of war,’ a competition without any restraints”.⁷⁰ While not explicitly referring to anthropological studies like Waltz and Morgenthau, images of primitive societies clearly inform Hoffman’s image of the international system. The model on which he bases his theory is that of a “decentralized milieu divided into separate units. It is not a Community, but at best it is a society with limited conditional cooperation among its members...It has no central Power – hence,

⁶³ Ibid., 59.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 62.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 75-6.

⁶⁷ Stanley Hoffmann and David P. Fidler, "Introduction," in *Rousseau on International Relations*, Stanley Hoffmann and David P. Fidler, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), lxxvii.

⁶⁸ Immanuel Kant, "The Metaphysics of Morals," in *Kant's Political Writings*, Hans Reiss, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 98,160.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 165.

⁷⁰ Stanley Hoffmann, *The State of War: Essays on the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965), 27.

resort to violence by each unit is legitimate".⁷¹ In order to introduce ethics and morality into the international system it must be transformed from the "state of a jungle to that of a society" for "moral opportunities, in every milieu, depend on the social framework" and "if (as in primitive societies) integration is total, there is not moral choice at all".⁷²

Concerns about turning the 'jungle' of the international system into a society also underpin the work of the constructivist IR scholar Alexander Wendt who, like Hoffmann, uses images of primitive society and the state of nature as a point of departure. Wendt begins by noting that, "anarchy poses a distinctive and important problem for international politics, to which a constructivist approach suggests some new solutions" . His take on the anarchy problematique is to claim that "anarchy is what states make of it", that is, anarchy doesn't have to lead to realist power politics and self-help systems because anarchy itself has no internal logic.⁷³ So, where Waltz's abstract notion of structure allows him to posit states in the role of tribal units, for Wendt the picture is complicated by his conviction that structure be must defined by both material and ideational aspects. In Wendt's schema this means that an agent, such as a state, cannot automatically be a role in a structure, rather it must take on a role depending on the ideas and interests it shares with other agents.⁷⁴ He thereby develops a theory in which international systems change and evolve depending on the ideas and roles that are internalized by states. To make his point, Wendt identifies the three structures of Hobbesian anarchy, Lockean anarchy and Kantian anarchy, he believes to be at work in the international system. Here it becomes clear that the Enlightenment philosophy of history and the primitive societies of social anthropology are still very much part of Wendt's conceptualization of international politics. His three structures of anarchy are particularly evocative of Adam Ferguson's 'stages' theory of history in which savagery was followed by barbarism and finally civilization. Hobbesian anarchy is a system consisting of states taking on the role of enemy, which gives rise to a type of violence that has no internal limits, the "kind of violence found in a state of nature".⁷⁵ Hobbesian anarchy is thus akin to the state of nature and although Wendt admits that it is "an ideal type, and perhaps never characteristic of the state of nature

⁷¹ Ibid., 14.

⁷² Stanley Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 35.

⁷³ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992).

⁷⁴ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 251.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 261.

among individuals” he still argues that “the Hobbesian condition does describe significant portions of international history”, perhaps because as he later claims, “states are by nature more solitary than people”.⁷⁶ Wendt’s Hobbesian anarchy is therefore described in terms similar to that of Waltz’s international system, its unmitigated violence means that it cannot sustain role asymmetry and it remains dominated by states taking on the role of enemy.⁷⁷ What distinguishes Wendt’s theory though, is his argument that this “state of war is constituted by shared ideas, not by [a logic of] anarchy or human nature”.⁷⁸ This takes Wendt closer to the social anthropology of Radcliffe-Brown who, like Wendt, was interested in how social systems evolve.⁷⁹ Thus, Wendt’s Hobbesian anarchy can evolve into a functionally differentiated Lockean anarchy that is constituted by a role structure based on rivalry rather than solely enmity. It is this “live and let live logic of Lockean anarchical society” that he claims is dominant in the Westphalian system despite occasional lapses into the Hobbesian condition of nature’s realm.⁸⁰ However, it is Kantian anarchy, in which states have internalized the role of friend and have built collective identities, that is the most functionally differentiated and hence representative of the highest stage of evolution. Radcliffe-Brown’s sociology drew from Emile Durkheim’s notions of functional differentiation and the division of labor to explain how some groups evolve into civilized societies and Wendt’s explanation of how a Kantian anarchy is brought about does the same.⁸¹ Among the four master variables he identifies as necessary for collective identity formation are interdependence, common fate and homogeneity. This third variable is the precondition from which a division of labor emerges and “increases the extent to which actors are interdependent and suffer a common fate”, which in turn produces functional differentiation.⁸² The fourth variable, self-restraint, also has echoes of Durkheimian social theory, for Wendt suggests that this is “the essence of civilization”⁸³ as opposed, it might be added, to the passionate reflex that supposedly dominates behavior in primitive societies.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ Ibid., 266-7.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 257.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 260.

⁷⁹ Beers Sampson, "Tropical Anarchy: Waltz, Wendt, and the Way We Imagine International Relations," 447.

⁸⁰ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 270, 79.

⁸¹ Beers Sampson, "Tropical Anarchy: Waltz, Wendt, and the Way We Imagine International Relations," 449.

⁸² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 356.

⁸³ Ibid., 359.

⁸⁴ Beers Sampson, "Tropical Anarchy: Waltz, Wendt, and the Way We Imagine International Relations," 450.

The Savage Within International Relations Theory

By describing the international system as anarchical IR theorists cannot help but activate images of the state of nature and primitive society, concepts that contain culturally specific understandings of human nature and history which are hidden from view through the language of universalism. In doing so they end up recycling orientalist ideas about non-Western societies that can no longer be considered valid sources of knowledge. The ethnographic evidence that social contractarian theorists used to substantiate their claims about the state of nature is highly dubious for a variety of reasons not least of which were the colonizing imperatives of those writing the studies. As Beier suggests, the idea of the savage in the state of nature, "fulfills a vital rhetorical function in support of the contemporary settler state itself" by justifying "past conquests and continuing assimilative practices, even to the extent of making them seem morally imperative".⁸⁵ Likewise, British social anthropology's representation of primitive social systems was used by British colonial administrators to justify and implement their rule. They were particularly fond of the evolutionist strand of thinking, which maintained that unless change was introduced very gradually primitive societies would suffer cultural degeneration, because it allowed them to resist any innovations threatening to their authority.⁸⁶ Anthropology has long realized that the notion of 'primitive society' is a Western invention, the production of which supplied nineteenth century Europe with the necessary Other against which it could reinforce itself in a time of rapid change and uncertainty.⁸⁷ The British social anthropology that has so influenced IR theorists reflected the downward spiral of Britain's self-confidence at the end of the nineteenth century, due to declining economic growth, the fall in its international clout and increasing demands for independence from its colonies.⁸⁸

As culturally peculiar ideas that were given form and meaning by European domination over non-European societies, the concepts of the state of nature and primitive society have had similarly deleterious effects when transposed onto the international system via the description of it as anarchic.

⁸⁵ Beier, "Beyond Hegemonic State(ment)s of Nature: Indigenous Knowledge and Non-state Possibilities in International Relations," 108.

⁸⁶ Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Anthropology, 1885-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 222.

⁸⁷ Elazer Barkan and Ronald Bush, "Introduction," in *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, Elazer Barkan and Ronald Bush, eds. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 2.

⁸⁸ Kuklick, *The Savage Within*, 5.

It results in a portrayal of the international system as a primitive struggle that must be mitigated through the use of force or the imposition of some form of universalist ethic and the capacity for this is consistently found only in the West. As will be seen below, contemporary international theory remains embedded with the notion that the West sets the standard for civilized human conduct and Western, liberal democracies are constantly treated as the only entities capable of bringing any sort of order to the system. International theory is thus, conceptually limited by being bound to an orientalist logic devoid of genuine consideration of how to deal with the cultural diversity of the world in a way that does not involve coercion, domination and the assumption of Western superiority.

Realism, Anarchy and Western Civilization

Nowhere are the conceptual limitations of international theory more evident than in the work of Kenneth Waltz, for whom questions of ethics, morality and cultural diversity do not enter into the picture he paints. For Waltz, states act as they do not because of ideology or cultural factors but because they operate in an anarchical system that forces them to behave in a particular (self-interested) way. The structural-functionalist anthropology that influenced Waltz's theory of international politics considered the personality structure of the individual in primitive societies to be epiphenomenal since individual behavior was thought to be entirely the product of social conditioning.⁸⁹ Hence, just as "anthropologists do not ask about the habits and the values of chiefs and the Indians" when accounting for how the "interactions of tribal units are affected by tribal structure", Waltz does not consider it relevant to take into account cultural and other differences when accounting for states' behavior since their actions are the result of systemic features.⁹⁰ War and insecurity in the international realm are thus unavoidable products of like units, whether they are empires, nations or tribes, acting in a self-help system where survival is their key aim. And this has been the case, claims Waltz, through the millennia from the time of Thucydides through to Hobbes and the Cold War.⁹¹ Weighing the arguments in favor of transforming the anarchical system into one of hierarchy against the alternative of just system maintenance, Waltz comes to the conclusion that the former is too risky.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁹⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 81.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

For him, system transformation is taken to mean “that we act to make and maintain world order”, just as England claimed to bear the white man’s burden and France had her *mission civilisatrice*.⁹² Accordingly, Waltz argues that system transformation in the contemporary period risks all the pitfalls of colonialism for “if a country because of internal disorder and lack of coherence, is unable to rule itself, no body of foreigners, whatever the military force at its command, can reasonably hope to do so”.⁹³ Moreover, he fears the “arrogance of the global burden bearers” preferring instead the “selfishness of those who tend to their own narrowly defined interests”.⁹⁴ In a characterization that bears the hallmarks of the policy of indirect rule which came to be favored by colonial administrators, Waltz praises the US Cold War strategy from the 1970s as one that aimed at “maintaining and working the system, rather than of trying to transform it”.⁹⁵

Morgenthau’s ideas on dealing with international anarchy are complicated by his claim that the drive for power within human nature dictates the behavior of societies. Whereas for Waltz, conflict arises from the structural anarchy of the international system, for Morgenthau conflict and anarchy are the result of human nature. Thus, the inherently self-interested nature of states means that any efforts to transform the present system of sovereign states into something like a world state will fail. Instead, Morgenthau stays true to his insistence about the centrality of human nature in arguing that only the practice of diplomacy, as a traditional and timeless feature of social relations between humans, can create peace through accommodation.⁹⁶ Anarchy, in other words, cannot be ordered but can be tamed. For Morgenthau, this goal has been “the paramount concern of Western civilization”, because, “since the time of the Stoics and the early Christians, there has been alive in Western civilization a feeling for the moral unity of mankind which strives to find a political organization commensurate with it”.⁹⁷ Furthermore, he claims that the “increase in the humaneness and civilized character of human relations which the last centuries have witnessed in the Western world” has made the search for an end to war and international anarchy even more of a priority for the West.⁹⁸ According to Morgenthau then, establishing peaceful relations between societies through the establishment of moral rules is a

⁹² Ibid., 200.

⁹³ Ibid., 188-9.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 205.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 203.

⁹⁶ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 519-21.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 373.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 374.

uniquely Western preoccupation since the West is at a high stage of social development and not as beholden to the vicissitudes of human nature. Rather, the West has replaced crude and violent methods of combat with “refined instruments of social, commercial, and professional competition”, with the “competition for the possession of money” being the most important.⁹⁹ This interpretation of history appears to display a willful amnesia when seen from the non-Western world where the humaneness of the West has rarely been on display in the last few centuries.¹⁰⁰ Thus, what we get in Morgenthau is a culturally peculiar understanding of human nature and history dressed in a universalist guise that allows him to portray the West as the standard bearer for peace and morality in an international system he has constructed as devoid of both.

Ordering Anarchy

Similar understandings of history and the international system can be found in the work of Hedley Bull. However, for Bull, anarchy can be ordered, as demonstrated in primitive societies. According to Bull, on the basis of their studies of African systems, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard came to the conclusion that “a high degree of common culture was a necessary condition of anarchical structures, while only a central authority could weld together peoples of heterogeneous cultures”.¹⁰¹ He finds that “the society of sovereign states...is *par excellence* a society that is culturally heterogeneous”.¹⁰² The states system must, therefore, either be centralized or instilled with a common culture. Bull argues that since war has been an endemic feature of the states system, its replacement with a universal political organization would be ideal and the precedent for this ideal model can be found in the “pluralistic security-communities” that exist among Western states.¹⁰³ However, since a decentralized system is likely to persist for the foreseeable future he argues that reforming and reshaping the existing model remains

⁹⁹ Ibid., 223.

¹⁰⁰ Also forgotten in Morgenthau’s account is the long history of the West as a disrupter of peace, as it was, for example, in 1509 when the inability to compete on a commercial basis led to the Portuguese declaration of a proprietary right over the Indian Ocean, largely putting an end to the centuries-old Indian Ocean trade. The trade had flourished in a system of bargaining and compromise without any power trying to gain control of it by force, possibly due to the influence of the pacifist beliefs and customs of the Gujarati Jains and Vantias who played an important part in it. See Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land* (Delhi: Ravi Dayal & Permanent Black, 1992), 286-88.; Kavita Philip, *Civilising Natures: Race, Resources and Modernity in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2003), 33-4..

¹⁰¹ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 64.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 283-4.

the only available avenue for mitigating conflict between states.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Bull argues this is even more vital in light of the “revolt of non-European peoples” which weakened international society by undermining the nineteenth century common culture that previously formed its basis.¹⁰⁵ His solution is the establishment of an international society based on a common cosmopolitan culture that would bring the sort of wholeness and unity underpinning the ordered anarchy of primitive societies.¹⁰⁶ However, while Bull acknowledges that the “nascent cosmopolitan culture of today, like the international society which it helps to sustain, is weighted in favor of the dominant cultures of the West” he fails to grapple with the implications of this apart from suggesting the “need to absorb non-Western elements to a much greater degree if it is to be genuinely universal”.¹⁰⁷ Diversity is therefore permissible only so far as it fits into the existing model of cosmopolitan culture developed and defined on the West’s own terms.

For Hoffmann also, decolonization has meant that “the international system is much more heterogeneous than at any other moment; not only in terms of ideologies but also in the sense that there is a radical difference between states run by secular churches...and all the others, or in the sense that states behave as if they did belong to different ages of international affairs”.¹⁰⁸ Like Bull, Hoffman finds the establishment of world order conditional on the development of cosmopolitanism because (and here he harks back to the state of nature as a state of war) the alternative of a “world of self-contained oases or self-contained islands in a state of siege is a very dangerous world”.¹⁰⁹ However, “for the time being we have to be resigned to the fact that cosmopolitanism will be possible only in some parts of the world”, that is, in parts of the world containing secular, Western-style liberal democracies.¹¹⁰ Hoffmann’s cosmopolitanism entails the development of a “liberal ethic of world order” in which the “individual’s right to democratic self-government should be recognized as the highest principle of world order, with state sovereignty as a circumscribed and conditional norm”.¹¹¹ Any suggestion that the potential violation of the sovereignty of nonliberal states might entail a new kind of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 287.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 257-9, 316-7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 316.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 317.

¹⁰⁸ Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics*, 201.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 222.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 223.

¹¹¹ Stanley Hoffmann, *World Disorders: Troubled Peace in the Post-Cold War Era* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 247.

Western imperialism however, is dismissed by the claim of liberalism's universal relevance.¹¹² The universality of liberalism was, of course, the basis on which liberals like Locke and John Stuart Mill justified colonial rule, and Hoffmann's thinking does not escape their logic. Just as it was for Locke and Mill, what it means to be human, for Hoffmann, is narrowly defined according to liberal precepts, as evidenced by his emphasis on the individual, while anything outside of this vision is vulnerable to intervention in the form of civilizing missions.

Hoffman's liberal ethic of world order is largely what we find in Alexander Wendt's Kantian anarchy although Wendt is cautious about settling "prematurely on liberal democracy as the only pathway to a Kantian culture".¹¹³ Indeed he leaves open the possibility that Kantian culture is "multiply realizable" through for example, "Islamic states, socialist states, "Asian Way" states".¹¹⁴ Yet Wendt's theory is largely an explanation of how some states, namely Western ones, have been able to lift themselves out of the Hobbesian state of nature into a Kantian peace, in which common, fundamentally liberal values are the binding factor. Self-restraint, that "essence of civilization" is most likely to be found, Wendt argues, in democratic states and capitalist states are more likely to be interdependent.¹¹⁵ Moreover, given that the other two variables Wendt identifies as being necessary for "prosocial behavior" are homogeneity and common fate, it is difficult to see how diversity of political form is allowed for in his theory. Identities are formed, Wendt claims, through imitation and social learning and the 'Western way' appears to be the preeminent model of behavior in Kantian anarchy.¹¹⁶

International Relations: Still a Western Social Science

The assumption of anarchy in international politics has major implications for the treatment of culture in IR. Because the culturally specific construction of the concept of anarchy is not recognized it is instead essentially considered to be the product of the functioning of human nature in an environment free of constraints. Thus, cultural difference in realism is considered to be a superficial mask under

¹¹² Ibid., 245.

¹¹³ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 364.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 342-3.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 364.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 336.

which lies the real driver of human behavior and therefore state behavior, a self-interested human nature. Alternatively, in liberalism, cultural particularity is treated as a stage along the path of evolution to a universal condition based on values derived from the natural rights of individuals. Ultimately then, in both these dominant strands of IR, dealing with the cultural diversity of the world is avoided through its absorption within a universal human nature. However, if as Clifford Geertz argues, there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture¹¹⁷, which is a socio-historical construct, then there is “neither an unchanging subcultural self nor an established cross-cultural consensus”.¹¹⁸ What this implies is that the universal human nature that IR scholars assume to exist is actually a Western cultural construct, which is why their theories so often end up implicitly and unreflectively universalizing Western culture and imposing it as a norm.

This assumption of the universal applicability of modernist Western ontology results in a highly restricted understanding of the conditions necessary for the realization of peace, justice, freedom and human rights in world politics. As Siba Grovogui notes, “the actualization of modern Western maxims and standards of international relations have failed for three centuries to bring about their declared goals of peace and stability”.¹¹⁹ This leads him to wonder why Western thinkers remain the sole inspiration of today’s scholars of international relations. Indeed, it could be argued that as long as Western thinkers remain the sole inspiration, IR will remain circumscribed by its parochialism in dealing with cultural diversity and hamstrung in its efforts to bring about a more peaceful world. The decolonization of IR must, therefore, proceed in two directions. Firstly, IR needs to remember its origins as a Western social science that built its core categories on centuries of accumulated orientalist knowledge about the non-Western Other. Secondly, rather than objectifying the contents of the world and distorting it to make it fit within a Western conceptual framework, IR theorists must devise fundamentally different ways of interacting with the non-West based on acknowledgement, dialogue and respect for their self-defined histories, knowledges, and worldviews.

¹¹⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 49.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹¹⁹ Siba N. Grovogui, "Come to Africa: A Hermeneutics of Race in International Theory," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 26, no. 4 (2001): 434.

