

Foregrounding ontology: dualism, monism, and IR theory

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Abstract. While the recent proliferation in philosophical discussions in International Relations indicates a welcome increase in the discipline's conceptual sophistication, a central issue has gone relatively unremarked: the question of how to understand the relationship between scholarly observers and their observed objects. This classical philosophical problem has a number of implications for the conduct of inquiry in the discipline, and raises particular challenges for the status of knowledge-claims advanced by constructivists. I clarify these issues and challenges by distinguishing between 'dualist' and 'monist' ontological standpoints, in the hope of provoking a more focused philosophical discussion.

Recent years have seen a marked resurgence of debate about the philosophical foundations of empirical inquiry throughout the social sciences. From efforts to clarify the status of comparative case studies¹ to sustained arguments in favour of statistical² or critical³ research, the conceptual sophistication of the study of politics has certainly been on the increase. Within International Relations (IR), this increased sophistication is perhaps most visible in the debate surrounding Alexander Wendt's efforts to merge an ontology of social construction with the epistemological practices of so-called 'positivist' science, drawing on Bhaskarian notions of scientific realism in his efforts.⁴ Although generally taking place at a very high level of abstraction, these debates hold the potential for fundamentally reshaping the epistemological and ontological foundations on which empirical work in IR rests.

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¹ James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, 'The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research', *American Political Science Review*, 98 (2004); Charles C. Ragin, *Fuzzy-Set Social Science* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

² Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

³ Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁴ Alexander E. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); see also Heikki Patomäki and Colin Wight, 'After Postpositivism? The Promises of Critical Realism', *International Studies Quarterly*, 44 (2000), and Fred Chernoff, 'Scientific Realism as a Meta-Theory of International Politics', *International Studies Quarterly*, 46 (2002).

But through almost all of this debate, a vital issue that cuts to the heart of any robust account of the *status* of social scientific findings has been all but ignored: the issue of whether the knowledge that academic researchers produce is in some sense a *reflection* of the world, or whether it is irreducibly a *perspective* on the world. Virtually all of the IR discussions of these issues have presumed, whether explicitly or implicitly, that the goal of social science is to make descriptive and causal inferences that portray the world ‘as it really is’, and that IR should thus seek to mirror the world by deploying analytical and conceptual tools that *correspond*, in some sense, to the way that the world really (and already) is. The scientific realist formulation of this position is that we should ‘put ontology first’: because ‘it is the nature of objects that determines their cognitive possibilities for us’, we are always in the position of striving to make our knowledge conform to the world.⁵ Taken to its logical extreme, this position – which I will argue is as central to neopositivist notions of falsification and critical-theoretical notions of argumentative consensus as it is to scientific realism – implies that the ideal social science would be a completely *presuppositionless* one, the goal of which would be to simply get the scientific observer out of the way as much as possible so that the true way that things are could shine through unimpeded.

Unfortunately, this Enlightenment dream of a presuppositionless social science that can aspire to transcendental truth is philosophically unsustainable. The collapse of logical positivism as an account of the sciences has left researchers to confront the irreducibly *perspectival* character of the knowledge that they produce. Researchers must now take account of the theory-dependence of observation: the way that our very *experience* of the world is inescapably mediated by the conceptual and linguistic apparatus that we bring to bear when producing knowledge *of* the world. Various efforts to solve this problem and restore some measure of classical objectivity to scientific knowledge, whether by post-positivists,⁶ critical realists,⁷ or partisans of ‘communicative action’,⁸ have not succeeded, and are not likely to do so for reasons I will discuss below.

The chief reason why all of this philosophical controversy is relevant to empirical research in IR is that, ever since the 1960s, the field has largely laboured under the spell of that Enlightenment dream. ‘Social science’ has for the most part been equated with the drive for classical objectivity, relegating other kinds of work to the status of (as J. David Singer once commented of Hedley Bull) ‘insight without evidence’.⁹ The kinds of questions that we often ask of empirical propositions about world politics – questions about the general applicability of findings, their statistical significance, or their success in corresponding to other bodies of fact and thus ‘getting the story right’ – depend, albeit implicitly, on the notion that a presuppositionless social science is possible, desirable, and achievable. If that notion is wrong (and I

⁵ Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 25.

⁶ Imre Lakatos, ‘The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes’, in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

⁷ Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*; John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1975); Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

⁹ J. David Singer, ‘The Incomplete Theorist: Insight Without Evidence’, in Klaus Knorr and James N. Rosenau (eds.), *Contending Approaches to International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 62–86.

believe that it is wrong), then we have to fundamentally rethink the ways in which we conduct and evaluate empirical research in IR.

But it is difficult to discuss these matters in IR, partly because we as a field have not talked about them for so long. The philosophy of social science is not generally a required course in Ph.D programmes in IR, at least not in the United States,¹⁰ so it is not surprising that American-dominated IR scholarship would be somewhat hesitant about dealing with these conceptual issues. But the issue extends beyond a lack of familiarity into a basic conceptual confusion engendered by the long-standing dominance of classical objectivity as the goal of social science: a confusion between *method* and *methodology*. The distinction is critical: methods are techniques for gathering and analysing bits of data, whereas methodology is ‘a concern with the logical structure and procedure of scientific enquiry’.¹¹ But because of the dominance of classically objective methodology, our putative ‘methodological’ discussions in IR have largely been *method* discussions: how best to achieve ‘progress’ in accurately representing the world in our accounts,¹² how to select cases so as to most efficiently test hypotheses,¹³ and so forth. There has been comparatively little fundamental interrogation of what we should be doing when we construct IR knowledge: very little *methodological* discussion.

In this article I try to fill this gap, and to provoke a more philosophically rigorous methodological conversation about the goals and purposes of IR knowledge. I argue that we have to give up the Enlightenment dream, and re-envision social science as an irreducibly partial and perspectival endeavour. In my view, such a revised vision of social science follows in the tradition of the seminal reflections on the topic by Max Weber. In what follows I want to sketch out such a Weberian stance according to which the distinguishing characteristic of social science is its *systematic application of a consistent set of culturally specific analytical premises*. Two chief implications follow. First, a good piece of social science should abandon claims to have definitively grasped anything in a classically objective manner. Second, a good piece of social science should not make any undue effort to appear ‘even-handed’ and ‘balanced’, but should instead pursue the implications of its analytical stance in a meticulous manner – even if, as is likely, the result appears somewhat one-sided. ‘Balance’, in fact, is a chimerical goal:

The ‘middle course’ is *not even a hair’s breadth scientifically truer* than the most extreme party ideals of the right or the left. The long-term interests of science are never more poorly served than when one refuses to see the uncomfortable facts and realities of life in all their starkness . . . this is much more dangerous for the impartiality of research than the old naïve belief of the parties in the scientific ‘demonstrability’ of their dogmas.¹⁴

¹⁰ Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, ‘Is This the Curriculum We Want? Doctoral Requirements and Offerings in Methods and Methodology’, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 36 (2003), pp. 379–86.

¹¹ Giovanni Sartori, ‘Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics’, *American Political Science Review*, 64 (1970), p. 1033.

¹² Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, ‘Lessons from Lakatos’, in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (eds.), *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

¹³ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); Timothy McKeown, ‘Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview’, *International Organization*, 53 (1999).

¹⁴ Max Weber, ‘Die “Objektivität” Sozialwissenschaftlicher und Sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis’, in Elizabeth Flitner (ed.), *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Potsdam: Internet-Ausgabe, (<http://www.uni-potsdam.de/u/paed/Flitner/Flitner/Weber/>), 1999), pp. 154–5.

Clarifying this Weberian position requires paying serious attention to ontology, but not in the manner of scientific realists. Instead of trying to put ontology before epistemology and methodology and the like, we should bring ontological considerations to the forefront of our reflections about the status of the knowledge that we produce in our research. Instead of trying to put an end to philosophical controversies, such a *foregrounding* of ontology seeks instead to clarify their terms and thus encourage a more robust debate about these vital, but often overlooked, conceptual issues.

Dualism and classical objectivity

The position that social-scientific research can achieve absolutely secure answers and definitively put controversies to rest depends on a very specific conception of scientific knowledge and scientific practice. This conception, regardless of the technical philosophical name by which it is known, ‘always demand[s] that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing something becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking’.¹⁵ Such a view from nowhere, through which the social scientist would become merely a neutral conduit for ‘the facts’, could in principle put an end to controversies political and otherwise by revealing the absolutely incontestable features of a situation with which all parties have to deal.

For the sake of clarity, I will refer to this position as a drive for *classical* objectivity. By ‘classical’ I mean several things: pre-quantum-mechanical,¹⁶ pre-‘postmodern’,¹⁷ and preceding the linguistic turn in the social sciences.¹⁸ The heart of classical objectivity is an ontological stance that is perhaps best named *dualism*: the position that the world is composed, so to speak, of two orders of being. On the dualistic account we have both ‘things’, which are the objects of investigation by researchers and other observers, and ‘thoughts’, which contain representations of these things. The central presupposition of dualism is a kind of gulf or radical separation between the world and knowledge of the world, whether that knowledge is held by the researcher or by the people under investigation. As such, dualism is an ontological position pertaining to how the world ‘really is’, and forms the foundation for a variety of knowledge practices, regardless of the extent to which the researchers using those practices are aware of the nuances of the position.

Because knowledge is only a representation of the world, it occupies a distinctly secondary position in dualist accounts, deriving from and ultimately referring to a world of objects that exist and have their character outside of any knowledge. Indeed, this externality is one of the two central components of a dualist position: things in

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 119.

¹⁶ Arkady Plotnitsky, *Complementarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

¹⁸ Francis A. Beer and Robert Hariman (eds.), *Post-Realism: The Rhetorical Turn in International Relations* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1996).

the world exist independently of the knowledge practices through which people come to apprehend them. Dualism also presumes that the things that people are apprehending have a more or less determinate character, some kind of dispositional essence that both gives rise to and sets limits on the kinds of knowledge-claims that can be validly constructed about them. These two components of dualism (externality and determinacy) give rise to a specific set of epistemological problems, largely revolving around techniques to guarantee that knowledge of the world corresponds to the world itself; valid knowledge means mirroring the world, representing it accurately, and not ignoring any of its important and essential features.

Dualism is an assumption that is made by the researcher. Like any kind of ontological assumption, it *precedes* empirical study and *structures* that study in profound ways.¹⁹ But it is not the only ontological assumption that might be made. What is the opposite of a dualist position? An alternative to dualism would be a position that did *not* posit a radical gulf or break between the world and knowledge of the world, and did not begin by separating things and thoughts as dualism does. I call this alternate ontological position *monism*, since it maintains a fundamental continuity of knowledge with the world, and therefore does not give rise to an account of knowledge practices that aims at accurately reflecting the world's essential dispositional character.²⁰ Monism is not idealism; the position here is not that the world (things) is simply a function of what the researcher thinks about it (thoughts). Instead, a monist position avoids the thing/thought dichotomy altogether, concentrating instead on those practical (worldly) activities that *give rise to both* 'things' and 'thoughts' – whether we call these discursive practices, fields of action, figurations, or what have you.

While dualism continues the Enlightenment project of seeking an absolutely secure grounding for knowledge and action, monism abandons that project in favour of an embrace of the ultimate irreconcilability of fundamental value-orientations. Dualist orientations are ultimately about reducing or eliminating the perspectival character of knowledge; monist orientations make no such claims. Such a fundamental divergence cannot help but generate very different kinds of social science. To the extent that the dualist position cannot, in my view, sustain itself philosophically and demonstrate that it can actually succeed in dispensing with the perspectival character

¹⁹ Habermas (*Philosophical Discourse*, p. 321) argues that a world-disclosing assumption needs to be submitted to 'an ongoing test across its entire breadth' by continual comparison with the results of intramundane practice within the world. Perhaps it is a failure of imagination on my part, but I cannot conceive of a mundane, practical result that could *even in principle* confirm or deny dualism (or its opposite, monism). As I suggest below, the most compelling arguments in favor of dualism rest not on this kind of practical testing (which *presumes* dualism), but on transcendental arguments about the conditions of possibility for ordinary linguistic formulations.

²⁰ In so designating this position I have in mind roughly the same thing that William James meant by philosophically dissolving the traditional opposition between consciousness and the objects of consciousness: William James, *The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 169–83. I am aware that the term is often used in the philosophical literature in a somewhat different sense, having more to do with questions of the material/ideal relationship. But most of this literature seems concerned with the position of a knowing subject in the world, and less of it seems to be directly concerned with the position of a researcher trying to generate knowledge *about* such subjects in the world. Rom Harré (personal communication) suggests that the real issue here is whether human beings can *ever* have knowledge of the world as it is in itself, with dualists presuming that they can and monists arguing that they cannot.

of knowledge, it is worth exploring the alternative ‘scientific monism’ that we find in Max Weber’s methodological writings. I will briefly discuss three contemporary varieties of dualism – neopositivism, critical realism, and Habermasian ‘communicative action’ – and their philosophical flaws before explicating and defending what I take to be Weber’s position on the issue.

Neopositivism: hypothesis-testing and falsification

Many contemporary debates about social scientific methodology are unfortunately carried out under the banner of ‘positivism’. This is unfortunate inasmuch as this term has been (mis)used so often in these debates that it is very difficult to use it without being completely misunderstood. Positivism was once the banner of progressive scientific practice, and largely involved the notion that phenomena could be reduced to more ‘basic’ levels of empirical reality as a way of explaining them. After the Frankfurt School’s criticism of Karl Popper for being insufficiently reflexive about the social conditions under which scientific knowledge was produced, the term got wrapped up with issues involving the relationship between the empirical and the normative in scholarship.²¹ In between there was the Vienna Circle, whose ‘logical positivism’ largely aimed at clarifying the conditions under which statements could be said to be true; the great irony of this work, especially that of the early Wittgenstein and of thinkers like Carnap, is that it was actually quite constructionist in orientation and hence rather sceptical of dualist views on the production of knowledge.²² Wittgenstein in particular was not satisfied with dualist ontology, arguing that it was largely nonsensical:

In order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to think what cannot be thought). It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense.²³

We cannot say in logic, ‘The world has this in it, and this, but not that’. For that would appear to presuppose that we were excluding certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case, since it would require that logic should go beyond the limits of the world; for only in that way could it view those limits from the other side as well.

We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot say either.²⁴

Given these problems, I have chosen to characterise the contemporary debate in other, more precise terms. My decision is also reinforced by the fact that contemporary political scientists who refer to themselves as ‘positivists’ and use this as a way of characterising their dualist views on social research owe considerably more to the *criticisms* of logical positivism advanced by thinkers like Karl Popper. It is the turn to falsification as a strategy of knowledge-production that is the truly dualist move, especially in contrast to the monist leanings of the logical positivism that preceded

²¹ Hans-Joachim Dahms, *Positivismusstreit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994).

²² Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 42–3.

²³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, 1974), p. 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, §5.61.

it.²⁵ Contemporary political science ‘positivists’ are more properly termed *neopositivists*, inasmuch as they have taken the Popperian-dualist critique of logical positivism on board and then promptly become as unreflective about the issue as ‘positive’ researchers are supposed (largely by their critics) to have been.

Popper’s whole line of attack against logical positivism involved replacing the latter’s monism with his own dualism. The procedure of falsification – the testing of hypothetical conjectures about the world against that world, and seeing which conjectures survive the process – is through and through a dualist procedure, designed to increase the ‘verisimilitude’ of knowledge by successively eliminating falsehoods.²⁶ If the world is not taken to exist independently of the knowledge practices used to apprehend it, this procedure makes no sense. From the fact that science has made ‘genuine progress’ in the sense ‘that we know more than we did before’ it seems reasonable to Popper to conclude that our scientific account of the world must in fact be getting ‘nearer to the truth’,²⁷ which must mean that our picture of the world is getting *better*. Even if we are not likely to have a complete or final picture of the world at any time in the foreseeable future, the practice of falsification ensures that at the very least we will continue improving that picture instead of simply substituting one set of assumptions for another one in a faddish manner.

Contrary to the ‘received wisdom’ in political science (and in the social sciences more generally), many if not most of Popper’s famous critics (Kuhn, Lakatos, Feyerabend, and so on) are equally dualist and equally committed to the basic proposition that science progresses through *some* kind of falsification. The differences between Popper and supposed anti-Popperians like Kuhn, or between Popper and his supposed defenders like Lakatos, are actually considerably less severe on this point than are conventionally supposed.²⁸ The disagreement between Popper and Kuhn over ‘normal science’, for example, is largely about the relative frequency of what

²⁵ A further, IR-specific irony is the use of the term ‘post-positivism’ to describe those theories and approaches that reject the pursuit of covering-laws in favour of the procedures of hypothesis-testing, as in Yosef Lapid, ‘The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 33 (1989). Historically, those theorists advocating falsification – including Karl Popper – should be classified ‘post-positivists’, inasmuch as they come after positivism and arise through a critique of positivism’s assumptions. By contrast, IR ‘post-positivists’ are critical theorists in the broad sense: reflexive, concerned with how knowledge practices interact with and/or construct the world and objects within it, and so on. It is precisely this terminological confusion that I am trying to avoid by using non-standard labels.

²⁶ Popper, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*.

²⁷ Karl Popper, ‘Normal Science and its Dangers’, in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 57.

²⁸ Lakatos engages in an attempt to salvage the notion of rational scientific progress (in a sense other than ‘as instruments for puzzle-solving’: see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 206), with his notion of progressive problem-shifts in research programmes (Lakatos, ‘The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes’). But this is *still* a dualist position, inasmuch as the ultimate arbiter of such a problem-shift involves the explanation of ‘novel facts’ in addition to all of those facts that were explained by the previous research programme. The new research programme must therefore be in some way closer to reality, even if there is no theory-independent way to evaluate this. (We should not lose sight of the fact that Lakatos’ whole procedure concerns retrospective reconstruction rather than a foundationalist argument from the known character of ‘reality’: ‘one can be “wise” only after the event’: Imre Lakatos, ‘History of Science and Its Rational Reconstructions’, in John Worrall and Gregory Currie (eds.), *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 113).

Kuhn calls ‘revolutionary science’: Popper admits that there are puzzle-solving scientists, but disagrees with Kuhn’s diagnosis that most of the history of science is characterised by such activity. There is also a division between Popper and Kuhn about how easy it is to get outside of and therefore ‘test’ one’s core substantive assumptions about the world. Kuhn places great emphasis on the socialisation and perceptual training of students and on the disciplinary factors that work to sustain a paradigm once adopted, while Popper retains a greater faith in the ability of the scientist to break out of her or his framework.²⁹ *But both remain dualists*, ultimately committed to the position that what makes a conjecture true is the extent to which it corresponds to the (real) world – or at least that what makes a conjecture false is its failure to so correspond.³⁰

Contemporary neopositivists in political science retain this dualist procedure of falsification under the title ‘hypothesis-testing’. The whole idea here is to state conjectures in such a way that they might be refuted by some set of collected data. ‘We need to be able to give a direct answer to the question: what evidence would convince us that we were wrong?’³¹ Such conjectures are then used to generate observable implications that can be compared with the actual state of the world whether past, present, or future; there is no logical difference between these three kinds of ‘testing’ for neopositivist research practice. Without a presumption of ontological dualism, this explanatory stance literally makes no sense, as there would be no way to refute a hypothesis in the absence of an external world with a more or less determinate essential character.

Neopositivist dualism goes further than simply positing an external world against which hypotheses can be tested, and makes some substantive assumptions about the character of that external world, particularly with respect to the notion of ‘causality’. Although causality is ‘a theoretical concept independent of the data used to learn about it’,³² the fact that it is defined by neopositivists as a systematic cross-case covariation between factors does imply something quite significant about the external world: namely, that ‘unit homogeneity’ obtains and that the impact of some particular factors will be the same in all circumstances within the domain of the

²⁹ Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, pp. 19, 111–12, 168; Popper, ‘Normal Science and its Dangers’, p. 56.

³⁰ In fairness, Kuhn is somewhat ambiguous on this point. He does argue that ‘the notion of a match between the ontology of a theory and its “real” counterpart in nature now seems to me illusive in principle’, but links this to the fact that he sees ‘no theory-independent way to reconstruct phrases like “really there”’ and pairs it with the declaration that he does ‘not doubt, for example, that Newton’s mechanics improves on Aristotle’s and that Einstein’s improves on Newton’s as instruments for puzzle-solving’ (Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 206). As such, his position seems to be that a theory’s specific assumptions about the world are not directly relevant to its ability to produce tangible results. But to the extent that such tangible results are not themselves endogenous to the knowledge practices in question, but have instead to do with the interaction between knowledge practices and the world, it seems possible to subsume Kuhn’s position at the time he wrote *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* under Lakatos’ notion of ‘research programmes’ or Searle’s realism of brute facts and correspondence (see below). Kuhn’s later work moves in a more radical direction, taking the problem of translating between theories to be considerably more damaging to simple notions of empirical progress, but that need not concern us here.

³¹ King, Keohane and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, p. 19.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

investigation.³³ This uniformity of effect also suggests that the external, ‘real’ world is sufficiently characterised by recurrent patterns of correlation between factors that it may be treated as governed by lawlike generalisations. Anything that is to ‘matter’ in a neopositivist framework must be converted into an independent variable and fitted into a hypothesis displaying these characteristics; non-systematic, unique features of a case simply *cannot* ‘matter’ in the relevant way. Instead, what are to be sought are systematic connections that hold true in general, and which presumably do so because they mirror the way that the world *really is*.

This is the point at which the neopositivist argument breaks down. The problem is that there is no way to guarantee that even a hypothesis that survives the most rigorous testing has done so because it is less incorrect than the alternatives in the sense of mirroring the structure of the real world better. The survival of a hypothetical statement might, for example, have more to do with the practices of the scientist, or the interaction of the scientist and her or his measurement apparatus.³⁴ A statement might also survive not because it has been subjected to rigorous testing, but because it expresses a ‘common sense’ about a problem that is maintained by a specific group or research community.³⁵ Even in physics, ‘crucial experiments’ only appear as such afterwards, and discrepant evidence only looks damaging after a new account of the world has been proposed.³⁶ Indeed, the whole idea that science makes progress towards an accurate picture of the world is, according to Lakatos, an idealising presupposition made by the historian of science; this presupposition makes possible and generates a ‘*normative reconstruction*’ of historical events that illustrates progress rather than demonstrating it in any conclusive sense.³⁷

Even if we grant that scientific knowledge has produced practical and technical successes, it remains unclear why we *need* the metaphysical baggage of ‘correspondence to the external, really existing world’ in order to account for this. There are ‘conventionalist’ alternatives that arguably do just as well,³⁸ as well as more practical foci that emphasize the potential gap between ‘the One Way the World Is’ and ‘the ways in which human beings find it useful to describe their environment’ – along with the ultimate irrelevance, and with the potentially tragic consequences in terms of

³³ Although many neopositivists (for example, King, Keohane and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, pp. 91–3) argue that unit homogeneity can be empirically demonstrated via repeated tests of correlation, in practice the assumption of unit *comparability* is used as a structuring assumption that both alleviates the need to perform any such tests and opens the possibility of performing comparative case studies in the first place: Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon, ‘Globalization, the Comparative Method, and Comparing Constructions’, in Daniel M. Green (ed.), *Constructivism and Comparative Politics* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), pp. 100–1. Indeed, the idea that unit homogeneity could be ‘proved’ or ‘disproved’ through evidence designed to test hypotheses about cross-case correlations is nonsensical, since unit homogeneity is an assumption built into the (dualist) procedures of neopositivist hypothesis-testing in the first place.

³⁴ Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*, pp. 42–4.

³⁵ In IR in particular, Barkawi and Laffey suggest that this may be true of the notion of the ‘democratic peace’: Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, ‘The Imperial Peace: Democracy, Force, and Globalization’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 5 (1999). See also Grunberg’s discussion of ‘hegemonic stability’: Isabelle Grunberg, ‘Exploring the “Myth” of Hegemonic Stability’, *International Organization*, 44 (1990).

³⁶ Lakatos, ‘History of Science and Its Rational Reconstructions’, p. 111.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

³⁸ Chernoff, ‘Scientific Realism as a Meta-Theory of International Politics’.

violence and human misery, of the former notion.³⁹ It remains unclear how we would ever *know* whether a particular claim about the world did or did not correspond to the nature of reality, or whether it was just a lucky guess – or even an unlucky guess that nonetheless produced acceptable results. This is particularly the case in the social sciences, in which assumptions (like the ‘rational actor’), that if properly understood make no claims to correspond with *anything*, are nonetheless able to generate acceptable results under certain specific conditions.⁴⁰

All of these considerations lead to the suspicion that the procedures of falsification and hypothesis-testing, and the knowledge that they produce, are in the last instance consequences of a particular value-commitment rather than a non-perspectival reflection of ‘how the world really is’. The value in question – ‘progress’ – assumes that accounting for the success of science in terms of a lucky accident or miraculous happenstance would be a bad thing. That this is so seems self-evident, *to us* – that is, to we people living in an era of the ‘disenchantment of the world’, wherein we have come to expect that events have a non-magical, ‘rational’ explanation. *But this is a cultural value, and has no universal validity.*⁴¹ As such, the whole argument seems more like an expression of a normative value than a classically objective picture. Far from eliminating the perspectival character of knowledge, neopositivist falsification *depends* on a certain perspective.

Critical realism: abduction and brute facts

It may seem odd that I am passing from neopositivism to critical realism, given that many critical realists (especially those in IR) ground their work in a critique of neopositivist research practice.⁴² But while critical realists mount powerful criticisms of the neopositivist reduction of causality to its Humean, cross-case-correlation variant, they remain similar to neopositivists in regarding the task of research to involve a closer approximation to an externally existing real world. *Critical realism is just as dualistic as neopositivism*, and as such the differences between the two approaches may be regarded as more tactical and operational than strategic and fundamental.

That realism is dualistic should not come as a surprise. One of the basic tenets of a critical realist approach to explanation is that good theories refer to a mind-independent world, and that this world therefore exercises a limiting effect on those theories.⁴³ Both Searle’s ‘brute facts’ and Bhaskar’s ‘intransitive’ objects of knowledge serve to mark the role played by an external world in realist philosophy of science: the world is out there, outside of human knowledge practices, and it stubbornly resists efforts to conceptualise it in ways sharply at variance with itself.

³⁹ Richard Rorty, ‘The Ambiguity of “Rationality”’, in William Rehg and James Bohman (eds.), *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn: The Transformation of Critical Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 44.

⁴⁰ George Tsebelis, *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 32–3.

⁴¹ Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf • Politik als Beruf* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, [1917/1919] 1994), pp. 8–9.

⁴² Patomäki and Wight, ‘After Postpositivism?’

⁴³ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 51.

Conjectures about the world can and should be compared to the actual operation of the world in order to ascertain their truth.⁴⁴

The dispositional character of objects in the external world gives to rise to our knowledge of them, even though this dispositional character only manifests itself in complex ways outside of the controlled environment of a laboratory situation. For critical realists, the real world – whether the natural world or the social world – is an open system, characterised by a dearth of robust cross-case correlations and requiring a different approach to the disclosure of causal relations. Whether this involves the delineation of *mechanisms* through which effects are generated,⁴⁵ or the specification of the essential properties of objects which can subsequently be placed into different hypothetical ‘possible worlds’ in order to simulate likely outcomes,⁴⁶ or some other form of ‘abductive inference’,⁴⁷ the basic position is the same: ‘the behavior of things is influenced by self-organizing, mind-independent structures that constitute those things with certain intrinsic powers and dispositions.’⁴⁸

As such, knowledge practices are of necessity channelled into the promotion of correspondence between the world of things and the thoughts about those things maintained by researchers. True statements about the world are those that accurately reflect the world, although they need not do so in their internal grammatical structure or in their precise conceptual bases; it is sufficient that a true statement express some fact that is verifiably the case. Although Searle suggests that it is possible to be a realist without accepting the correspondence theory of truth, the way in which this would be possible remains somewhat obscure. If the (externally existing) real world is important to knowledge practices, it must be important to those practices by providing a limit against which they might flounder if wrong. So the fact that external reality *matters* in realist accounts opens the possibility of falsifying conjectures that do not correspond to that external reality, and hence leaving only those conjectures that presumably correspond better.⁴⁹ It is difficult to imagine a consistent realism that did not limit knowledge practices in this manner.

Realist accounts of the social world presume that social phenomena can be studied in the same way as natural phenomena, albeit with a few modifications that do not

⁴⁴ Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*; Roy Bhaskar, *Reclaiming Reality* (London: Verso, 1989).

⁴⁵ Heikki Patomäki, ‘How to Tell Better Stories About World Politics’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 2 (1996).

⁴⁶ David Sylvan and Stephen Majeski, ‘A Methodology for the Study of Historical Counterfactuals’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 42 (1998).

⁴⁷ Alexander E. Wendt, ‘The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory’, *International Organization*, 41 (1987).

⁴⁸ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 64.

⁴⁹ Indeed, the most sophisticated defence of realism to date argues that the correspondence theory of truth is more important to realism than the presumption of a mind-independent world. Such a position involves both re-evaluating truth as a limiting case of verisimilitude *and* accepting the notion that science is performed on instrument-world complexes rather than on ‘the world’ in itself. The particular affordances of the world revealed by a particular set of instruments and ‘conceptual resources’ are, if not mind-independent, at least non-arbitrary (Jerrold L. Aronson, Rom Harre and Eileen Cornell Way, *Realism Rescued: How Scientific Progress is Possible* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1995), pp. 140–1), and theories are ultimately reducible to arrangements of natural kinds ‘that must exist independently of any human project or conceptual system’ (Ibid., pp. 43–4). Hence there is an ‘intransigent order of nature’ (Ibid.), but that order is only ever accessible through knowledge practices which affect how and in what form it will manifest itself; different practices will reveal different orders, and progress will occur through convergence rather than through hypothesis-testing (Ibid., pp. 194–6).

affect the overall approach. Bhaskar argues that the ‘internality’ of human observers with respect to their social objects of study needs to be distinguished from the ‘existential intransitivity’ of those objects of study: a social object’s ‘existence (or not), and properties, are quite independent of the act or process of investigation of which it is the putative object, even though such an investigation, once initiated, may radically modify it’.⁵⁰ So the fact that the social world is composed of people and their actions, including their knowledge practices, does not preclude the possibility that the analyst will be able to delineate essential features of those actions, and to derive conclusions which may not be readily apparent to the persons under study. In this way, for example, it is possible for an analyst to scientifically identify ‘structures’ that are tacitly reproduced by individual actions, and thus to explain how individuals unintentionally contribute to the (re)production of the social orders within which they live. These structures are *real* features of social life, regardless of whether anyone notices or names them.

Searle, for his part, distinguishes between two different senses of the terms ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’, arguing that although social phenomena are ontologically subjective (in that they depend on the activity of human subjects for their existence), it is still possible to make epistemically objective statements (in the sense that these statements are not relative to any feature of the observer’s state of mind) about them.⁵¹ This stance is what makes it possible for him to detail the kind of practices of tacit agreement needed to sustain things like money by collectively imposing status-functions on otherwise meaningless physical objects. Money, marriage, human rights, and the like only exist inasmuch as people comport themselves in such ways as enable them to continue to exist, but they exist independently of particular individuals and as such display an inherent, constitutive structure. Hence they are *real*, existing whether anyone knows about or understands them correctly, and can exercise effects outside of anyone’s subjective sphere of awareness.

It is important to note the central place of *theory* in this kind of naturalistic approach. In the critical realist account, encountering objects is not precisely like banging one’s foot up against a rock; rather, an important function of research is to designate (or ‘baptize’) phenomena as particular things, and thus make them available for scientific study.⁵² This means that ‘correspondence’ for a critical realist is a complex matter, involving the production of a better and better map of the world by sometimes altering the conceptual shape of the objects being mapped. In this sense, realists argue that the objects under investigation in the social sciences are irreducibly theoretical – their essential character is intimately intertwined with theories about them. As such, a reconceptualisation of some pieces of data as constituting a distinct phenomenon is an aspect of ‘progress’ for critical realists.

Critical realists offer a number of arguments in favour of their dualist position on the status of scientific knowledge; all of these arguments aim to demonstrate that their approach succeeds in minimising or constraining the perspectival character of

⁵⁰ Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, p. 47.

⁵¹ Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, pp. 8–9.

⁵² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 57–8.

knowledge. The most powerful of these arguments, in my view,⁵³ involves our ordinary ways of speaking: ‘a public language presupposes a public world in the sense that many (not all) utterances of a public language purport to make references to phenomena that are ontologically objective’. Hence, in order to make sense of these references, ‘we have to take for granted that there is a way that the world is that is independent of our representations’, which is precisely the dualist claim.⁵⁴ Otherwise, ordinary understanding collapses and communication becomes largely impossible. Searle gives a specific illustration of the claim:

A fact is language independent if that very fact requires no linguistic elements for its existence. Take away all language and Mt. Everest still has snow and ice near the summit; take away all language and you have taken away the fact that ‘Mt. Everest has snow and ice at the summit’ is a sentence of English.⁵⁵

Both of these facts are held to exist independently of the language used to state them or to refer to them; in both cases mentioned the observer can ascertain whether or not the claim is factual or not, because its factuality is independent of the observer and her or his acts of observation. The perspective of the observer, while implicated in particular speech acts, ultimately runs aground on the brute factual aspects of the world.

There are several problems with this commonsensical argument, even though its very commonsensicality makes it difficult to see them at first. For one thing, note that the notion that one could ‘take away all language’ (and, presumably, all human beings using language, or making their way in the world in their ordinary language-assisted way) and still be left with facts is, strictly speaking, nonsensical. The thought experiment is internally contradictory, inasmuch as the removal of language and linguistically mediated observation is not complete; in order to *make the claim*, a linguistically competent observer has been in effect smuggled back into the picture. If ‘Mt Everest still has snow and ice near the summit’ is a claim, someone has to *make* that claim, and make it in such a way that it is comprehensible. So in the thought experiment, language is removed, and then some observer *with language at her or his disposal* returns to the site to see whether or not snow and ice remains near the summit of Mt. Everest. This is a bit of philosophical sleight of hand, inasmuch as language and linguistically-mediated observation has not been eliminated, but merely displaced.

The same is true of all claims about what would still be the case in the absence of human observers. The very positing of the situation as a situation about which we can meaningfully speak is nonsensical and contradictory, because if we can speak of it then obviously not *all* language has been removed. The only alternative is that the statement is some kind of transcendently authoritative pronouncement that cannot be questioned: a kind of *faith in reality*. But inasmuch as dualists have offered no

⁵³ Critical realists also offer the ‘miracle argument’ (only a realist position makes the success of science anything other than a miracle) and an argument that only a conception of knowing subjects as essentially pre-social entities adequately preserves human agency. The former argument has parallels with the defense of neopositivism that I critique above; on the latter argument, see Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, ‘Hegel’s House, or, “People Are States Too”’, *Review of International Studies*, 30 (2004).

⁵⁴ Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, pp. 186–7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

compelling reason for making such a leap, I remain unconvinced that (social) scientists in general should do so.⁵⁶

Indeed, I would argue that it makes more sense *not* to do so. Comporting oneself towards a river as equipment for recreation discloses a different river than does a comportment that regards the river as a source of raw energy to turn a turbine.⁵⁷ The world, and facts about objects within it, can be thought of as arising not on its own in a ‘self-organizing’ way, but from the concrete practical transactions that the researcher – and the research community – engages in. It is not necessary to posit a ‘river-in-itself’ that has dispositional qualities such that it *can* reveal itself to researchers and other observers in these myriad ways, or to infer that behind perspectival observations lays some *real* river. Realists would have us do this, and justify the argument with reference to the need for something to constrain theory – otherwise the world would simply be a product of our unconstrained imaginings, which does not appear to be the case. But although such a metaphysical leap would alter ‘the sense of the world’, it is not necessary to the analysis of events and phenomena in that world:

In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: *in* it no value exists – and if it did exist, it would have no value. If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. For all that happens and is the case is accidental. What makes it non-accidental cannot lie *within* the world, since if it did it would itself be accidental. It must lie outside the world.⁵⁸

Making such a leap seems rather more like an act of faith than like a useful assumption about how knowledge practices work. Indeed, insisting that one has disclosed the ‘real’, essential character of some object or situation is probably better regarded as a kind of rhetorical flourish for emphasis, akin to banging one’s fist on the table or placing words in italics or bold-face type. It signals that the speaker feels strongly, or that the speaker wishes to signal that she or he feels strongly, and as such tells the reader something about the speaker and the language-game in which she or he is enmeshed – but little about ‘the world’ itself (whatever *that* means).

Realists have actually given up considerable ground with their admission that the objects of experience are irreducibly theoretical. As Weber pointed out a century ago, the theory-dependence of our concepts ensures that the results that we produce through systematic empirical investigation have at least as much to do with our values as they do with the objects of our investigation. But at the same time, those results need not be entirely arbitrary, to the extent that an individual researcher

⁵⁶ Searle’s argument also depends on a series of presuppositions about individuality and individual minds, such that ‘ordinary communication’ means that the contents of my head and the contents of your head can be brought into rough correspondence: ‘normal understanding requires sameness of understanding by both speaker and hearer’ (Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 186). This is related to the absence of a robust conception of intersubjectivity in Searle’s work; communal meanings for Searle are always carried around inside of individual heads, and the only alternative to ‘inside of the head’ is ‘external to *all possible* heads’. Missing is any sense that meanings and perceptions might be *common* to a group of people without being *strongly shared* by that group of people (Mark Laffey and Jutta Weldes, ‘Beyond Belief: Ideas and Symbolic Technologies in the Study of International Relations’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 3 (1997)). This is also an issue for Habermas; see below.

⁵⁷ Martin Heidegger, ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), pp. 15–17.

⁵⁸ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p. §6.41.

explicitly lays out her or his presuppositions and then applies them consistently.⁵⁹ It remains unclear to me how one would distinguish on *practical* grounds between a systematic monism such as Weber's and a dualist realism that admitted the theory-laden-ness of the objects of experience. What is the operational difference between 'it appears this way to us' and 'it *is* this way'? The former seems more *intellectually honest*, in a way, and is probably to be commended on those grounds alone.

The 'ordinary language' argument tells us a lot about our current ordinary language. While this helps to clarify our contemporary perspective, and to describe the 'mythological' presumptions embedded in our everyday ways of being with one another and informing our 'picture of the world',⁶⁰ it says nothing about the transcendental validity of that picture. 'At some point one has to pass from explanation to mere description'⁶¹ – description of a *perspective* from which knowledge is generated. Ultimately, critical realism cannot dispense with the perspectival character of knowledge any more than neopositivism can.

Communicative action: ideal consensus as arbiter of the true

Jürgen Habermas' efforts to reformulate the Enlightenment project so as to keep 'communicative reason' at the centre of the analysis represent a third programme to restore some measure of classical objectivity to the social sciences.⁶² Habermas, I suspect, would not agree with this reading of his work; one of his central claims has always been the need to 'detranscendentalize' the notion of reason and embed its operations in the various local contexts in which it manifests itself.⁶³ As such, the simple notion of an objectively existing world is replaced with a keen sense of the dependence of any knowledge of that world on the common assumptions shared by speakers operating within it:

Insofar as speakers and hearers straightforwardly achieve a mutual understanding about something in the world, they move within the horizon of their common lifeworld; this remains in the background of the participants – as an intuitively known, unproblematic, and unanalyzable, holistic background. . . . The lifeworld forms a horizon and at the same time offers a store of things taken for granted in the given culture from which communicative participants draw consensual interpretive patterns in their efforts at interpretation.⁶⁴

So far, so sociological: knowledge, it seems, is inextricably intertwined with a world-picture that precedes the construction of that knowledge, and that world-picture is less a true reflection of an externally existing world than a matter of intersubjective consensus. Since the truth of a claim, for Habermas, depends on the conclusion that

⁵⁹ Weber, 'Objectivität'.

⁶⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. §94–5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, §189.

⁶² Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, pp. 30–1.

⁶³ Jürgen Habermas, 'From Kant's "Ideas" of Pure Reason to the "Idealizing" Presuppositions of Communicative Action: Reflections on the Detranscendentalized "Use of Reason"', in William Rehg and James Bohman (eds.), *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn: The Transformation of Critical Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 15.

⁶⁴ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p. 298.

rational speakers would assent to it under ideal conditions,⁶⁵ a suggestion that such assent is circumscribed by particular lifeworld contexts would be tantamount to building a perspectival character into the very foundations of knowledge.

But this is not the Habermasian position, as is well-known.⁶⁶ Instead, Habermas argues that validity claims raised within a specific lifeworld are *both* contextually circumscribed *and* subject to de-contextualised standards:

The transcendent moment of *universal* validity bursts every provinciality asunder; the obligatory moment of accepted validity claims renders them carriers of *context-bound* everyday practice . . . a moment of *unconditionality* is built into *factual* processes of mutual understanding – the validity laid claim to is distinguished from the social currency of a de facto established practice and yet serves it as the foundation of an existing consensus.⁶⁷

Habermas tries to square this particular circle by delineating the characteristics of the idealising presuppositions ‘that actors *must* make if they are to engage in . . . action oriented toward reaching mutual understanding,’ presuppositions that are ‘for us inescapable.’⁶⁸ Chief among these presuppositions is the notion that ‘the rational acceptability of the corresponding statement is based on the convincing force of the better arguments. Which argument does convince is not decided by private insight, but by the stances that, bundled together in a rationally motivated agreement, are adopted by everyone who participates in the public practice of exchanging reasons.’⁶⁹ As such, arguments tendered locally have to be evaluated in terms of universal formal principles concerning reason and logic, and can thus achieve something other than a merely local kind of consensus.

Habermas is no simple utopian, however; he fully recognises that the conditions of *actual* speech may not approximate this ideal in most respects. But he nonetheless maintains that local ‘language games only work because they presuppose idealizations that transcend any particular language game . . . these idealizations give rise to the perspective of an agreement that is open to criticism on the basis of validity claims.’⁷⁰ It is these idealisations that provide a universal basis on which to critique actually existing social arrangements. The social sciences, Habermas argues, have a crucial role to play in this process of self-critique, inasmuch as the analyses that they produce can contribute to the ‘ongoing test’ to which the ‘background knowledge of the lifeworld’ can and should be submitted.⁷¹ Abandoning this critical function would

⁶⁵ Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 64–6.

⁶⁶ Actually, I am not sure how well-known this is. I regularly see references to the position that I described in the previous paragraph linked to Habermas’ name, *even though Habermas’ whole philosophical project is dedicated to a defence of a notion of truth and validity that transcends local contexts*. Admittedly, Habermas is not the clearest of authors, especially on this point. But as one of Habermas’ foremost defenders points out, ‘The internal relation of meaning to validity means that communication is not only always “immanent” – that is, situated, conditioned – but also always “transcendent” – that is, geared to validity claims that are meant to hold beyond any local context and thus can be indefinitely criticized, defended, revised’: Thomas McCarthy, ‘Introduction’, in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), pp. xvi–xvii. One simply *cannot* separate Habermas’ comments about actual, empirical communicative practice from this broader normative concern.

⁶⁷ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, pp. 322–3.

⁶⁸ Habermas, ‘From Kant’s “Ideas” of Pure Reason to the “Idealizing” Presuppositions of Communicative Action: Reflections on the Detranscendentalized “Use of Reason”’, p. 13.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷⁰ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p. 199.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

mean that ‘power strategies . . . cannot be *judged* under the aspect of their validity’, and that we would thus be left with a pure interplay of dominations without end.⁷² Thus there is a duty for social scientists and philosophers to promote social conditions that more closely approximate the ideal.

This ideal is, again, not purely utopian, but rests on the best use of reason that we have available. Such a use of reason also necessarily presupposes ‘“the world” as the totality of independently existing objects that can be judged or dealt with’, and presupposes that this world is ‘objective’ in the sense of being ‘“given” to us as “the same for everyone”’.⁷³ It is on the externality of this world, and the subordination of knowledge practices to it, that Habermas’ claims to decontextualised knowledge ultimately rest:

. . . the ‘being the case’ or obtaining of states of affairs indirectly expresses the ‘existence’ of recalcitrant objects (or the facticity of constraining circumstances). The ‘world’ that we presuppose as the totality of objects, not of facts, must not be confused with the ‘reality’ that consists of facts, that is everything in the world that can be represented in true statements.⁷⁴

Since consensus about the character of the world depends not merely on local intersubjective notions but on the ability of rational procedures of inquiry to reach some solid *limit* in the character of the (classically) objective world itself, it is possible for the sciences – and the social sciences in particular – to establish more or less certain facts about, for instance, the effects that the rationalisation of certain social practices will have on the reproduction of the lifeworld. Indeed, establishing these conditions is the task of the social sciences, which can show how imperfectly the idealising presuppositions of communicative action have been implemented in a given society. This how Habermas (mis)reads Foucault’s work: it is the fact that ‘Foucault works out the internal kinship between humanism and terror that endows his critique of modernity with its sharpness and mercilessness’, but Foucault’s failure to advance solid and defensible ‘truth claims’ means that ‘the entire undertaking of a critical unmasking of the human sciences . . . lose[s] its point.’⁷⁵ Accordingly, the social sciences need to strive to be as perspective-less as possible, by always submitting their claims to the universal procedures of public reasoning; in this way, our knowledge will come as close to objectivity as it possibly can.

The problem here is that Habermas’ position depends on a rather profound leap of faith: a faith in the ultimate validity of the procedures of reason that *we* use to evaluate arguments.⁷⁶ This is quite a leap, inasmuch as it asks us to pass directly from ‘what we believe’ to ‘what is so’ without much of a pause – except for a nod in the direction of idealising presuppositions that are derived from the very practice of the argumentative language-games whose universal validity they are supposed to establish! The fact that *we* use certain procedures to evaluate truth-claims, and that *we* have certain rules by which to establish whether we have arrived at a consensus about an issue properly or not, tells us *nothing at all* about whether those claims or that

⁷² Ibid., p. 127.

⁷³ Habermas, ‘From Kant’s “Ideas” of Pure Reason to the “Idealizing” Presuppositions of Communicative Action: Reflections on the Detranscendentalized “Use of Reason”’, p. 16.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 18. This is a critique of the famous line from Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*: ‘The world is the totality of facts, not of things’ (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p. §1.1).

⁷⁵ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, pp. 246, 279.

⁷⁶ Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter*, p. 93.

consensus are *universally* valid. Agreement among an ever-larger group of people should not be conflated with an absolute increase in universal rational validity; while the former notion is susceptible of empirical measurement and practical implementation, the latter remains a purely metaphysical supposition with dubious efficacy.⁷⁷

Richard Rorty is therefore entirely correct to point out that ‘universal validity is an awkward halfway house between the old idea that Truth is correspondence to the One Way the World Is’ and a more pragmatic view focused on the dynamics of knowledge-producing social action.⁷⁸ Neither Habermas nor his defenders have been able to adequately square the circle and demonstrate that something like a universal, non-perspectival standard for validity – even a purely formal standard – is actually *thinkable*, let alone practically possible.⁷⁹ As with critical realism and neopositivism, we are thus left with the extreme oddity of a perspective *that claims not to be any kind of perspective at all*: the very eye turned in no particular direction that Nietzsche claimed was a philosophical absurdity:

These always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective ‘knowing’; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our ‘concept’ of the this thing, our ‘objectivity’, be.⁸⁰

Weberian ‘objectivity’ as scientific monism

Given these philosophical problems with a dualist approach to the social sciences, it may be more useful to explore to possibilities inherent in a social science built on monistic premises. Such a social science would embrace its own perspectival character instead of seeking to dispense with it, and would deliberately refrain from claiming to have captured the objectively existing essence of anything in the world. Instead, a monistic social science would serve as a kind of disciplined process of world-construction, whereby a perspective was first elaborated in ideal-typical fashion and then used as the baseline form which to rigorously produce an account. Max Weber’s subtle shifting of the concept of ‘objectivity’ exemplifies⁸¹ this conception of social science:

There is simply no ‘objective’ scientific analysis of cultural life – or, put perhaps somewhat more narrowly but certainly not essentially differently for our purposes – of a ‘social phenomenon’ *independent* of special and ‘one-sided’ points of view, according to which – explicitly or tacitly, consciously or unconsciously – they are selected, analyzed, and representationally organized as an object of research.⁸²

⁷⁷ Rorty, ‘The Ambiguity of “Rationality”’, pp. 43–4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁷⁹ Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter*, p. 99.

⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, p. 119.

⁸¹ But does not exhaust. For alternative, but equally monistic, accounts of a social science freed from the presumption of classical objectivity, see, *inter alia*, Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), and Stefano Guzzini, ‘A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 6 (2000).

⁸² Weber, ‘Objectivität’, p. 170, emphasis in original.

The goal of the social sciences *cannot* be to neutrally reflect an externally existing world. Instead, Weber places the human ‘capacity and the will to deliberately take up a *stance* towards the world and to lend it a *meaning*’ at the centre of his reflections.⁸³ ‘The quality of a process as a ‘socio-economic’ event is not something that inheres ‘objectively’ in the process as such’, he argues; this is a rather shocking statement to make in the editorial introduction of a journal devoted to what we would now probably call the analysis of political economy. ‘It is far more conditioned by the direction of our knowledge *interest*⁸⁴ as it arises from the specific cultural significance that we attribute pertaining to the process in an individual case.’⁸⁵ Without this deliberate attribution, no scientific results are possible, as the researcher would never know what to study or under what heading to study it. In this way, the social sciences are *productive* of the world, beholden not to some externally existing set of objects or their essential dispositional properties but rather to the cultural values that orient the investigation from the beginning.

Weber develops this monistic stance by calling for a more self-conscious delineation of the ideal-types with which researchers operate. Rather than ‘a “presuppositionless” copy of “objective” facts’, ideal-types are

formed through a one-sided *accentuation of one or more* points of view and through bringing together a great many diffuse and discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* events, which are arranged according to these emphatically one-sided points of view in order to construct a unified *analytical construct* [*Gedanken*]. In its conceptual purity, this analytical construct [*Gedankenbild*] is found nowhere in empirical reality; it is a utopia.⁸⁶

An ideal-type is a deliberately partial way of configuring the world, arising from a subtle combination of empirical observation and the value-commitments made by the researcher. As is proper to a monistic ontology, Weber’s position extends even to the level of the most basic *description* of a phenomenon; there simply is no apprehendable ‘world’ (or series of externally existing objects) that could be used to limit the application of an ideal-type or to falsify and improve it. It is not that ‘the world’ does not exist, but that at the most basic *logical* level it is quite impossible to disentangle that world from the practical knowledge activities that we use in constituting and studying it. *All* knowledge is therefore ideal-typical, whether or not we are explicit and rigorous about spelling out our value-commitments and the kinds of analytical oversimplifications to which they give rise. Weber’s procedure simply calls for a more self-conscious effort to do what we are always and already doing in our everyday lives.

It should go without saying that ideal-types cannot be evaluated based on their accuracy or their correspondence with any set of empirical facts; rather, ideal-types form the horizon within which ‘the facts’ arise. One cannot choose between ideal-types on a strictly empirical basis, and no amount of research can ever serve to

⁸³ Ibid., p. 180.

⁸⁴ Erkenntnisinteresses. The standard English translation of this essay renders the word as ‘cognitive interest’, which imports a subjectivity into the argument that I do not think is really appropriate. For an extended argument on this point, see Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, ‘Rethinking Weber: Toward a Non-Individualist Sociology of World Politics’, *International Review of Sociology*, 12 (2002).

⁸⁵ Weber, ‘Objectivität’, p. 161.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 191.

validate a particular way of constructing the world through cultural value-commitments. ‘“Worldviews” can never be the product of progressive empirical knowledge’, Weber suggests; ‘the highest ideals that move us most forcefully impinge for all time in conflict with other ideals that are just as sacred to others as ours are to us’.⁸⁷ This ‘irresolvable conflict’ between ‘different value-orderings of the world’ means, among other things, that science can never put political controversies to rest.⁸⁸ Instead, social science can clarify the likely consequences of adopting a particular perspective on an issue, and thus provide raw material for a decision that remains, irreducibly, *contingent* on the particular actor’s goals and purposes.⁸⁹

But Weber is also very clear that this irreducible value-conflict does not mean that social scientific⁹⁰ *research* can only have *results* which are “subjective” in the sense that they are *valid* for one person and not for others.⁹¹ Weber draws a sharp distinction between the formulation of an ideal-type and its application to a particular empirical problem, maintaining that:

A systematically correct scientific demonstration in the social sciences, if it wants to achieve its goal, must be recognized as correct even by a Chinese (or, more accurately, it must constantly *strive* to attain this goal, although it may not be completely reachable due to a dearth of documentation). Further, if the *logical* analysis of the content of an ideal and of its ultimate axioms, and the demonstration of the consequences that arise from pursuing it logically and practically, wants to be valid and successful, it must be valid for someone who lacks the ‘sense’ of our ethical imperative and who would (and often will) refuse our ideal and the concrete *valuations* that flow from it. None of these refusals come anywhere near the scientific value of the *analysis*.⁹²

Weber’s ‘Chinese’ represents any observer with value-orientations radically different than our own, rather than an observer with specific set of cultural commitments. The general point – that even someone who rejects our values should be able to appreciate the results that we produce by systematically applying those values to the study of empirical reality – remains valid regardless of the specific differences of value-orientations involved. Application becomes a more or less technical question in Weber’s conception, and it is on *this* basis – and *not* on the specific content or character of the value-orientations thus applied – that the ‘scientific’ character of an investigation can and should be evaluated.

It is important not to underestimate how radical a shift in the definition of ‘social science’ this represents: a study conducted from the perspective of, say, a Marxist conception of class relations represents not a definitively correct or incorrect way of viewing the world, but rather serves as a systematic demonstration of *what it would*

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 154.

⁸⁸ Weber, *Wissenschaft*, pp. 16–17.

⁸⁹ Elsewhere, I have argued that contingency *in this sense* is an absolutely indispensable component of a robust conception of *agency*. For fuller statements, see Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, ‘Defending the West: Occidentalism and the Formation of NATO’, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 11 (2003); and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, ‘Making Sense of Making Sense: Configurational Analysis and the Double Hermeneutic’, in Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (eds.), *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2006).

⁹⁰ Note that Weber usually speaks of the ‘cultural sciences’ (*kulturwissenschaft*) instead of the ‘social sciences’. Unlike Talcott Parsons and those sociologists who were influenced by Parsons, Weber does not make a systematic distinction between the social and the cultural aspects of a situation.

⁹¹ Weber, ‘Objectivität’, pp. 183–4.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 155–6.

be like to construct the world in that way. This can be contrasted, not merely to dualist notions of science in which the worth of a set of assumptions ultimately has to do with their ability to produce accurate knowledge of an externally existing world, but also to the purely ‘instrumentalist’ view of theory propounded by some social scientists.⁹³ A social scientific investigation should be regarded not merely as an analytical wager concerning what the world is like – although it is certainly that – but also as a thought-experiment about what such a world *would* be like. The creation of meaning and value remains central to the enterprise, even though (and perhaps even *because*) there is no definitive way to adjudicate between value-orientations and the worlds that they produce.

Implications for IR

My sketch of a Weberian approach to social science offers only the barest outlines of what a social science that accepted and embraced its own necessarily partial and perspectival character would look like. In this article I have not sought to definitively establish the procedures and techniques by which such a social science should operate. Rather, I have engaged in a measure of conceptual clarification designed to draw more sharply the contrast between the dualistic approach to knowledge – in which mirroring an externally-existing reality is the goal – and a monistic approach which dissolves the contrast between ‘reality’ and ‘knowledge of reality’ in favour of a more self-conscious focus on knowledge practices. By utilising Weber, I have tried to suggest that adopting such a monistic focus does not mean abandoning any concern with systematicity and rigour in the construction of knowledge, but only means giving up the metaphysical claims and conceits that accompany and underlie the dualistic practices common to other approaches to knowledge-construction.

What implications does this have for IR in particular? I do not imagine that the critiques of dualism that I have advanced above are definitive knock-out blows against what is, admittedly, the dominant form of social science in our discipline. Rather, my intent in this article has been to bring forward the ontological issues that are tacitly implicated in that dominant form, in the hope of producing a more focused discussion about the philosophical foundations of our knowledge practices. Dualists of various sorts will undoubtedly have responses to all of my criticisms, and if this article provokes a series of philosophical exchanges about ontological issues, it will have done its work. My intent here is *not* that everyone in IR stop what they are doing and adopt monistic philosophical premises; rather, my intent is that dualist and monistic scholars alike will be more somewhat more explicit about their presumptions.

Along these lines, I believe that it would constitute ‘progress’ of a sort if IR scholars would stop making the tacit assumption that all good social science *must be* dualist. Although I do not think that my critiques here provide a definitive dismissal

⁹³ Milton Friedman, ‘The Methodology of Positive Economics’, in Frank Hahn and Martin Hollis (eds.), *Philosophy and Economic Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); see also Paul MacDonald, ‘Useful Fiction or Miracle Maker: The Competing Epistemological Foundations of Rational Choice Theory’, *American Political Science Review*, 97 (2003).

of dualism, I do think that they serve to demonstrate that the ontological presumption of a categorical split between the world and our knowledge of it should not be taken or held to be self-evidently obvious. In that way, what I have tried to do in this article is to open some 'thinking space' in the discipline for conceptions of social inquiry that fall somewhat outside of conventional dualisms.⁹⁴

The arguments that I have advanced here pose different sorts of challenges for different schools of IR theory. Contemporary realists and liberals,⁹⁵ whose work is generally quite explicitly dualist by virtue of the split between 'material' and 'ideational' (or 'cognitive') factors on which their claims of causal efficacy rest, have the task of somehow demonstrating either that (1) my philosophical criticisms of dualism are misguided, so that a dualistic social science *is* in important ways unimpeachable; or that (2) a dualistic social science can somehow succeed on its own terms. IR realists and liberals have not devoted much attention to these issues; doing so would only strengthen their substantive claims by fleshing out their ontological infrastructure more explicitly.

IR constructivists, on the other hand, have a more complex challenge. Inasmuch as the central claim of IR constructivism is the notion that 'people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them',⁹⁶ it might seem that constructivism has committed itself to a monistic ontology. Otherwise, how might the claim that social knowledge constitutes the contours of empirical settings be made meaningful? We are not simply dealing with a claim about the importance of ideational variables here; an internally consistent constructivism has to treat social knowledge and the practices that generate it as exercising a more profound set of effects.⁹⁷ For a monistic ontology, this is not a problem, because the fundamental continuity of knowledge and the world is presumed. Hence knowledge practices, *including* those of scholars, are by definition implicated in the situations under study, and as such the perspectival character of social knowledge is maintained all the way up and down the ladder of abstraction.

But many prominent IR constructivists are uncomfortable with this implication, and have been trying to articulate a more 'conventional'⁹⁸ or 'progressive'⁹⁹ version of constructivism that rests on an odd combination of ontological presumptions: the knowledge practices *of actors* are held to be in some sense continuous with the world

⁹⁴ On 'thinking space', see Jim George and David Campbell, 'Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference: Critical Social Theory and International Relations', *International Studies Quarterly*, 34 (1990).

⁹⁵ Note that the classical antecedents of both of these theoretical positions escape, to a greater or lesser extent, from this challenge. It would be a stretch to characterise Morgenthau or Niebuhr as dualists in the sense that I have outlined it here, since for both of these classical realists the line between 'the world' and 'accounts of the world' is far more blurry than it is for their intellectual descendants.

⁹⁶ Alexander E. Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, 46 (1992), pp. 396–7.

⁹⁷ Laffey and Weldes, 'Beyond Belief'; John Gerard Ruggie, 'Introduction: What Makes the World Hang Together?' in *Constructing the World Polity* (London: Routledge, 1998); Alexander E. Wendt, 'On Constitution and Causation in International Relations', in Tim Dunne, Michael Cox and Ken Booth (eds.), *The Eighty Years' Crisis: International Relations 1919–1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁹⁸ Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, 'Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism', *European Journal of International Relations*, 4 (1998).

⁹⁹ Emanuel Adler, 'Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics', *European Journal of International Relations* 3 (1997).

in which they live, but the knowledge practices of *scholars* are somehow exempted from this internality so that they can establish truer accounts of situations. This opens the door to the possibility that IR constructivists studying a situation might somehow come to know that situation better than the actors themselves, and thus find themselves empowered to suggest courses of action that are based on a superior understanding of the essence of the factors involved – an understanding that may not be completely perspective-less, but at least comes closer to such a ‘view from nowhere’ than would otherwise be the case. From this relatively secure position, various emancipatory projects – whether involving an increasing reflexivity of the public sphere, the advance of a class-based revolution, or whatever – can be launched.¹⁰⁰

Two decades ago, John Ruggie and Friedrich Kratochwil referred to the problem now faced by these dualist constructivists as a contradiction between epistemology and ontology.¹⁰¹ But I prefer to think about the issue in slightly different terms, involving not so much ontology and epistemology as *two kinds of ontology*, which we might refer to as ‘scientific’ and ‘philosophical’ ontology.¹⁰² Where a scientific ontology contains a catalogue of the entities and objects that a particular perspective holds to exist, a philosophical ontology provides the necessarily conceptual basis for making such a claim. Individualism and statism are scientific ontologies; dualism and monism are philosophical ontologies. With this distinction in hand, we can clarify the challenge faced by many IR constructivists to be a tension between their scientific ontology (knowledgeable actors engaged in transformative social practices) and their philosophical ontology (dualist, such that the dispositional essences of such actors and their practices may be revealed in a more or less classically objective fashion).

Given this tension, IR constructivists have several choices. First, they could deny that the tension is significant, which would require critiquing the general presumption that internal logical consistency is one of the hallmarks of good social science. Second, they could articulate a more coherent ontological dualism, along the lines of Wendt’s efforts to sketch out a ‘thin’ constructivism in which a non-social baseline limits the extent that social practices can constitute empirical situations.¹⁰³ One unacknowledged implication of this view, however, would be the admission that processes of social construction are in a sense stop-gap measures until such time as a more classically objective account of factors and objects can be produced; once social scientists articulate a better empirical account, the existing (inferior) social knowledge must be replaced by the more ‘scientific’ account. Before adopting such a perspective, IR constructivists might want to ascertain whether this is really a normative project in which they are comfortable participating.

A third option for IR constructivists would be to investigate the potentials of a more consistently monistic ontological stance, potentially along the Weberian lines

¹⁰⁰ Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, pp. 62–5; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 375–7.

¹⁰¹ Friedrich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie, ‘International Organization: A State of the Art on an Art of the State’, *International Organization*, 40 (1986).

¹⁰² Patomäki and Wight, ‘After Postpositivism?’, p. 215.

¹⁰³ Alexander E. Wendt, ‘On the Via Media: A Response to the Critics’, *Review of International Studies*, 26 (2000).

that I have sketched here.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the best concise statement of such what a monistic social science might look like in practice comes, ironically enough, from Habermas himself. Criticising a work that brings postmodern sensibilities to bear on Kant, Habermas derisively comments that the work – along with other studies of its kind – ‘move[s] in the no-man’s-land between argumentation, narration, and fiction.’¹⁰⁵ Habermas to the contrary, I would argue that this is a pretty good working definition of monistic social science. ‘Argumentation’, I think, catches up the extent to which a good piece of social science needs to involve a consistent application of its value-orientation to some specific empirical problem. ‘Narration’ catches up the embeddedness of that value-orientation in a specific cultural context from which it arises; the delineation of an ideal-type and a general perspective on things necessarily involves an assembly of existing cultural resources and rhetorical commonplaces to as to produce something that (literally) ‘makes sense’ to the relevant audience. And ‘fiction’ catches up the world-disclosing power of the exercise, highlighting the extent to which ‘the world’ is a thing made rather than a thing more or less neutrally discovered.

Monistic social science, then, would be a form of *enacted cultural morality*. Because we cannot ‘ground’ this morality on transcendental rational grounds, we have to look elsewhere for ways to adjudicate the clashes of value and of value-oriented worlds that arise from the endeavour of social scientific research. There remains an irreducible moment of contingent decision when trying to resolve such a clash, and all such resolutions are undoubtedly local consensuses without universal validity. But the fact remains that in our daily lives together, issues that are not logically decidable are, in practice, worked out.¹⁰⁶ *And this should be good enough*. We need to stop striving for a kind of certainty about the world that we can never achieve except by imposing it on the world by force. Foregrounding ontology is, I submit, one way to keep ourselves *honest* about such matters.

It is also important to recall that the concerns I have outlined here have not always been distant from the mainstream of IR scholarship. Once upon a time there was a ‘second great debate’ in the discipline, a debate between so-called ‘traditionalists’ and so-called ‘scientists’, and the sort of issues of philosophical ontology I have foregrounded here were (even if not mentioned by name) central to the discussion.¹⁰⁷ Hedley Bull’s famous criticism of ‘scientific’ approaches – that such approaches kept their practitioners ‘as remote from the substance of international politics as the

¹⁰⁴ Other alternatives include the ‘quantum’ constructivism that Wendt is developing (for a preliminary statement, see Alexander E. Wendt, ‘*Social Theory as Cartesian Science: An Auto-Critique from a Quantum Perspective*’, in Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander (eds.), *Constructivism and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2006, and Vincent Pouliot’s Bourdieu-inspired ‘subjectivism’: Vincent Pouliot, ‘“Subjectivism”: Towards a Constructivist Methodology’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 51 (2007)).

¹⁰⁵ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p. 302.

¹⁰⁶ John Shotter, *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 220.

¹⁰⁷ See the papers collected in Klaus Knorr and James N. Rosenau (eds.), *Contending Approaches to International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969). For a reading of the ‘second debate’ that explicitly highlights such concerns, see Friedrich Kratochwil, ‘History, Action and Identity: Revisiting the “Second” Great Debate and Assessing its Importance for Social Theory’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 12 (2006).

inmates of a Victorian nunnery were from sex'¹⁰⁸ – is more precisely, if less colourfully, phrased as a denunciation of dualism for separating analysts from their object of study. A monistic alternative, concerned to generate systematic perspectives on the world along with some degree of *phronesis* or practical wisdom,¹⁰⁹ would therefore constitute both a novel development and a return to a road less travelled in the history of the discipline. The greatest of theoretical debates never really *end*, but only recur in slightly modified form.¹¹⁰ Perhaps it is time to have this debate more explicitly again.

¹⁰⁸ Hedley Bull, 'International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach', in Knorr and Rosenau (eds.), *Contending Approaches*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ On *phronesis*, see Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter*.

¹¹⁰ This insight lies at the core of Andrew Abbott, *Chaos of Disciplines* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001).