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# Sociology and international relations: legacies and prospects.

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**Sociology and International Relations:
Legacies and Prospects**


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**Abstract**
While sociological concepts have often been implicitly used in International Relations (IR), recent years have seen a more explicit engagement between IR and Sociology. From constructivist debates about structure-agency, identity formation and constitutive causation to post-structuralist accounts of biopower, genealogy and governmentality, many of sociology's most fundamental concerns have been used to illuminate core features of international theory. As with any such interdisciplinary assignation, there are both possibilities and challenges contained within this move: possibilities in terms of reducing IR's intellectual autism and opening the discipline towards potentially fertile terrain that was never, actually, that distant; challenges in that interdisciplinary raiding parties can often serve as pseudonyms for cannibalism, shallowness and dilettantism. This forum reviews the sociological turn in IR and interrogates it from a novel vantage point – how sociologists themselves approach IR concepts, debates and issues. Three sociological approaches – classical social theory, historical sociology and Foucauldian analysis – are critically deployed to illuminate IR concerns. In this way, the forum offers the possibility of (re-)establishing exchanges between the two disciplines premised on a firmer grasp of social theory itself. The result is a potentially more fruitful sociological turn, one with significant benefits for IR as a whole.

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**Introduction**

The late birth and subsequent growing pains of International Relations (IR) are, by now, well worn tales (Wæver 1998). Not only, it is supposed, does IR have a distinct point of origin vis-à-vis other social sciences, nor is there any *body* of what we could recognisably call international theory before the early twentieth century, whether we search for this in the sands of political theory (Wight 1966) or social theory (Rosenberg 2006). Although there are now a number of competing explanations of IR's origins (e.g. Ashworth 1999; Schmidt 2002; Vitalis 2005; Long and Schmidt eds 2005), these accounts converge around one common point of departure: that the principal institutionalisation of the discipline took place during the first half of the twentieth century. As such, there is general agreement that IR lacks comparable origins to other social sciences. Unlike sociology, economics and political science (often considered to be the master-disciplines of the social sciences), IR was not established during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as attempts to understand the effect of modernity upon European societies, that is to say the range of processes extending from the emergence of industrial capitalism to the rise of the bureaucratic state and the development of novel techniques of mass warfare. Nor was IR established in order to interrogate the "dark side of modernity" – the multiple changes wreaked upon non-European societies by the midwives to European exceptionalism: slavery, colonialism and imperialism. And the consequences of IR's discrete point of departure are significant. Indeed, compared to other major social sciences, IR has often appeared as an ugly duckling, less a coherent body of thought than a hotchpotch of statecraft, diplomacy, history and law. Perhaps it is little surprise to see relatively few stand-alone departments of International Relations in the world. When we ask what should be a simple enough question, 'What is International Relations?', it is surprisingly difficult to come up with a clear-cut answer. Rather, IR appears as a kind of disciplinary Polo mint – an enterprise without a centre.

Of course, all disciplines have blind spots; all have genealogies which are revealing as much for what they leave out as for what they include (Smith 1995). Nevertheless, the infusion of IR with two foundational dates – 1919, taken to be the first steps towards the institutionalisation of the discipline; and 1648, the Treaties of Westphalia and Munster which ended the wars of religion in Europe – envelop the discipline in a double bind which occludes investigation of the multiple forms of international system that have existed across time and space (Buzan and Little 2000),

and the important ways in which societies, polities and economies have inter-related in driving processes of historical development (Hobson 2004; Matin 2007; Hall and Jackson eds 2008). Mainstream IR scholarship has, for the most part, omitted the world beyond Europe (Reeves 2007; Shilliam ed forthcoming), the world beyond men (Enloe 1989) and, quite frequently, the world beyond high politics (Hobson and Seabrooke eds 2007). Indeed, for much of its existence, IR has had relatively little to say about perhaps the most fundamental international process of all – the world market (Strange 1988). All in all, this is what we might call an iceberg approach to IR, concentrating on 10% of the surface while missing 90% of the action which lies beneath (Tétrault and Lipshutz 2005). The result is an impoverished discipline, *necessarily* restricted by the limits of its purview.

Such a lament is hardly novel (e.g. Buzan and Little 2001) and there is little doubt that an increasing range of IR scholarship is aware of the poverty of its core subject matter. One of the principal ways in which IR scholarship has sought to makes it subject matter more robust is through concerted engagement with concepts, issues and debates drawn from cognate disciplines. This forum contributes to this process of (potentially fruitful) interaction by interrogating the relationship between IR and a discipline whose influence on IR has often been more hidden than openly declared – Sociology. Although one of our arguments is that sociological concepts have had a more substantial impact on IR than is often acknowledged, there is little doubt that the relationship between Sociology and IR – and the influence of the former on the latter – has become stronger in recent years, partly because of the emergence of social constructivism and critical theory in IR, partly because of a shared conceptual interest in notions of power, action and causation, and partly because of a certain fusion of empirical concerns ranging from how the modern world came into being to assessing the relative novelty of the present historical conjuncture. This forum examines both the explicit and implicit influences, and the long-term and short-term impact, of Sociology on IR. Our aim is simple: to demonstrate the ways in which Sociology – both as a practical field of enquiry and as a range of theoretical approaches – can add value to IR.

Although this task is a relatively familiar one, we set about it in a novel way. Rather than asking IR scholars how they employ sociological techniques and tool-kits, the forum explores the ways

in which three sociologists working on sites of obvious theoretical exchange (classical theory, historical sociology, Foucauldian analysis) approach some of IR's central concerns: whether IR constitutes a discrete field of enquiry; the possibility of imagining a non-Eurocentric IR; and the ways in which the international political economy is governed. Contributors have been asked, and in our view have admirably succeeded, to deliver a double punch, at once both theoretical and empirical, which can contribute to the deepening of IR as an intellectual field of enquiry. In the Introduction to the forum, we contextualise these contributions by exploring the many legacies – and prospects – of sociological thinking in IR. We begin by examining the ways in which Sociology has influenced mainstream IR and, in particular, structural realism (implicitly) and constructivism (explicitly). We move on to outline key spheres of the "social" international, exploring several problematiques which act as contact zones between the two disciplines, most notably anarchy/solidarity, instrumental-rational governance, and historical sociologies of modernity. In the final section of the Introduction, we return to the main concern which lies behind this forum – the role of interdisciplinary in academic research and, in particular, the prospects and challenges of continued conversations between IR scholars and sociologists.

**Legacies**

Sociology plays a role in the social sciences as the discipline associated with study of the particular form and content of modern society, seen as emerging from the "dual revolutions" that took place in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century – an industrial ("economic") revolution in England and a democratic ("political") revolution in France (Nisbet 1967, ch. 2; Elias 1978). The institutionalisation of Sociology along the lines of what Auguste Comte called a "science of the social" was made in direct response to the tumult of these dual revolutions. Walter Benjamin (1999, 249) put the vocation of Sociology starkly – like the angel of history, Benjamin wrote, sociologists should concern themselves with "searching for order in the broken fragments of modernity". Interestingly enough, although Martin Wight (1966) famously argued that there was no possibility of generating an international theory which stood as independent from study of the "good life" afforded by the laws and norms of domestic societies, the canonical trinity of classical sociological theory – Durkheim, Marx and Weber – did seek to unravel the *social* content of the modern condition, defining this in terms strikingly reminiscent of the "outside" of the good life, i.e. as anomie, alienation and disenchantment respectively.

Although IR often claims an inheritance drawn principally from political theory, international law and international history, it could be argued that there is relatively little in the discipline – at least in terms of IR theory – that stands outside from the influence of sociological approaches, theories and concepts. For example, although Kenneth Waltz (1979, esp. ch. 6) famously raided micro-economics in order to construct his theory of international politics, he also borrowed extensively – if inaccurately – from Émile Durkheim in generating his conceptualisation of international anarchy. Most notably, Waltz differentiated between domestic and international orders by reference to Durkheim's distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity. The international realm, Waltz argued, is characterised by mechanical solidarity – the lack of functional differentiation required by complex society's means that like-units (states) can only stand in loose relation to others. In short, Waltz rendered anomie in the form of anarchy. For Waltz, the domestic realm, in contrast to international politics, is characterised by organic solidarity, which Waltz understood to be a functionally differentiated space in which actors were bound together within an integrative, largely consensual, hierarchy.

A range of scholarship in IR has challenged Waltz's use of Durkheim. First, as many authors have noted, Waltz effectively misplaces conditions of anomie in mechanical rather than organic solidarity (Ruggie 1983; Larkins 1994; Barkdull 1995; Goddard and Nexon 2005). For Durkheim, traditional societies exhibit a mechanical form of solidarity in which individuals are bound to the "collective conscience" directly, i.e. without forms of institutional mediation. In this understanding, individuals in pre-modern societies can effectively be seen as inorganic matter, hence Durkheim's use of the concept "mechanical solidarity" to describe the ways in which individuals are bound together in simple social orders (1964, 130). For Durkheim, under conditions of modernity, processes such as industrialization induce a specialization of tasks which, in turn, produce a complex division of labour in which individuals are organised into discrete areas of work, family, education and so on (1964, 354-361). As experiences are increasingly channelled through these intermediary roles, individuals come to understand their existence as one of "anomie" – a loss produced by the removal of the totalising norms, codes and standards of conduct which defined pre-modern social orders (1964, 128, 361). Paradoxically, for Durkheim, the complex division of labour in modern industrial society actually gains its

strength by *encouraging* the development of individual personalities. As such, because both the parts (individuals) and the whole (society) can be considered as "living", modern society can be said to exhibit a novel, "organic" form of solidarity (1964, 124-131). And in this way, Waltz misreads Durkheim by seeing anomie as a feature of international (mechanical) life rather than, as Durkheim intended, as a product of domestic (organic) orders – a fairly pronounced error.

Linked to this point is a second problem with Waltz's use of Durkheim. As some critics point out (e.g. Rosenberg 2010), by misplacing anomie in mechanical rather than organic social orders, Waltz undermines the sharpness of his distinction between domestic societies and the international realm. Indeed, where Durkheim applies the concepts "mechanical" and "organic" in order to indicate how progress takes place over *time* between simple and complex orders, Waltz uses the concepts to illustrate a static *spatial* distinction between domestic hierarchy and international anarchy. In this way, Waltz appears to hold two contradictory claims simultaneously: first, following Durkheim, that there is a (potentially temporary) temporal distinction between domestic and international orders based on complex forms of differentiation; and second, in his (mis)reading of Durkheim in the development of structural realism, that this distinction is an eternal (spatial) point of demarcation between anarchical and hierarchical orders. Seen in this light, structural realism can be said to contain an unsustainable – even incommensurable – sociological logic, albeit one which often appears as implicit rather than explicit to its hardcore assumptions.

These two misappropriations of Durkheimian social theory by the doyen of structural realism – and it could be argued of mainstream IR theory in general – illustrate both the considerable impact, and also the important challenges, in unravelling the relationship between IR and Sociology. On the one hand, we see that even Waltzian structural realism – perhaps the most influential attempt to carve out a discrete space in which to theorise international relations – depends heavily upon sociological attempts to define the exclusivity of the modern condition. On the other hand, it is obvious that much of this interaction is problematic, employing sociological theories and concepts somewhere between loosely and inaccurately.

If the sociological foundations of structural realism represent one of IR's least productive interdisciplinary engagements, this is less the case with constructivism, an approach which has borrowed promiscuously from Sociology. Alexander Wendt (1987, 1999), for example, deploys a number of sociological approaches and traditions in order to set up his critique of structural realism and, implicitly, of mainstream IR discourse *tout court*. Wendt ranges far and wide in his appropriation of prominent sociological traditions, variously employing: American symbolic interactionism as practiced by figures such as George Herbert Mead (1981) and Erving Goffman (1959) (who, in turn, were influenced by the German interpretive sociological tradition known as *Verstehen*); the theory of structuration pioneered by the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984); and a sociology of knowledge exemplified in the work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967).

Perhaps most importantly, Wendt's version of social constructivism followed a path forged, in the first instance, by the agent-structure debate which had previously taken place in Sociology, itself a product of European debates regarding the structuralist tendencies of dialectical materialism and American disillusionment with Parsonian structural-functionalism (Swingewood 2000, 202; Bottomore 1984, 13). The agent-structure debate in IR may have been fed by pre-existing questions within the philosophy of science (such as Roy Bhaskar's (1975) critical realism; see also Keat and Urry 1975), but it was nourished primarily by extant sociological literatures (Wendt 1995, p.76fn17; Dessler 1989, 452 fn45). Seeking to inject understanding of the importance of social agency and change into previously static accounts of anarchy, Wendt perceived the international system as a realm in which states were both constrained by the requirements of anarchy but also played their part in constituting it. For Wendt, it was possible to identify three principal "cultures of anarchy" (Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian) within which certain social roles (enmity, rivalry and friendship respectively) served as the symbolic technologies by which states acted (Laffey and Weldes 1997). For Wendt, material capabilities could not be understood without prior understanding of the social contexts within which these relations were both embedded and interpreted. As such, one hundred nuclear weapons held by the UK were less threatening to the United States than one held by North Korea. And in short, "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt 1992).

Wendt was not the only instigator of constructivism who relied upon sociological approaches and traditions (see, for example, Onuf 1989). And since the appearance of Wendt's breakthrough article, constructivists have filled in a research agenda which has now reached impressive proportions. Richard Price (2007) and Nina Tannenwald (2007) have studied the emergence of a norm around the non-use of chemical and nuclear weapons respectively, taboos which serve as a "standard of civilization" delineating appropriate behaviour in international politics. Similarly, Martha Finnemore (1996, 2003) has illustrated how the norm of humanitarian intervention has been constructed over time, starting with the protection of Christians from persecution by the Ottoman Empire, and carried via the fight against slavery and decolonization into a universal concept of humanity. Patrick Jackson (2007) has examined the re-imagining of the German state after World War Two as a central node of Western civilization, thereby allowing material benefits – membership of NATO, aid and more – to flow into the country. At the same time, "thick constructivists", opposed to Wendt's immanent critique of mainstream IR, his state-centrism and his "rump materialism" have preferred to appropriate an understanding of international relations as "social all the way down" (e.g. Kratochwil 2006, 2007).

Thus, perhaps the most successful challenge to the 1980s and 1990s neo-neo synthesis in IR – social constructivism – is heavily indebted to Sociology, particularly the various twists, turns and permutations of the agent-structure debate. And as such, constructivism represents the most obvious – and influential – example of the ways in which contemporary IR scholarship has borrowed from Sociology. Nevertheless, the relationship between Sociology and IR far exceeds that which has taken place either explicitly within constructivist circles or implicitly between neo-realists and their critics. Indeed, both constructivism and structural realism are both way stations on a more extensive journey, one which includes the overt use by IR scholars of sociological classics (for example, Durkheim's notion of social solidarity or Weber's work on subjectivity), associations mediated through other approaches/disciplines (such as Michael Mann's (1986) pioneering study of the sources of social power in world history), and the use of concepts that, in their contemporary enunciations, have been previously developed by social theorists (for example, "rationality", "social action" and "power"). Indeed, if the influence of Sociology on IR is mapped in this way, it becomes obvious that the intellectual relationship between the two disciplines is multifaceted and complex rather than simple or singular.

**The "social" international**

If Waltz borrowed extensively – if incongruously – from Durkheim in his understanding of international anarchy, many critiques of structural realism in IR have relied just as heavily on sociological traditions, especially that of the Frankfurt School as represented by the work of Jürgen Habermas and his colleagues. Habermas is best known for his work on the ethical possibilities of modern forms of social solidarity. Habermas divides up knowledge-constitutive interests (1971, ch.9) – the means by which subjects organize social life – into three areas: technical interests (work life); practical interests (social life); and emancipatory interests (freedom from existing constraints) (Habermas 1983, pt. III). Habermas argues that the ethical promise of modern social life lies in the generation of forms of communicative action in which truth claims and moral action arise out of free and equal exchange between individuals engaging in "ideal-speech situations". Even if modernity generates friction between the anomie of the social "system" and the communicative rationality of the "life-world" (1987, ch.6), moral conduct and political action comes about through recovering and promoting the latter (1987, ch.8). Perhaps the most sustained engagement with Habermas in IR comes from Andrew Linklater (see also Risse 2000). Linklater argues that the "life-world" of international relations exhibits a thin form of moral universalism. Indeed, the spread of dialogic reasoning via the universalisation of the modern subject around the world serves to transform the moral composition of international relations (Linklater 1998, 2005). Cosmopolitan theory in IR along the lines proposed by Linklater effectively transposes sociological arguments about the need to sustain ethical forms of solidarity within modern societies characterised by anomie to the global level.

In effect, therefore, sociological approaches have informed the question of whether qualitatively different forms of social life exist in the domestic and international spheres. And sociological approaches have also informed debates about whether the social solidarity promised in the domestic sphere can be cultivated both across and beyond borders. In his contribution to this forum, Daniel Chernilo addresses both the content of modern social solidarity and the ethical possibilities of social life arising from this form. Chernilo critiques the view that classical sociology suffers from a "methodological nationalism" in the sense of a conflation between

modern society and the nation-state. Chernillo takes up these issues by reference to the synergies drawn between structural realism and the English School (Buzan, Jones and Little 1993; Buzan and Little 1996), and the emergence of a research agenda around the concept of world society (Buzan 2004), Chernilo argues that the critique of "methodological nationalism" is taken up in IR as the critique of the "domestic analogy". This critique is associated with Hedley Bull, a classical resource of the contemporary English School. Chernillo notes that the "domestic analogy" critique is essentially a denial of a position which argues that the modes of order within domestic societies can be transposed to the international realm. Alternatively, Chernilo argues, it is possible to extract an implicit universalism within classical social theory – itself drawn from the European tradition of natural law – which can be used to theorise international dynamics, in the process making the "domestic analogy" problem in IR appear to be something of a canard.

Sociological approaches to the issue of the "social" international have also informed the ways in which *subjectivity* and *inter-subjectivity* have been understood in IR. Indeed, in many ways, the problematique of inter-subjectivity in the contemporary social sciences is one defined by the challenge of explaining how systems of rule and order can adhere when they interpolate their units as anarchical/anomic individuals. Many of the "third debate" critiques of positivism in IR, for example, employed hermeneutics and interpretive sociology in the pursuit of "post-positivist" theory. In other words, rather than assuming that rational self-interested action is a pre-social behavioural response to external stimuli, a number of critics, using sociological resources, have argued that instrumental rationality is merely one, peculiarly modern, form of rational subjectivity (Walker, 1993, ch.3; George, 1994). To this end, critics have employed concepts drawn from perhaps the pre-eminent sociologist of instrumental rationality – Max Weber.

Much of Weber's sociology was concerned with examining why – and how – modern forms of rationality, social action and political rule took on the form of instrumental rationality. For example, in his thesis on the "Protestant Ethic" (2001), Weber argued that "the Protestant calling" was historically exceptional amongst spiritual maxims in that it sought neither indulgence in earthly pleasures nor a flight from this world. Rather, Protestantism demanded an ascetic of labour *within* the world. However, for Weber, this pursuit led to "disenchantment" in that individuals became subject to privileging predictability and calculation to the detriment of

the value-laden ends that social action was supposed to be mobilised towards (Weber 1978a, 66-68). For Weber, the product of this disenchantment (instrumental rationality) was distinguished from other forms of rationality (value, emotive and traditional) by the ways in which it *self-consciously* stripped away the relation between social and moral action. In parallel fashion, instrumental rationality could be distinguished from other ideal-types of political authority (charismatic and traditional authority) by the ways in which it allowed technical means to master moral ends. Weber's study of how modern bureaucracies produced and reproduced the pursuit of calculating, predictable action in order to generate a disenchanted world of "icy, polar darkness" stand as landmarks in the field (1978b, 958-975).

IR scholars have used Weber's critique of rational instrumentality and his conception of "legitimate authority" in numerous debates, not least those surrounding the authority and standing of international organizations (Lawson 2006). For example, work by Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore (2004) has indicated the extent to which international institutions assign meaning and normative values to certain modes of behavior, helping to construct and constitute the social world in their image. By carrying out the "duties of office" and "doing their job", international organizations control information and establish a level of expertise that states cannot possess. This specialized knowledge shapes rather than merely implements the policy directives of states. Hence, UN peacekeepers have an authority that stems from their role as neutral, independent actors implementing Security Council resolutions. The World Bank classifies who can be considered "peasants", "farmers" and "laborers", and asserts its authority by dictating the content and direction of global development programs. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has the power to set up camps, and make life and death decisions, without recourse to consultation with the UN's member states. Likewise, international organizations often establish a relative autonomy from the states that set them up by constructing categories of actors (like refugees), promoting new interests (such as human rights), or transferring models of political association around the world (in particular, democracy). In short, international organizations fix meanings, establish rules, and transmit norms around the international realm. This does not necessarily entail that they do this job well. Indeed, as Barnett and Finnemore (2004) acknowledge, factionalism, turf wars, cumbersome decision-making processes and self-insulated elites do not make for high-quality policy making. But the key point

is that these lines of inquiry pick up the Weberian argument that instrumental rational action is not simply a behavioural constant of human nature, but a particular form of social action immanent to the exercise of modern political power whether this is exercised domestically or internationally.

Weber's work on disenchantment and the "iron cage" of instrumental rational rule resonates with much of the Frankfurt School of critical theorists, including Adorno and Horkheimer (1997), Marcuse (1964) and Habermas (1987). Indeed, the instrumental-rationalization of social relations and the values imputed to them is an abiding feature of sociological approaches that focus on the ways in which modernity subverts the promise of enlightenment freedom. Weber, in this respect, shares a strong family resemblance (in the Wittgenstein sense) with Michel Foucault's (1991) work on "governmentality" ("the art of government"). For Foucault, modernity represents a totalising script in which conduct itself is managed by the techniques of an overweening array of disciplinary bureaucracies. Indeed, Foucault argues, control in modernity is exerted not just through intermediary institutions, but also in the form of "bio-power" – control over internal as well as external modes of subjectivity. In his contribution to this forum, Robert Deuchars extends Foucault's notion of governmentality to the international sphere. Deuchars examines the ways in which international techniques of rule – in particular, risk management and insurance regimes – act as a form of bio-politics which, in turn, governs populations by rendering them as calculating objects. Deuchars shows how international organization is best conceived as the geo-governmentality of a "global social" rather than as a discrete form of interstate relations. *In fine*, Deuchars shows how a critical sociological approach can enhance understanding of global governance by revealing the inter-subjective dimensions of instrumental rational forms of global rule manifested in the quotidian practices of credit rating, risk assessment, accounting and insurance. By including a searching critique of the roots of the 2007 credit crunch in his analysis, Deuchars demonstrates how Foucauldian analysis can generate compelling empirical arguments alongside powerful theoretical claims.

**A shared Eurocentrism**

Thus far, we have considered the beneficial insights that Sociology brings to IR both explicitly and, on occasion, more implicitly. However, IR is supposed to (at least definitionally) take the

whole world as its canvass, and it is with regards to this "global scope condition" that Sociology falls short. Indeed, the two disciplines share a common blind spot when it comes to this issue: oftentimes, both IR and Sociology concern themselves with the emergence and ambiguities contained within Western, particularly European, social and political orders. But this raises an important question: can European modernity represent global modernity?

Classical sociological analysis was intimately informed by observations of the non-European world, even if these were made through a coloniser's optic. For example, Durkheim's (1965) sociology of religion focused its attention on Australian aboriginal belief systems, while his work on the division of labour was oriented around a contrast between (ostensibly European) "traditional" communities and the "savage peoples" of America and the South Pacific (for example 1964, 58-59). Durkheim's nephew and student, Marcel Mauss (1979), looked at the development of the modern individual as a conscious, moral agent by contrast to the "primitive" collective roles found within American Indian and Australian aboriginal groups. At the same time, Weber's (1963) sociology constructed ideal-typical tools which contrasted European forms of disenchantment with "Eastern" belief systems. And for his part, Marx's later writings – including his thoughts on the potentials of the traditional Russian commune *(mir)* – were influenced by anthropologies of "primitives" provided by figures such as Lewis Henry Morgan, who undertook one of the first ethnographies on the American Iroquois (on these issues, see Shanin 1983). The justification for investigating "rude and early tribes" in the mid- to late-nineteenth century was usually posited in terms of "knowing" the savage and barbarian in order to better understand the "civilized" (see especially Tylor 1964; and Morgan 1964). And these investigations often relied upon historical narratives enthused by the mystique of a pristine, primal human past. With the development and spread of ethnographic methods, Europeans gained knowledge of the "primitive" by living within "exotic" communities (Malinowski 1922), in turn, shifting studies of the "primitive condition" from the status of historical conjecture to one concerned with establishing social facts. As social anthropology developed in the inter-war years, the primitive subject was opened up to detailed observation on the assumption that he/she inhabited a Durkheimian social system with roles that could be scientifically expressed (see especially Radcliffe-Brown 1948, 229-234). Concomitantly, the primitive condition became less about being understood as a mythic-historical figure to an object of comparative-sociological

study. In this way, Meyer Fortes and Edward Evans-Pritchard (1940), although anthropologists, produced work which would nowadays be regarded as "comparative politics".

Sociologists have often been concerned to make a principled distinction between their study of modernity and the study of the primitive by anthropologists. However, Roger Masters (1964) used social-anthropological studies to shed light on the thin sociality of the international sphere as a primitive form of governance. And Hedley Bull later used Masters' work as inspiration for his conceptualisation of international relations as exhibiting an "anarchical society" (1977, 57-62). More recently, Aaron Sampson (2002) has argued that one of the things that attracted Waltz to a Durkheimian structural-functional theory of the anarchical international system was his reading of social anthropology. Taken in this light, Waltz's international theory can, perhaps, best be seen as an example of "tropical anarchy". Alongside IR's well known "domestic analogy" problem (Bull 1977; Suganami 1989), therefore, can also be found a "geo-cultural analogy" – the assumption that modernization in non-European cultures and societies, transmitted through colonialism and imperialism, have essentially been derivative (or, at times, a mimicry) of the original dual revolutions of late eighteenth century Europe (e.g. Bull and Watson eds 1984; Gong 1984; Buzan and Little 2000, Suzuki 2009).

What becomes clear from this discussion is that the relationship between Sociology and IR must be explored not just by reference to the pre-modern/modern problematique, but also via recognition of the primitive/modern divide that exists *within* this problematique. While it is true that the non-European "primitive" has commonly been deployed in parallel to the European pre-modern subject, a characteristic of this relationship is to see the primitive other as formed by the European gaze rather than as a subject created in the process of the gaze itself (Fabian 1983). Indeed, the colonial inflection of sociological analysis evident in much classical theory and social anthropology denies the co-constitutive relationship between the primitive, the pre-modern and the modern (Asad ed 1973). Gurminder Bhambra's contribution to this forum engages specifically – and critically – with this inflection. Bhambra's critique is situated within one of Sociology's most prominent sub-fields – historical sociology. Since the 1980s, and particularly over recent years, advocates of historical sociology have made substantial footprints in IR, contributing to debates ranging from the emergence of the modern states-system to unravelling

the core features and relative novelty of the contemporary historical conjuncture (e.g. Rosenberg 1994, 2005; Teschke 2003; Hobson 2004). However, despite the upsurge of interest in historical sociology (e.g. Hobden and Hobson eds 2002; Lawson, 2007) and a burgeoning scholarship on inter-social forms of historical development (Hobson, Lawson and Rosenberg 2010), much IR scholarship remains cut off from the world beyond the West (Shilliam 2008). Bhambra argues that, despite appearances to the contrary, historical sociology in IR remains stuck in a purview which sees inter-connections as something constituted *by* European societies *to* "others", thereby granting the latter only a subaltern identity. Intriguingly, although post-colonial inquiry has sought to illuminate this identity by concentrating on the constitutive impact of the non-European world on the formation of the modern world, it frequently omits these co-constitutive *interconnections*. By focusing on "connected histories", Bhambra shows how important it is for historical sociology in IR to critically address the colonial narrative that has framed investigations of what should be considered as our "global modernity". Bhambra's endorsement of narrational inter-connections as providing the means for overcoming unhelpful self-other binaries highlights a central motivation for this forum – furthering inter-connections in the academic realm itself.

**Prospects**

Given that so many contemporary academic approaches are either trans-disciplinary (post-structuralism and the broader cultural turn) or joint-disciplinary (such as gender and ethnic studies), the type of engagement suggested by this forum (in general) and by Bhambra's piece (in particular) can be considered as both *potentially* fertile and *increasingly* widespread (Lawson 2008a). Given this, and granting the narrowness of much of IR's intellectual agenda as sketched out in the first part of this Introduction, it is hardly a surprise to see a call by IR scholars, funding bodies and the wider academy to work beyond the confines of sometimes arbitrary and frequently constraining disciplinary perimeters. Such steps are made all the more urgent by the non-disciplinary nature of many of the issues which most engage contemporary students and academics: religion, culture, terrorism, nationalism, globalisation and so on. Indeed, one celebrated advocate of interdisciplinarity, Immanuel Wallerstein, has chaired a commission which made the case for recasting social science as "pluralistic universalism", akin "to the Indian pantheon, wherein a single god has many avatars" (Gulbenkian Commission 1996, 59-60).

Wallerstein's (2004) vision of "uni-disciplinarity" is intended as a return to a nineteenth century view of the social scientific enterprise, a time before disciplines sought the relative autonomy and security which flowed from discrete disciplinary edges. However, even if we accept Wallerstein's basic point – that the social world is a totality only artificially separated into discrete spheres marked by the boundaries of academic disciplines – there needs to be a degree of caution about how (and whether) these disciplines should be reintegrated. After all, it may be that, at least up to a point, disciplinary and professional separation is no bad thing. Although awareness of work in other disciplines is part of the lifeblood of the intellectual imagination, it is unlikely that engagement with the primary turf of other disciplines can ever take place with the same levels of depth or knowledge which specialists bring to a subject. Often, it seems, interdisciplinarity entails an attraction to the mainstream of another subject, either delivering an off-the-shelf reading of a particular debate, or reading instrumentally about a certain issue in a way that precludes understanding of the more interesting terrain which lies beneath the surface (Lawson 2005). As such, interdisciplinary researchers often lack the means to arbitrate between rival specialist interpretations, a process Joseph Bryant (2005) describes as "narrational discordance". One of the lessons of the last few years of international politics, both for government and academics, is that specialist knowledge of an area, issue or language (such as the Middle East, Iraq or Arabic) generates a depth of understanding which few generalists can match. In this sense, it is worth recognising that, although the social sciences constitute a single family in which some relations are unnecessarily fractured, some subjects appear as only distant cousins. Just as General Practitioners do not conduct heart by-pass operations, hysterectomy's and neurological procedures, so matters of specialist importance are likely to be beyond the range of those conducting interdisciplinary work.

As noted above, this issue is particularly acute for International Relations. If Barry Buzan and Richard Little (2001) are right – and we think that they are – IR has a semi-permeable membrane which allows ideas from other disciplines in, but blocks substantive traffic travelling in the opposite direction. As a result, just as politics has gone international, so researchers from outside IR have sought to occupy turf one might expect the discipline to inhabit. Indeed, figures as diverse as Noam Chomsky, Niall Ferguson and Slavoj Žižek have a far higher profile than those

within IR even on issues which speak to the heart of contemporary world politics: Iraq, war, the nature and extent of American power, and so on. As Buzan and Little argue (2001, 20), when the question is posed: what have other disciplines learned from IR, the cupboard is, "if not quite bare, then certainly not well stocked". Buzan and Little claim that this story of one-way traffic stems from IR's triple confinement behind a Eurocentric ahistoricism which isomorphises the Westphalian moment, a sectoral narrowness which privileges military and political power relations, and an increasing fragmentation into house journals, styles and languages. As they write (2001, 31), "In the end, mainstream IR theory has preferred to think small and narrow rather than big and wide". And there seems little doubt that, for much of its existence, IR has been a relatively subordinate discipline, a net-importer of ideas content to ride academic fads and fashions, but unable to shape them in its own image.

This leads to a second challenge inherent to interdisciplinary research: its tendency to dissolve into cannibalism. Interdisciplinarity rarely works on a level playing field. More often, it works as a means for one discipline to colonise the turf of another. As such, border raids become akin to Viking raiding parties with booty carried off in one direction and little to show for it in the other. Indeed, these "looting and pillaging raids" (Mann 1995, 555) conjure up an image more akin to intellectual asset stripping than to fertile inter-relationship. There are numerous examples of this type of tendency at play. In IR, many constructivists appear to have ignored – either by accident of design – what symbolic interactionists have been arguing for the past century or more. Equally galling is the use by game theorists of a thick form of rational choice which is increasingly out of favour in economics, and the physics envy which has driven IR towards a peculiar form of scientism quite out of keeping with its principal subject matter. Indeed, it is striking how few IR theorists have taken an interest in biology or geology, "historical sciences" which appear far more suited to the complexity of world politics than physics (Gould 1990). Although biology and geology work within broad overarching paradigms – natural selection and plate tectonics respectively – it is only through comparative analysis in which processes are traced, patterns deduced and taxonomies constructed that knowledge is seen to accumulate (Ziman 1991; Gleick 1988; Waldrop 1992). As such, complexity, contingency, uncertainty and particularity are necessary features of these sciences rather than anomalies to be explained away. But despite the many overlaps between the enterprises, neither biology nor geology feature widely in IR's

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scientific gaze. And from the other side of the interdisciplinary divide, it is apparent that macro-sociologists have much to learn from IR, not least regarding the constitutive role of inter-social dynamics in processes of state formation, economic development and conflict (Halliday 1999; Hobson 2005). Comparable points could be made about any number of fields, not least political theory (Lawson 2008b), the study of globalisation (Rosenberg 2005), and more. In general, it seems as if what most interdisciplinary travellers want is not the detail of, or immersion in, the debates which lie beneath the surface of a discipline's principal books and journals, but the basics – a Rough Guide or Lonely Planet – which can help them navigate through the foreign terrain they are visiting and which can guide them safely home thereafter.

On the one hand, therefore, interdisciplinarity creates opportunities for what Bruce Carruthers (2005) calls "constructive misbehaviour" – a chance for intellectual entrepreneurs to act as translators, borrowing concepts and data from one academic discipline and introducing them into another. Such acts of arbitrage, when they are done well, can reduce levels of "intellectual autism" (Steinmetz 2005) – the narrowing of a field under the watchful scrutiny of academic homeland security agents. But it is important not to get too carried away with openness and fluidity both within disciplines and between them. Interdisciplinarity can engender thinness and sloppiness as well as promote depth and rigour. Obscuring root-and-branch differences can serve to make bridge-building enterprises a metaphor for hostile takeovers, a means of amplifying small differences, or of generating intellectual dilettantism. For IR, what is needed is a two way street in which the subject is more fully integrated into the broad family that constitutes the social sciences, not as an adjunct to more prominent cousins, but as a relatively autonomous field with substantive points to make about the complex processes which make up world politics. Just as no country can really be autarkic in the true sense of the word, and no individual is an island, it is also self-evidently the case that no discipline exists in pristine isolation from others, however jealously it guards its intellectual space. But these exchanges, lifeblood as they are to the intellectual enterprise, need to be carefully mediated.

By focusing on how sociologists themselves imagine both the theory and substance of international relations, this forum hopes to make more apparent the disciplinary influence of Sociology on IR and, in the process, enable IR scholarship to take a firmer grasp of its principal

domain assumptions. Our principal message is straightforward: although sociological concepts and approaches have often been repressed by the international imagination, their "outing" has much to offer both disciplines. Although the contributions to this forum concentrate on the move from Sociology to IR, we hope – and expect – that this engagement will encourage journeys in the opposite direction. We do not claim to have exhausted the possibilities of this exchange – far from it. Indeed, notable by its absence is a discussion of systems theory, particularly the powerful work on functional differentiation in IR which has been derived from Durkheim and the work of the German functionalist, Niklas Luhmann (e.g. Albert and Hilkermeier eds 2004, Buzan and Albert 2010, Donnelly 2009). Equally prominent by its absence is a pronounced engagement with Marxism, an approach which has contributed significantly both to international theory in general (e.g. Rosenberg 1994, Teschke 2003) and to sub-fields such as international political economy (e.g. Cox 1986; Gill 2008; Morton 2007).

Despite these (mostly self-imposed) limitations, the forum delivers some good news – sociological concepts and approaches are frequently employed in IR, often to sound effect. On the other hand, IR, especially the mainstream of the discipline, has yet to recognise the full debt it owes – both good and bad – to Sociology. All three pieces in this forum point to a more sustained engagement between IR and Sociology, one which avoids the traps of cannibalism and subordination which such interdisciplinary exchange can, on occasion, foster. Indeed, it may be that, as much sociological theory goes "global", or at least "international", synergies between the two enterprises lead to a period of sustained intellectual exchange. To that end, this forum is extremely timely, enhancing a return of the sociological repressed in the international imagination which, in turn, should foster dynamic engagements between the two disciplines. Given this, the promise of an "international sociology" may be rich indeed (Halliday 2002).

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