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A2: Ontology First

Normative political calculation MUST precede ontological questioning

Jarvis 2k (Darryl, Senior Lecturer in International Relations – University of Sydney, International Relations and the Challenge of Postmodernism, p. 128-9)

More is the pity that such irrational and obviously abstruse debate should so occupy us at a time of great global turmoil. That it does and continues to do so reflect our lack of judicious criteria for evaluating theory and, more importantly, the lack of attachment theorists have to the real world. Certainly it is right and proper that we ponder the depths of our theoretical imaginations, engage in epistemological and ontological debate, and analyze the sociology of our knowledge. But to support that this is the only task of international theory, let alone the most important one, **smacks of intellectual elitism** and **displays** a certain **contempt** for those who search for guidance in their daily struggle as actors in international politics. What does Ashley’s project, his deconstructive efforts, or valiant fight against positivism say to the truly marginalized, oppressed, and destitute? How does it help solve the plight of the poor, the displaced refugees, the casualties of war, or the émigrés of death squads? Does it in any way speak to those whose actions and thoughts comprise the policy and practice of international relations? On all these questions one must answer **no**. This is not to say, of course, that all theory should be judged by its technical rationality and problem-solving capacity as Ashley forcefully argues. But to support that problem-solving technical theory is not necessary—or in some way bad—is a **contemptuous position** that abrogates any hope of solving some of the **nightmarish realities that millions confront daily**. As Holsti argues, we need ask of these theorists and their theories the ultimate question, **“So what?”** To what purpose do they deconstruct, problematize, destabilize, undermine, ridicule, and belittle modernist and rationalist approaches? Does this get us any further, make the world any better, or enhance the human condition? In what sense can this “debate toward [a] bottomless pit of epistemology and metaphysics” be judged pertinent, relevant, helpful, or cogent to anyone other than those foolish enough to be scholastically excited by abstract and recondite debate. Contrary to Ashley’s assertions, then, a poststructural approach fails to empower the marginalized and, in fact, abandons them. Rather than analyze the political economy of power, wealth, oppression, production, or international relations and render and intelligible understanding of these processes, Ashley succeeds in ostracizing those he portends to represent by delivering an obscure and highly convoluted discourse. If Ashley wishes to chastise structural realism for its abstractness and detachment, he must be prepared also to face similar criticism, especially when he so adamantly intends his work to address the real life plight of those who struggle at marginal places.

Even a flawed epistemology has predictive potential

Norris, 92 (Christopher, professor of philosophy at the University of Wales-Cardiff, Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals, and the Gulf War, the university of massachusetts press, 43-44)

This is not to suggest that Solomon takes the whole Aristotelian doctrine on board, along with its deep-laid teleological assumptions and other commitments that would clearly run counter to his own critical-realist position. What he does wish to rescue — and defend as wholly valid from a present-day perspective — is Aristotle’s argument that the unpredictability of future events need not be taken as any cause for scepticism with regard to our knowledge of present realities and their possible or likely outcome. Thus he cites the well-known passage from Dc Interpretutione where Aristotle makes this point by way of distinguishing matters of logical necessity from matters of real-world predictive consequence. • “A sea-fight” (or, we might add, a nuclear war] must either take place tomorrow or not”, Aristotle explains, but “it is not necessary that it should take place tomorrow, neither is it necessary that it should not take place.” it is wrong to conclude from this that reason is powerless in face of such uncertainties, or that we are simply in no position to extrapolate from present evidence to future events on the basis of observed regularities, rational conjectures, the weighing of probable outcomes etc. For the absence of any strictly logical (i.e. deductive) order of necessity does nothing to disqualify these other forms of valid inferential reasoning. Two further passages from Solomon’s book may help to clarify the point. On the one hand, ‘the future, Aristotle believes, must establish the propositional truth of our predictions, but those predictions themselves, our words, cannot determine the truth from within, cannot cross over from the word to the act, cannot reduce to indifference the difference between the conformations of our knowledge and the reality that we seek to know’. In which case it might seem that the sceptical arc right and that we have no grounds — no possible warrant — for predicting future eventualities on the basis of present observations. More than that: one could press Aristotle’s reasoning yet further and argue, in postmodern-textualist fashion, that this scepticism must apply not only to future occurrences but also to existing states of real-world affairs, since here likewise there is no guarantee that the ‘conformations of our knowledge’ (or the ‘facts’ as 43 represented in some given language-game) necessarily correspond at any point to ‘the reality we seek to know’. But this is simply wrong, as Solomon points out, since the absence of strictly logical grounds for predicting future events (or foe claiming knowledge of the truth behind present appearances) gives absolutely no reason for doubting our capacity to interpret events and arrive at a better understanding on the basis of evidence and inferential reasoning of a probabilistic kind. ‘This is the real challenge that the nuclear referent offers to criticism, a challenge to analyze the ways in which the word relates to the world, how our knowledge actuates the potentiality of a world that is real, that subsists outside our discourse, and that referentially grounds it.’2’

Ontology Bad

Subjectivity is rooted in material fact—the affirmatives superfluous questioning destroys political potential and results in unrestrained domination

Graham 99 (Philip , School of Communication Queensland University of Technology, Heidegger’s Hippies Sep 15 1999 http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palms/8314/index.html)

Societies should get worried when Wagner’s music becomes popular because it usually means that distorted interpretations of Nietzsche’s philosophy are not far away. Existentialists create problems about what is, especially identity (Heidegger 1947). Existentialism inevitably leads to an authoritarian worldview: this, my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of twofold voluptuous delight, my “beyond good and evil,” without a goal, unless the joy of the circle itself is a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will towards itself – do you want a name for this world? A solution to all its riddles? A light for you, too, you best-concealed, strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly men? – This world is the will to power – and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides! (Nietzsche 1967/1997).

Armed with a volume of Nietzsche, some considerable oratory skills, several Wagner records, and an existentialist University Rector in the form of Martin Heidegger, Hitler managed some truly astounding feats of strategic identity engineering (cf. Bullock, 1991). Upon being appointed to the Freiberg University, Heidegger pronounced the end of thought, history, ideology, and civilisation: ‘No dogmas and ideas will any longer be the laws of your being. The Fuhrer himself, and he alone, is the present and future reality for Germany’ (in Bullock 1991: 345). Heidegger signed up to an ideology-free politics: Hitler’s ‘Third Way’ (Eatwell 1997).

The idealised identity, the new symbol of mythological worship, Nietzsche’s European Superman, was to rule from that day hence. Hitler took control of the means of propaganda: the media; the means of mental production: the education system; the means of violence: the police, army, and prison system; and pandered to the means of material production: industry and agriculture; and proclaimed a New beginning and a New world order. He ordered Germany to look forward into the next thousand years and forget the past. Heidegger and existentialism remain influential to this day, and history remains bunk (e.g. Giddens , 1991, Chapt. 2).Giddens’s claims that ‘humans live in circumstances of … existential contradiction’, and that ‘subjective death’ and ‘biological death’ are somehow unrelated, is a an ultimately repressive abstraction: from that perspective, life is merely a series of subjective deaths, as if death were the ultimate motor of life itself (cf. Adorno 1964/1973). History is, in fact, the simple and straightforward answer to the “problem of the subject”. “The problem” is also a handy device for confusing, entertaining, and selling trash to the masses. By emphasising the problem of the ‘ontological self’ (Giddens 1991: 49), informationalism and ‘consumerism’ confines the navel-gazing, ‘narcissistic’ masses to a permanent present which they self-consciously sacrifice for a Utopian future (cf. Adorno 1973: 303; Hitchens 1999; Lasch 1984: 25-59). Meanwhile transnational businesses go about their work, raping the environment; swindling each other and whole nations; and inflicting populations with declining wages, declining working conditions, and declining social security. Slavery is once again on the increase (Castells, 1998; Graham, 1999; ILO, 1998).

There is no “problem of the subject”, just as there is no “global society”; there is only the mass amnesia of utopian propaganda, the strains of which have historically accompanied revolutions in communication technologies. Each person’s identity is, quite simply, their subjective account of a unique and objective history of interactions within the objective social and material environments they inhabit, create, and inherit. The identity of each person is their most intimate historical information, and they are its material expression: each person is a record of their own history at any given time. Thus, each person is a recognisably material, identifiable entity: an identity. This is their condition. People are not theoretical entities; they are people. As such, they have an intrinsic identity with an intrinsic value. No amount of theory or propaganda will make it go away.

The widespread multilateral attempts to prop up consumer society and hypercapitalism as a valid and useful means of sustainable growth, indeed, as the path to an inevitable, international democratic Utopia, are already showing their disatrous cracks. The “problem” of subjective death threatens to give way, once again, to unprecedented mass slaughter. The numbed condition of a narcissistic society, rooted in a permanent “now”, a blissful state of Heideggerian Dasein, threatens to wake up to a world in which “subjective death” and ontology are the least of all worries.

A2: K of Positivism

The criticism of positivism destroys a productive engagement with institutions and creates a vacuous methodology

Houghton, 8 (David Patrick, Associate Professor of I.R. Theory at the University of Central Florida, “Positivism ‘vs’ Postmodernism: Does Epistemology Make a Difference?”, International Politics (2008), 45)

As long ago as 1981, Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach effectively laid the influence of the dogmatic behaviouralism of the 1960s to rest in their book The Elusive Quest, signaling the profound disillusionment of mainstream IR with the idea that a cumulative science of IR would ever be possible (Ferguson and Mansbach, 1988). The popularity of the ‘naı¨ve’ form of positivism, wed to a view of inexorable scientific progress and supposedly practiced by wide-eyed scholars during the 1960s, has long been a thing of the past. **Postmodernists hence do the discipline a disservice when they continue to attack the overly optimistic and dogmatic form of positivism as if it still represented a dominant orthodoxy**, **which must somehow be overthrown**. Equally, supporters of the contemporary or ‘neo-’ version of positivism perform a similar disservice when they fail to articulate their epistemological assumptions clearly or at all. Indeed, the first error is greatly encouraged by the second, since by failing to state what they stand for, neo-positivists have allowed postmodernists to fashion a series of straw men who burn rapidly at the slightest touch. Articulating a full list of these assumptions lies beyond the scope of this article, but contemporary neo-positivists are, I would suggest, committed to the following five assumptions, none of which are especially radical or hard to defend: (1) That explaining the social and political world ought to be our central objective, (2) That — subjective though our perceptions of the world may be — many features of the political world are at least potentially explainable. What remains is a conviction that there are at least some empirical propositions, which can be demonstrably shown to be ‘true’ or ‘false’, some underlying regularities that clearly give shape to IR (such as the proposition that democracies do not fight one another), (3) That careful use of appropriate methodological techniques can establish what patterns exist in the political world, (4) That positive and normative questions, though related, are ultimately separable, although both constitute valid and interesting forms of enquiry. There is also a general conviction (5) that careful use of research design may help researchers avoid logical pitfalls in their work. Doubtless, there are some who would not wish to use the term ‘positivism’ as an umbrella term for these five assumptions, in which case we probably require a new term to cover them. But to the extent that there exists an ‘orthodoxy’ in the field of IR today, this is surely it. Writing in 1989, Thomas Biersteker noted that ‘the vast majority of scholarship in international relations (and the social sciences for that matter) proceeds without conscious reflection on its philosophical bases or premises. In professional meetings, lectures, seminars and the design of curricula, we do not often engage in serious reflection on the philosophical bases or implications of our activity. Too often, consideration of these core issues is reserved for (and largely forgotten after) the introductory weeks of required concepts and methods courses, as we socialize students into the profession’ (Biersteker, 1989). This observation — while accurate at the time — would surely be deemed incorrect were it to be made today. Even some scholars who profess regret at the philosophically self-regarding nature of contemporary of IR theory, nevertheless feel compelled to devote huge chunks of their work to epistemological issues before getting to more substantive matters (see for instance Wendt, 1999). The recent emphasis on epistemology has helped to push IR as a discipline further and further away from the concerns of those **who actually practice IR**. The consequent decline in the policy relevance of what we do, and our retreat into philosophical self-doubt, is ironic given the roots of the field in very practical political concerns (most notably, how to avoid war). What I am suggesting is not that IR scholars should ignore philosophical questions, or that such ‘navel gazing’ is always unproductive, for questions of epistemology surely undergird every vision of IR that ever existed. Rather, I would suggest that the existing debate is sterile and unproductive in the sense that the various schools of thought have much more in common than they suppose; stated more specifically, postpositivists have much more in common than they would like to think with the positivists they seek to condemn. Consequently, to the extent that there is a meaningful dialogue going on with regard to epistemological questions, it has no real impact on what we do as scholars when we look at the world ‘out there’. Rather than focusing on epistemology, it is inevitably going to be more fruitful to subject the substantive claims made by positivists (of all metatheoretical stripes) and postpositivists to the cold light of day. My own view, as the reader may have gathered already, is that the empirical claims of scholars like Der Derian and Campbell will not often stand up to such harsh scrutiny given the inattention to careful evidence gathering betrayed by both, but this is a side issue here; the point is that substantive theoretical and empirical claims, rather than metatheoretical or epistemological ones, ought to be what divides the international relations scene today.

Empirics Good

Ontological question produces reductionism—we must use empirical validity to create proscriptive political formulations

Owen 2 (David, Reader of Political Theory – University of Southampton, “Re-orienting International Relations: On Pragmatism, Pluralism and Practical Reasoning”, Millennium: Journal of International Studies, 31(3), p. 655-657)

Commenting on the ‘philosophical turn’ in IR, Wæver remarks that ‘[a] frenzy for words like “epistemology” and “ontology” often signals this philosophical turn’, although he goes on to comment that these terms are often used loosely.4 However, loosely deployed or not, it is clear that debates concerning ontology and epistemology play a central role in the contemporary IR theory wars. In one respect, this is unsurprising since it is a characteristic feature of the social sciences that periods of disciplinary disorientation involve recourse to reflection on the philosophical commitments of different theoretical approaches, and there is no doubt that such reflection can play a valuable role in making explicit the commitments that characterise (and help individuate) diverse theoretical positions. Yet, such a philosophical turn is not without its dangers and I will briefly mention three before turning to consider a confusion that has, I will suggest, helped to promote the IR theory wars by motivating this philosophical turn. The first danger with the philosophical turn is that it has an inbuilt tendency to prioritise issues of ontology and epistemology over explanatory and/or interpretive power as if the latter two were merely a simple function of the former. But while the explanatory and/or interpretive power of a theoretical account is not wholly independent of its ontological and/or epistemological commitments (otherwise criticism of these features would not be a criticism that had any value), it is by no means clear that it is, in contrast, wholly dependent on these philosophical commitments. Thus, for example, one need not be sympathetic to rational choice theory to recognise that it can provide powerful accounts of certain kinds of problems, such as the tragedy of the commons in which dilemmas of collective action are foregrounded. It may, of course, be the case that the advocates of rational choice theory cannot give a good account of why this type of theory is powerful in accounting for this class of problems (i.e., how it is that the relevant actors come to exhibit features in these circumstances that approximate the assumptions of rational choice theory) and, if this is the case, it is a philosophical weakness—but this does not undermine the point that, for a certain class of problems, rational choice theory may provide the best account available to us. In other words, while the critical judgement of theoretical accounts in terms of their ontological and/or epistemological sophistication is one kind of critical judgement, it is not the only or even necessarily the most important kind. The second danger run by the philosophical turn is that because prioritisation of ontology and epistemology promotes theory-construction from philosophical first principles, it **cultivates a theory-driven rather than problem-driven approach to IR.** Paraphrasing Ian Shapiro, the point can be put like this: since it is the case that there is always a plurality of possible true descriptions of a given action, event or phenomenon, the challenge is to decide which is the most apt in terms of getting a perspicuous grip on the action, event or phenomenon in question given the purposes of the inquiry; yet, from this standpoint, ‘theory-driven work is part of a reductionist program’ in that it ‘dictates always opting for the description that calls for the explanation that flows from the preferred model or theory’.5 The justification offered for this strategy rests on the mistaken belief that it is necessary for social science because general explanations are required to characterise the classes of phenomena studied in similar terms. However, as Shapiro points out, this is to misunderstand the enterprise of science since ‘whether there are general explanations for classes of phenomena is a question for social-scientific inquiry, not to be prejudged before conducting that inquiry’.6 Moreover, this strategy easily slips into the promotion of the pursuit of generality over that of empirical validity. The third danger is that the preceding two combine to encourage the formation of a particular image of disciplinary debate in IR—what might be called (only slightly tongue in cheek) ‘the Highlander view’—namely, an image of warring theoretical approaches with each, despite occasional temporary tactical alliances, dedicated to the strategic achievement of sovereignty over the disciplinary field. It encourages this view because the turn to, and prioritisation of, ontology and epistemology stimulates the idea that there can only be one theoretical approach which gets things right, namely, the theoretical approach that gets its ontology and epistemology right. This image feeds back into IR exacerbating the first and second dangers, and so a potentially vicious circle arises.

Empiricism is necessary to convince policy makers—recourse to the ontological is merely preaching to the choir

Wagner, 2k (Joseph, Poly Sci Prof @ Colgate, “The Revolt Against Reason,” in Critical Thinking, ed. Oxman-Michelli and Weinstein, http://hascall.colgate.edu/jwagner/DownloadFiles/Revolt.doc)

In this paper I have tried to show that the relativist fails to appreciate the obligatory epistemic status of objectivity and logical consistency. Relativists fail to understand that while objectivity is implicit in any framework or language, and while frameworks and languages are human conventions, objectivity is not. In other words, whether we call blue, 'blue' or 'grue' is a matter of volition; but that the condition for meaningful reference to blue is that we can pick out the same color and use the same color terms in a consistent fashion, and this is not simply a matter of volition. This is the precondition for metaphorical, ironic, sarcastic claims as well, if we are to get their meaning, irony, etc. And this point holds for every language. Language (the most open of frameworks) makes meaning possible; and particular languages make certain meanings more available, more easily expressible than others, but no language creates new things in the world to which other language users cannot, in principle, have access, and no language makes purely private experiences a matter for only parochial communication. Although different standards and frameworks determine what we say about the world, they do not determine the world. To illustrate this analogically we need only recognize that while having a microscope is the precondition for discovering very small objects, very small objects are the precondition of perceiving them in the microscope. In other words, frameworks are chronologically prior to our descriptions of the world, but the world is the epistemic condition for the possibility of frameworks. Or put somewhat differently, while learning language is chronologically prior to expressing meaning, the possibility of meaning is epistemically prior to language. Relativism confuses chronological and epistemological order of knowledge, or what Aristotle would have called the formal and material conditions of knowledge. By failing to appreciate the distinction between chronology and epistemology, relativism commits a genetic fallacy. By confusing the formal and material conditions of knowledge relativism is guilty of the confusion of discernibles. Thus relativism fails. If follows that the possibility of frameworks and languages presupposes universal meta-principles. These meta-principles are not determined by the framework, but are the preconditions for meaning and the constraints upon what can be validly said. Because common meta-principles condition any framework, not only are meanings universally accessible, but the constraints of reason universally apply. For instance, assume a language, Loco, in which all Locoians believe the earth is a two dimensional plane. This belief, X, is, in fact, false, any outside observers who know Loco can correctly assert, in Loco, 'X is false' even though no native Locoian believes it (assuming no mistake in translation). Why should unanimity among Locoians cause us any doubt? The epistemic problem of asserting this across frameworks is no greater than the problem of asserting scientific truths within a culture in which some persons persist in pre-scientific beliefs. The underlying conditions of logical consistency and objectivity, our knowledge of Locoian physics and modern Western physics, our evidence from satellites allow us to judge truth in this matter. Of course, deciding whether the Locoians are wrong is distinguished from deciding whether one should respect Locoian beliefs and customs, and whether one should tell them they are wrong. Relativism goes awry because of its tendency to confuse distinct categories and issues. In this case it confuses an epistemic issue with a normative one. Normatively, post-positivist relativism tells us that the universalism and objectivity of science and ethics seem insensitive to non-Western cultures or even subordinate subcultures, groups, and classes within Western societies. It reminds us that 'knowledge is power,' and that power is frightful. It commends relativism to those excluded groups and recommends that each group recapture the 'fleeting images' and 'subjective memories' that constitute its group meanings and form the basis for social and political solidarity. Each community is encouraged to articulate values implicit in such archeology (Giroux 1991). Perhaps these are commendable prescriptions, especially if we believe there is value in solidarity and in capturing meanings that make life in a community worthwhile. But by themselves these are inadequate prescriptions for liberation or emancipation from domination. If the subordinate groups have one set of values and the dominant groups have another; if the subordinate groups have their fleeting images and the dominant groups have another; if the subordinate group has its collective memories and the dominant group theirs, then the question of politics and morals is, which values and images should rule? If subordinate groups find objectivity hostile, then they deny a common ground that is prior to or takes precedence over the parochial differences in beliefs and values. If they can only appeal to that which is unique in their group, if they can appeal to values that move only them, then they fail. They fail to appeal to the values of the dominant group; they fail to make any claim upon the dominant group; and thereby concede to a struggle that is simply a matter of power. Unfortunately, the dominant group, by definition has power. Thus the normative prescriptions of relativism are practically as well as logically self-defeating. Alternatively, objective principles of justice and mutual respect make moral and political claims which ought to be honored by all persons, nations, and cultures. These are universal claims, the only sorts of claims which assert obligation on those who are dominant as well as those who are subordinate. Only universal claims of justice are the kind that cannot be discharged by the rejoinder, 'those are simply your tastes and preferences, not mine,' because only universal claims are grounded on the fundamental commonality of human beings and human societies, not upon the ineradicable differences between them. Such universality resides in the common reason and common truths (empirical and moral), which make differences possible as well as shared understanding and appreciation. Finally, identifying, understanding and appreciating differences between groups and individuals depends the universal capacity for logical consistency and objectivity that every language user possesses. By this means I recognize that 'happiness,' 'pain,' 'frustration,' 'friendship,' 'commitments' and 'beliefs about justice' matter not only to me but to others. I recognize that 'happiness' is desirable not because it occurs in me, but because happiness is a desirable experience in whomever it occurs. I recognize that if these matters are reasons to advance my interests or the interests of my society, they are also reasons to advance the interests of others and other societies. It is our commonality and universality that forms the basis for understanding and solidarity. Abandoning the common and the universal, as post-positivists, post-structuralists, and post-moderns do, not only rests upon a series of epistemic mistakes, but leads to a moral and political program that is as foolish as it is imprudent and unwise.

Predictions are possible even without recourse to positivism

Wagner, 2k (Joseph, Poly Sci Prof @ Colgate, “The Revolt Against Reason,” in Critical Thinking, ed. Oxman-Michelli and Weinstein, http://hascall.colgate.edu/jwagner/DownloadFiles/Revolt.doc)

There is an affinity between critical thinking and relativism, which, on its face, is not surprising. Contemporary relativism, like its predecessors, appeals to those who view the Enlightenment as incarcerating society and morality in the rigid and compassionless formalism of reason (e.g., Sandel 1982, Barnes and Bloor 1985, Connolly 1985, Poole 1991, White 1991). In contemporary ethics relativism has developed from groundings as disparate as feminist psychology and analytic philosophy (Gilligan 1982, Brown and Gilligan 1992, Murdoch 1985, Kittay and Meyers 1987, Nicholson 1990, Benhabib 1992 as examples of the former and Mackie 1976, Walzer 1983, Hampshire 1983, MacIntyre 1984, 1992, Taylor 1984, 1989 as examples of the latter). This resurgence of relativism can be found in a variety of fields, perhaps inspired by the demise of positivism (Winch 1958, Kuhn 1960, Lakatos and Musgrave 1970) and the emergence of avant garde trends in continental philosophy (Derrida 1978, Foucault 1970, Rorty 1979, 1989, and Lyotard 1988). In advancing their position, contemporary relativists often speak in the spirit of multiculturalism. They find the Western emphasis on reason and methodological empiricism inhospitable to the interests, voices, and concerns of those whose visions and values are unarticulated within the dominant canon of the Western philosophical tradition. Not surprisingly they also argue that a commitment to universal truth and transcultural standards bespeaks an arrogance and insensitivity to group, class, and cultural differences. After all Geertz (1973), Taylor (1985), and Foucault (1980) remind us that power is knowledge and warn us of the violence done when we attempt to understand the beliefs and acts of others by imposing categories, concepts and norms external to the individuals or groups we seek to understand. The critics of reason go on to argue that observation and comprehension of human behavior requires 'attunement' to other ways of knowing, feeling, valuing and experiencing. Contemporary relativists counsel us to recognize that all knowledge claims are acts of interpretation, because there is no Archimedean point from which one may survey the world. In effect, there is no world, pure and simple. Worlds are created by observers; truth and knowledge are framework-dependent; and understanding is an interpretive act. Given such an epistemology, art is a more appropriate paradigm for knowing than science, and knowledge is a matter of "reading the world" (Barthes 1973). Our readings derive from incommensurable contexts shaped by ineliminable language games (Lyotard 1988). A fortiori, no group, class, or culture occupies a position that authorizes their judgments and evaluations as superior to the beliefs, principles, or values of another. Therefore, confronted with the question, whose community, whose knowledge, and whose interpretation of the world is to prevail, the relativist responds by insisting that the values and meanings of others deserve as much attention and appreciation as our own. These articulations are often associated with the doctrines of post-modernism, post-positivism and multiculturalism. I hope to show these claims are indefensible on epistemic, moral, and political grounds. I intend to challenge progressive thinkers to consider how relativism ill serves and dishonors their ends and to see how transcultural and ahistorical claims of reason can be advanced as universally and objectively true while also denying that human beings can occupy a "god's eye point of view." Finally, I wish to show that despite firm assurances about the death of universalism and objectivity, these standards are necessary for any coherent epistemic position and essential for anyone who prescribes an obligation to honor prescriptions for equality, justice, and the mutuality of respect.

A2: Security is Constructed

Even if security is a discursive construction, the affirmative cannot create international change in the actors that BELIEVE in it

Wendt, 92 (Alexander, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Chicago, “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics, International Organization, VOl. 46, no. 2.)

Let us assume that processes of identity- and interest-formation have created a world in which states do not recognize rights to territory or existence—a war of all against all. In this world, anarchy has a “realist” meaning for state action: be insecure and concerned with relative power. Anarchy has this meaning only in virtue of collective, insecurity-producing practices, but if those practices are relatively stable, they do constitute a system that may resist change. The fact that worlds of power politics are socially constructed, in other words, does not guarantee they are malleable, for at least two reasons. The first reason is that once constituted, any social system confronts each of its members as an objective social fact that reinforces certain behaviors and discourages others. Self-help systems, for example, tend to reward competition and punish altruism. The possibility of change depends on whether the exigencies of such competition leave room for actions that deviate from the prescribed script. If they do not, the system will be reproduced and deviant actors will not.” The second reason is that systemic change may also be inhibited by actors’ interests in maintaining., relatively stable role identities. Such interests are rooted not only in the desire to minimize uncertainty and anxiety, manifested in efforts to confirm existing-beliefs about the social world, but also in the desire to avoid the expected costs of breaking commitments made to others—notably domestic constituencies and foreign allies in the case of states—as part of past practices. The level of resistance that these commitments induce will depend on the “salience” of particular role identities to the actor. The United States, for example, is more likely to resist threats to its identity as “leader of anticommunist crusades” than to its identity as “promoter of human rights.” But for almost any role identity, practices and information that challenge it are likely to create cognitive dissonance and even perceptions of threat, and these may cause resistance to transformations of the self and thus to social change.” For both systemic and “psychological” reasons, then, intersubjective understandings and expectations may have a self-perpetuating quality, constituting path-dependencies that new ideas about self and other must transcend. This does not change the fact that through practice agents are continuously producing and reproducing identities and interests, continuously “choosing now the preferences [they] will have later.” But it does mean that choices may not be experienced with meaningful degrees of freedom. This could be a constructivist justification for the realist position that only simple learning is possible in self-help systems. The realist might concede that such systems are socially constructed and still argue that after the corresponding identities and in have become institutionalized, they are almost impossible to transform.

**Predictions Good**

The affirmative abandons predictions in the name of metaphysical purity—this destroys responsibility for preventative actions and results in atrocity

Kurasawa, 04 (Fuyuki, Professor of Sociology, York University of Toronto, Constellations Volume 11, No 4, 2004).

A radically postmodern line of thinking, for instance, would lead us to believe that it is pointless, perhaps even harmful, to strive for farsightedness in light of the aforementioned crisis of conventional paradigms of historical analysis. If, contra teleological models, history has no intrinsic meaning, direction, or endpoint to be discovered through human reason, and if, contra scientistic futurism, prospective trends cannot be predicted without error, then the abyss of chronological inscrutability supposedly opens up at our feet. **The future appears to be unknowable**, an outcome of chance. Therefore, rather than embarking upon grandiose speculation about what may occur, we should adopt a pragmatism that abandons itself to the twists and turns of history; let us be content to formulate ad hoc responses to emergencies as they arise. While this argument has the merit of underscoring the fallibilistic nature of all predictive schemes, it conflates the necessary recognition of the contingency of history with unwarranted assertions about the latter’s total opacity and indeterminacy. **Acknowledging the fact that the future cannot be known with absolute certainty does not imply abandoning the task of trying to understand what is brewing on the horizon and to prepare for crises already coming into their own**. In fact, the incorporation of the principle of fallibility into the work of prevention means that we must be ever more vigilant for warning signs of disaster and for responses that provoke unintended or unexpected consequences (a point to which I will return in the final section of this paper). In addition, from a normative point of view, the acceptance of historical contingency and of the self-limiting character of farsightedness places the duty of preventing catastrophe squarely on the shoulders of present generations. **The future no longer appears to be a metaphysical creature of destiny or of the cunning of reason, nor can it be sloughed off to pure randomness.** It becomes, instead, a result of human action shaped by decisions in the present – including, of course, trying to anticipate and prepare for possible and avoidable sources of harm to our successors. Combining a sense of analytical contingency toward the future and ethical responsibility for it, the idea of early warning is making its way into preventive action on the global stage.

Preventative foresite and prediction making is ethical and necessary to confront the immense problems of modernity

Kurasawa, 04 (Fuyuki, Professor of Sociology, York University of Toronto, Constellations Volume 11, No 4, 2004).

In the twenty-first century, the lines of political cleavage are being drawn along those of competing dystopian visions. Indeed, one of the notable features of recent public discourse and socio-political struggle is their negationist hue, for they are devoted as much to the prevention of disaster as to the realization of the good, less to what ought to be than what could but must not be. The debates that preceded the war in Iraq provide a vivid illustration of this tendency, as both camps rhetorically invoked incommensurable catastrophic scenarios to make their respective cases. And as many analysts have noted, the multinational antiwar protests culminating on February 15, 2003 marked the first time that a mass movement was able to mobilize substantial numbers of people dedicated to averting war before it had actually broken out. More generally, given past experiences and awareness of what might occur in the future, given the cries of ‘never again’ (the Second World War, the Holocaust, Bhopal, Rwanda, etc.) and ‘not ever’ (e.g., nuclear or ecological apocalypse, human cloning) that are emanating from different parts of the world, the avoidance of crises is seemingly on everyone’s lips – and everyone’s conscience. From the United Nations and regional multilateral organizations to states, from non-governmental organizations to transnational social movements, the determination to prevent the actualization of potential cataclysms has become a new imperative in world affairs. Allowing past disasters to reoccur and unprecedented calamities to unfold is now widely seen as unbearable when, in the process, the suffering of future generations is callously tolerated and our survival is being irresponsibly jeopardized. Hence, we need to pay attention to what a widely circulated report by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty identifies as a burgeoning “culture of prevention,”3 a dynamic that carries major, albeit still poorly understood, normative and political implications. Rather than bemoaning the contemporary preeminence of a dystopian imaginary, I am claiming that it can enable a novel form of transnational socio-political action, a manifestation of globalization from below that can be termed **preventive foresight**. We should not reduce the latter to a formal principle regulating international relations or an ensemble of policy prescriptions for official players on the world stage, since it is, just as significantly, a mode of ethico-political practice enacted by participants in the emerging realm of global civil society. In other words, what I want to underscore is the work of farsightedness, the social processes through which civic associations are simultaneously constituting and putting into practice a sense of responsibility for the future by attempting to prevent global catastrophes. Although the labor of preventive foresight takes place in varying political and socio-cultural settings – and with different degrees of institutional support and access to symbolic and material resources – it is underpinned by three distinctive features: dialogism, publicity, and transnationalism. In the first instance, preventive foresight is an intersubjective or dialogical process of address, recognition, and response between two parties in global civil society: the ‘warners,’ who anticipate and send out word of possible perils, and the audiences being warned, those who heed their interlocutors’ messages by demanding that governments and/or international organizations take measures to steer away from disaster. Secondly, the work of farsightedness derives its effectiveness and legitimacy from public debate and deliberation. This is not to say that a fully fledged global public sphere is already in existence, since transnational “strong publics” with decisional power in the formal-institutional realm are currently embryonic at best. Rather, in this context, publicity signifies that “weak publics” with distinct yet occasionally overlapping constituencies are coalescing around struggles to avoid specific global catastrophes.4 Hence, despite having little direct decision-making capacity, the environmental and peace movements, humanitarian NGOs, and other similar globally-oriented civic associations are becoming significant actors involved in public opinion formation. Groups like these are active in disseminating information and alerting citizens about looming catastrophes, lobbying states and multilateral organizations from the ‘inside’ and pressuring them from the ‘outside,’ as well as fostering public participation in debates about the future. This brings us to the transnational character of preventive foresight, which is most explicit in the now commonplace observation that we live in an interdependent world because of the globalization of the perils that humankind faces (nuclear annihilation, global warming, terrorism, genocide, AIDS and SARS epidemics, and so on); individuals and groups from far-flung parts of the planet are being brought together into “risk communities” that transcend geographical borders.5 Moreover, due to dense media and information flows, knowledge of impeding catastrophes can instantaneously reach the four corners of the earth – sometimes well before individuals in one place experience the actual consequences of a crisis originating in another. My contention is that civic associations are engaging in dialogical, public, and transnational forms of ethico-political action that contribute to the creation of a fledgling global civil society existing ‘below’ the official and institutionalized architecture of international relations. The work of preventive foresight consists of forging ties between citizens; participating in the circulation of flows of claims, images, and information across borders; promoting an ethos of farsighted cosmopolitanism; and forming and mobilizing weak publics that debate and struggle against possible catastrophes. Over the past few decades, states and international organizations have frequently been content to follow the lead of globally- minded civil society actors, who have been instrumental in placing on the public agenda a host of pivotal issues (such as nuclear war, ecological pollution, species extinction, genetic engineering, and mass human rights violations).

Preventative foresight is critical to prevent runaway impact scenarios

Kurasawa, 04 (Fuyuki, Professor of Sociology, York University of Toronto, Constellations Volume 11, No 4, 2004).

Independently of this contractualist justification, global civil society actors are putting forth a number of arguments countering temporal myopia on rational grounds. They make the case that no generation, and no part of the world, is immune from catastrophe. Complacency and parochialism are deeply flawed in that even if we earn a temporary reprieve, our children and grandchildren will likely not be so fortunate unless steps are taken today. Similarly, though it might be possible to minimize or contain the risks and harms of actions to faraway places over the short-term, parrying the eventual blowback or spillover effect is improbable. In fact, as I argued in the previous section, all but the smallest and most isolated of crises are rapidly becoming globalized due to the existence of transnational circuits of ideas, images, people, and commodities. Regardless of where they live, our descendants will increasingly be subjected to the impact of environmental degradation, the spread of epidemics, gross North-South socioeconomic inequalities, refugee flows, civil wars, and genocides. What may have previously appeared to be temporally and spatially remote risks are ‘coming home to roost’ in ever faster cycles. In a word, then, procrastination makes little sense for three principal reasons: it exponentially raises the costs of eventual future action; it reduces preventive options; and it erodes their effectiveness. With the foreclosing of long-range alternatives, later generations may be left with a single course of action, namely, that of merely reacting to large-scale emergencies as they arise. We need only think of how it gradually becomes more difficult to control climate change, let alone reverse it, or to halt mass atrocities once they are underway. Preventive foresight is grounded in the opposite logic, whereby the decision to work through perils today greatly enhances both the subsequent room for maneuver and the chances of success. Humanitarian, environmental, and techno-scientific activists have convincingly shown that we cannot afford not to engage in preventive labor. Moreover, I would contend that farsighted cosmopolitanism is not as remote or idealistic a prospect as it appears to some, for as Falk writes, “[g]lobal justice between temporal communities, however, actually seems to be increasing, as evidenced by various expressions of greater sensitivity to past injustices and future dangers.”36 Global civil society may well be helping a new generational self-conception take root, according to which we view ourselves as the provisional caretakers of our planetary commons. Out of our sense of responsibility for the well-being of those who will follow us, we come to be more concerned about the here and now.

Deterrence🡪Onto-Security

Deterrence theory creates a mutual vulnerability and respect that ushers in a paradigm of onto-security

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“Why the Cold War Practices of Deterrence are Still Prevalent: Physical Security, Ontological Security and Strategic Discourse”

http://cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2008/Lupovici.pdf)

Since deterrence can become part of the actors’ identity, it is also involved in the actors’ will to achieve ontological security, securing the actors’ identity and routines. As McSweeney explains, ontological security is “the acquisition of confidence in the routines of daily life—the essential predictability of interaction through which we feel confident in knowing what is going on and that we have the practical skill to go on in this context.” These routines become part of the social structure that enables and constrains the actors’ possibilities (McSweeney, 1999: 50-1, 154-5; Wendt, 1999: 131, 229-30). Thus, through the emergence of the deterrence norm and the construction of deterrence identities, the actors create an intersubjective context and intersubjective understandings that in turn affect their interests and routines. In this context, deterrence strategy and deterrence practices are better understood by the actors, and therefore **the continuous avoidance of violence is more easily achieved.** Furthermore, within such a context of deterrence relations, rationality is (re)defined, clarifying the appropriate practices for a rational actor, and this, in turn, reproduces this context and the actors’ identities.

Therefore, the internalization of deterrence ideas helps to explain how actors may create more cooperative practices and **break away from the spiral of hostility that is forced and maintained by the identities that are attached to the security dilemma,** **and which lead to mutual perception of the other as an aggressive enemy.** As Wendt for example suggests, in situations where states are restrained from using violence—such as MAD (mutual assured destruction)—states not only avoid violence, but “ironically, may be willing to trust each other enough to take on collective identity”. In such cases if actors believe that others have no desire to engulf them, then it will be easier to trust them and to identify with their own needs (Wendt, 1999: 358-9). In this respect, the norm of deterrence, the trust that is being built between the opponents, and the (mutual) constitution of their role identities may all lead to the creation of long term influences that preserve the practices of deterrence as well as the avoidance of violence. Since a basic level of trust is needed to attain ontological security,21 the existence of it may further strengthen the practices of deterrence and the actors’ identities of deterrer and deterred actors.

In this respect, I argue that for the reasons mentioned earlier, the practices of deterrence should be understood as providing both physical and ontological security, thus **refuting that there is necessarily tension between them.** Exactly for this reason I argue that Rasmussen’s (2002: 331-2) assertion—according to which MAD was about enhancing ontological over physical security—is only partly correct. Certainly, MAD should be understood as providing ontological security; but it also allowed for physical security, since, compared to previous strategies and doctrines, it was all about decreasing the physical threat of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the ability to increase one dimension of security helped to enhance the other, since it strengthened the actors’ identities and created more stable expectations of avoiding violence.

Ext—Onto-Security

Deterrence creates ontological security

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Identifying these possible interactions allows for an understanding of the special characteristics of the practices of mutual deterrence. I suggest that these practices lie between the two poles of physical threat and the two poles of ontological threat, providing an escape from the ontological security dilemma. In other words, mutual deterrence provides actors trapped in the classical security dilemma (Box 3) with a gradual way out: through a via-media that may increase their physical security without posing a grave threat to their identities. Thus, implementing deterrence practices neither increases their physical level of threat nor poses an immediate threat to actors’ identities. In fact, successful implementation decreases the threat level by providing some degree of physical security, and constitutes the actors’ identities (as deterrer and deterred actors). This makes their routines more predictable, which may lead to an increase in their ontological security.

Onto-Security sovles the root cause of all conflict

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In her breakthrough work on this issue, Mitzen (2006) aims to extend the concept of ontological security, suggesting that states (and not only individuals) engage in ontological security seeking (Mitzen, 2006: 342). Her main argument, as stated above, concerns the ontological security dilemma—situations in which states are forced to choose between physical security and securing their identities. She suggests,

Even a harmful or self-defeating relationship can provide ontological security, which means states can become attached to conflict. That is, states might actually come to prefer their ongoing, certain conflict to the unsettling condition of deep uncertainty as to the other’s and one’s own identity. The attachment dynamics of ontological security-seeking thus turn the security dilemma’s link between uncertainty and conflict on its head, suggesting that conflict can be caused not by uncertainty but by the certainty such relationships offer their participants (Mitzen, 2006: 342-3).2

Because this dilemma may lead to a prolonging of conflicts, Mitzen argues that more attention should be given to how states can break away from it. This distinction between physical security and ontological security—a distinction that is fundamental to Mitzen’s thesis (and my own) and that has been acknowledged by a number of scholars (Huysmans, 1998: 242; Steele, 2005: 527)3—is, admittedly, not clear cut (Huysmans, 1998: 243). However, distinguishing between the two can be justified given the possibility of the existence of threats that do not involve a physical dimension. The importance of Mitzen’s arguments lies in their implications, mainly with regard to explaining international conflicts, their duration, and the ability to shift them towards cooperation. In order to extend her arguments, however, one must sketch out the various possible interactions between the acts of providing physical security and securing state identity.