

Theoreticians' obligation of transparency: when parsimony, reflexivity, transparency and reciprocity meet

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Abstract. One way to describe the role of the social sciences (international relations included) is by relating to its function of rendering the social world transparent. This is a major conception of moral significance. The social world is a world of moral subjects. To render this world of moral subjects transparent involves exposing the inner states of the human mind. Moreover, according to the moral principle of reciprocity, those who make others transparent should be also transparent themselves. Furthermore, as facts do not order themselves objectively into parsimonious theory, the social scientist requires an extra-theoretical mechanism to classify and filter out data on the way to constructing theory. This extra-mechanism comprises the scientist's *a priori* assumptions of normative, ontological, and epistemological types: *a priori* assumptions that constitute the inner states of the theoretician's mind and necessarily precede theory. It is argued here that according to the moral and social principle of reciprocity, theoreticians have an individual and communal moral obligation to ensure that theory and theorising are transparent; an obligation attainable and preceded by strong individual and communal reflexivity. The extra-theoretical mechanism, and especially the ideological inclinations and normative convictions of theoreticians that allows parsimonious theory to be constructed from unbounded social complexity, should be made visible to the public.

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Introduction

Among the terms used to describe the mission of the social scientist are: to explain, to comprehend, to explore facts and their interrelations, to identify causal mechanisms, to theorise social reality, to expose what is otherwise unknown, and

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to disclose hidden truths of society. However, this mission can also be expressed by another notion: transparency. The social scientist's role is to make the social world transparent – to both observers and participants.

Defining the social scientist's work in terms of transparency is not simply a matter of using fashionable terminology. Rather, it is an important shift of moral significance. Unlike the natural world, which is the natural scientist's subject of inquiry, the social world is a world of moral subjects. To make this world of moral subjects transparent entails exposing the inner states of the human minds. By studying human society, social scientists shed light on human desires and beliefs and expose and connect them (usually causally) with social dynamics. They explain, for example, how human self-interest shapes free market dynamics, how rational calculations mould the balance of threats and mutual deterrence between states, and how identification with one's group leads to solidarity. As these examples show, the inner state of mind is an important factor in the theoretical account of social phenomena. This does not imply that states of mind are the only explanatory variables or even that the causal direction is only from states of mind to social structures. On the contrary, social structures and social processes also shape and drive human states of mind. Still, (setting aside behaviourism for the moment), inner states of mind are an important variable in social science exploration. Change also dovetails with the act of theorising, of producing knowledge of potential relevance to the workings of a society. By exposing otherwise unknown social mechanisms theory can at times trigger social and political dynamics that would never have occurred without the theoretical knowledge. Thus, and using the same examples as above, awareness of the self-interest of the parties in a given situation could help in planning fiscal and monetary strategies. We know that understanding the underlying operating mechanisms behind mutual deterrence was a crucial factor in managing the Cold War and preventing its escalation into a full scale war, and that a Machiavellian leader can exploit what we now know about group identity to defend his regime. Rallying around a flag is after all quite an efficient political strategy for winning elections when one's political standing has been given a thrashing.

Those two factors – making inner states of mind transparent and the socio-political effects of making them transparent – should stimulate public interest in social science transparency and also produce a commitment to transparency in the social scientists themselves. As argued below, the moral and social principle of reciprocity obligates theoreticians to transparency. Reciprocity as moral principle requires us to treat others as we would wish them to treat us, and to be willing to enact upon ourselves what we enact on others. Reciprocity is also a social principle, understood as transforming actions into interactions founded on mutuality. When understood jointly, reciprocity obligates transparency as the moral obligation of theoreticians to disclose and acknowledge the normative convictions and ideological inclinations which inherently and necessarily enable theorising. As discussed below, the obligation is for two levels of transparency, one individual the other communal, collectively assigned to the community of theoreticians.

Transparency as argued for here depends on the kind of strong reflexivity embraced by feminist epistemologists and standpoint theoreticians.¹ Before revealing

¹ See also autoethnography, Jan du Preez, 'Locating the Researcher in the Research: Personal Narrative and Reflective Practice', *Reflective Practice*, 9 (2008), pp. 509–19. Neo-pragmatism also

one's assumptions, convictions, and commitments to the public, social scientists must register them consciously. In other words, theoreticians should employ strong reflexivity. A similar approach to feminist epistemology was advocated and practiced recently in International Relations (IR) by James Rosenau in his book, *Distant Proximities*.² The book's postscript is practically a chapter of confession where Rosenau practices what he terms 'explicitness' and reveals the values, concepts, and methods underlying his academic writing. Like the feminist epistemologists and standpoint theoreticians, Rosenau believes that explicitness 'is the key to knowledge building'³ and could improve consensual cumulative knowledge.⁴

However, close as those projects are, there are two important differences between the argument presented here and that defended by feminist epistemology. First, the nature of justification is different. In feminist epistemology the justification for reflexivity is obviously epistemological. Strong reflexivity is required due to the epistemological claim that all knowledge is socially situated. It is argued that disclosing the theoretician's cultural and social commitments will produce a better theory, more universal in application. The justification employed here is mainly an ethical one: theoreticians are obligated to be transparent because of the moral force of the principle of reciprocity. Secondly, the argument employed here does not fully share the materialist predisposition with standpoint theory.⁵

My argument for transparency involves several steps. Step one argues that social science explanation depends to an extent on the study of the inner states of human mind and that understanding these states is a central, fundamental, and inherent aspect of social science (first section). To argue this, I begin the section by exploring the social science tendency to search for regularities, either partial and contextual, or involving law-like totalities and universal. I subsequently make the case that these regularities are explained, at least in part, in terms of the inner states of the human mind. Stated differently, social science theorising involves rendering the inner states of human mind transparent.

The second section examines the second step in the argument for transparency, namely that a fundamental constituent of constructing theoretical explanation is

seeks to locate knowledge in a particular perspective, see Patrick Baert, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: Towards Pragmatism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 136, 153–4.

² James N. Rosenau, *Distant Proximities: Dynamics Beyond Globalization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

⁴ Aydinli Ersel and James N. Rosenau, 'Courage Versus Caution: A Dialogue on Entering and Prospering in IR', *International Studies Review*, 6 (2004), pp. 511–26. As will become clear below, I think Rosenau's position, while laudable, is too naïve in its expectations that theoreticians be fully aware of the assumptions, commitments, and convictions that inform their theories.

⁵ Standpoint theory, embraced mainly by feminist epistemologists, claims that all knowledge is situated. Standpoint theory is historically predisposed towards materialist analysis according to which standpoints are determined by the position of the knower in the social hierarchy and his or her corresponding social commitments. See, Elizabeth Potter, *Feminism and Philosophy of Science: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 131–2; Dorothy E. Smith, 'Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology', in Sandra G. Harding (ed.), *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 91; Mary E. Hawkesworth, 'Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth', in Barbara Laslett, Sally G. Kohlstedt, Helen Longino and Evelyn Hammonds (eds), *Gender and Scientific Authority* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 78; Barbara Laslett, Sally G. Kohlstedt, Helen Longino and Evelyn Hammonds, 'Introduction', in *Ibid.*, p. 192; Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14 (1988), pp. 575–99.

the inner states of the theoretician's mind. To support this claim I examine theory as a heuristic instrument that is used to address the complexities and contextualities of social reality. I emphasise the parsimonious nature of theory⁶ and the role of *a priori* assumptions in bridging between complex social reality and parsimonious, patterned theory. I argue that these assumptions embed theory in moral convictions and ideological inclinations. The task of the second step is to establish that certain states of mind are necessarily and inherently involved in theorising, *and* that they may be suitable candidates for transparency justified by the principle of reciprocity. That is that those convictions and inclinations of the theoretician that enable the process of theorising are what should be disclosed under the reciprocal obligation of transparency.

But before completing the argument for transparency justified by reciprocity, I take a slight detour in the third section. Section three deals with the phenomenon of 'theory gets real' and explores the possible mechanisms through which theorising generates social and political change. This discussion is relevant to the structure of the argument for transparency as a whole as it lends additional moral weight to the obligation of transparency. This is because if theory has moral convictions and ideological inclinations and at times it gets real those convictions and inclinations can be translated into actual policies. Therefore, the public has a vested interest in the transparency of the inner states of the theoretician's mind if they are to understand the moral basis for public policies (which affect their lives).

In the fourth section I proceed to the crux of my argument for transparency as morally obligated by the principle of reciprocity. I open this section by exploring the nature and origins of the principle of reciprocity, setting out several possible objections, which I then refute. I then proceed to examine the prerequisite for transparency, namely strong reflexivity with its inbuilt weaknesses and limitations. Analysing those weaknesses and limitations leads me to the conclusion that there are two levels of strong reflexivity (one individual, the other communal). This discussion clears the way for my final step in the argument, namely that there is indeed an obligation for transparency justified by the principle of reciprocity and that as is the case with strong reflexivity so it is with transparency: two levels of transparency are needed, individual and communal. After validating the argument for transparency, I practice transparency myself, and in the fifth and final section render my own argument transparent, disclosing my moral commitment to deliberative democracy as the moral groundwork for my argument on the reciprocal obligation of transparency.

⁶ Parsimony is defined as 'The principle that the best statistical model among all satisfactory models is that with the fewest parameters. Hence, more generally, the principle which asserts that if it is possible to explain a phenomenon equally adequately in a number of different ways, then the simplest of explanations (in terms of the number of variables or propositions) should be selected.' *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, 3rd edition, edited by John Scott and Gordon Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 477. According to this strict definition, not all IR theoreticians are committed to parsimony. Clearly constructivists do not seek the explanation with the fewest possible variables, and Hans Morgenthau's realism is not as parsimonious as that of Waltz. However, all theoreticians, including constructivists (as we see clearly from the Ned Lebow quotation below), seek simplified explanations; explanations that are much simpler and sparser than the complexities of social reality. This loose conception of parsimony is the focus of my analysis. While not as accurate as the strict definition, the loose conception is much more convenient and word-efficient than 'simpler and sparser than the complexities of social reality'. I therefore invite the reader to understand 'parsimony' as I do, that is loosely.

Social science and the study of inner states of human mind

Many social scientists draw back from exploring theory itself, preferring to engage simply in theory construction. In this way, metatheoretical reflection remains by wayside, to be picked up by the philosophers. This tendency is regrettable however. First, as the sociologists of science realised long ago, theory is itself a social phenomenon. It is constructed socially according to human-made rules.⁷ This understanding lies at the bottom of what became Science and Technology Studies (STS). Theory then is legitimate subject matter for the social scientist. Even in our days of specialisation into ever narrower sub-fields, theory might form a common subject worthy of exploration by all social scientists. Second, such exploration involving self-reflection can be most beneficial to the cause of self-improvement. Self-reflection can generate a meritorious cycle of drawing lessons and amending the construction of theory. These two reasons provide a strong basis for studying theory – a study taken up below.

The search for regularities and patterns

We generally describe social science as the systematic search for patterns and regularities in society and human conduct and the successive effort to explain these patterns. The following section argues that this explanatory effort involves the disclosure of the inner state of the human mind. In later sections, this argument is developed to argue for the reciprocal obligation of transparency.

The emphasis in the above description of social science is on patterns, regularities, and explanations. The methodology employed is quite varied. For example, social scientists use qualitative and quantitative methods, hermeneutical and behavioural approaches, positivist and critical philosophies. Social science involves a plethora of approaches and methodologies, yet they are all committed to the systematic explanation of patterns and regularities. This is not to say that all approaches and methodologies understand patterns and regularities the same way or that they all look for the same degree of order in the social world. For example, Critical Realists who follow Roy Bhaskar argue that the social world is comprised of open systems which work against law-like regularities.⁸ They therefore try to explain 'demi-regularities', or 'partial regularities', which Patrick Baert calls 'imperfect patterns, but patterns nevertheless'.⁹

Others, followers of Max Weber's interpretative methodology, have two options for perceiving regularities. Like Weber, they can opt for his methodological 'ideal

⁷ Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1987). Sheila Jasanoff, *The Fifth Branch: Science Advisers as Policymakers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), Sheila Jasanoff, *Designs on Nature: Science and Democracy in Europe and the US* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Roger A. Pielke, *The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Helen E. Longino, *The fate of knowledge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁸ For example, Colin Wight, *Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 51–2.

⁹ Baert, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, p. 96.

types' solution. Weber described ideal types as analytical constructs that help us methodologically to handle the inexhaustible complexity of the social world and life. According to Baert, 'every ideal type makes for a welcome reduction of complexity, and this bringing "order into chaos" is a *sine qua non* for understanding'.¹⁰ Secondly, they can follow Weber's emphasis on meaning in the social world and the importance of interpreting meaning to explain and/or understand reality. Hence, rather than seek universal patterns, theoreticians of this ilk can stress contexts as the locus of meaning and the domain where rules apply; as the social entities in need of explanation and/or understanding.¹¹ Even then, though, theoreticians would not give up the search for regularities, rather they would limit regularities to particular contexts. This was wonderfully set out recently by Tulia Falleti and Julia Lynch on the subject of contexts, causal mechanisms, and political analysis, especially from the perspective of historical institutionalism.¹² They 'define causal mechanisms as relatively abstract concepts or *patterns* of action that can travel from one specific instance, or "episode", of causation to another and that explain how a hypothesized cause creates a particular outcome in a given context'.¹³ Similarly, John Searle differentiated between brute facts and institutional facts, the latter existing solely in human institutions and being governed by systems of constitutive rules in the form of 'X counts as Y in C', where 'C' stands, of course, for contexts.¹⁴ Searle's argument was taken on board by constructivists who perceive the social world as constructed by inter-subjective meanings which are governed by constitutive rules and are therefore contextualised.¹⁵ Consequently, according to Jonathon Moses and Torbjørn Knutsen, constructivists' explanations see 'History, ideas, community and language [as . . .] all important contextual factors that provide order and patterns to the world as we know it.'¹⁶

The various ways of understanding regularities are also evident in the currently accepted distinction between problem-solving and critical theory. As Robert Cox has made clear, some theories are problem-solving, that is, they (or more accurately, the theoreticians constructing them), accept existing structures and

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 43. See also, Alfred Schütz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, trans. George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), p. 226; Molly Cochran, 'Deweyan Pragmatism and Post-Positivist Social Science in IR', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 31 (2002), pp. 535–6.

¹¹ Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 72.

¹² Tulia G. Falleti and Julia F. Lynch, 'Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis', *Comparative Political Studies*, 42 (2009), pp 1143–66.

¹³ Ibid., p. 1145. Emphasis added.

¹⁴ John S. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), pp. 27–9.

¹⁵ See, for example, Tal Dingott Alkopher, 'The Social (and Religious) Meanings that Constitute War: The Crusades as Realpolitik vs. Socialpolitik', *International Studies Quarterly*, 49 (2005), p. 719.

¹⁶ Jonathan W. Moses and Torbjørn L. Knutsen, *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 190. See also, Amir Lupovici, 'Constructivist methods: a plea and manifesto for pluralism', *Review of International Studies*, 35 (2009), pp. 195–218, and Milja Kurki and Adriana Sinclair, 'Hidden in Plain Sight: Constructivist Treatment of Social Context and its Limitations', *International Politics*, 47 (2010), pp. 4–10. See also Peter Winch who advanced a radical version of constructivism and argued that 'the category of cause [fitting to natural phenomena] involves generality by way of empirical generalizations, that of a reason for action [fitting to social phenomena] involves generality by way of rules.' Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relations to Philosophy*, second edition (London: Routledge, 1990), p. xi.

systems as givens and offer an explanation as to the working of their mechanisms.¹⁷ In contrast, critical theories problematise existing structures and systems.¹⁸ Critical theoreticians investigate the development of those structures and systems, namely the mechanisms that produce (or constitute) the formation of structures and systems (and their constituent units) as we know them today. Problem-solving theoreticians take an ahistorical view, whereas critical theoreticians are more historical. Yet different as the two types of theoreticians are, they both seek regularities: the former seeking regularities within existing systems and structures, the latter between coming and going systems and structures.

Every theory construction must have some expectation of regularity and beneath what we understand as theory lies the search for regularity whether partial or with law-like totality, whether contextual or universal, positivist or post-positivist. Without this quest, in whatever its form or degree, we would face another sort of intellectual activity which might be legitimate and useful but cannot be understood as theorisation.

The search for inner states of human mind

Moreover, most social scientists apart from the notable exception of those ascribing to the now mostly discredited behaviourism¹⁹ search the causes of the patterns in, among other variables, the beliefs and desires of people: how people understand their environment and themselves, their expectations of others, their feelings about others and themselves, the goals they wish to achieve, how they think they can and ought to achieve it, and their commitments towards achieving them. Together these internal states of mind help to shape the organisation of the social world and the human conduct in it.

In an alternative conceptualisation, social scientists attempt to uncover the logic of social action, the driving force of the human calculus behind a commitment to a given course of action. Humans – and writ large societies – may try to maximise cost/benefit according to the logic of consequences or instrumental rationality. They may act according to a set of expected norms dictated by the logic of appropriateness. They may alternatively seek jointly to arrive at a shared understanding of truth and reality guided by the Habermasian logic of arguing. While these (by no means exclusive) logics each prescribe a different sort of calculus, they nevertheless all assume a calculus of the human mind; a calculus

¹⁷ Robert W. Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 10 (1981), pp. 128–9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 129. For a recent critical exercise in the historicisation of the meaning of democracy, see Christopher Hobson, 'Beyond the End of History: The Need for a "Radical Historicisation" of Democracy in International Relations Theory', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 37 (2009), pp. 631–57.

¹⁹ A devastating criticism of behaviourism can be found in Steven Lukes. Lukes rightly argues that behaviourism's single-minded focus on observable behaviour leaves it unable to say anything fruitful about power that quite often works in invisible ways, Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Charles Taylor criticises behaviourism for other reasons, namely, that contrary to its pretensions, behaviourist research is caught up with values and norms, Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 77–81.

which social science attempts to disclose and decipher. Alternatively, people may act unreflectively according to the Baurdieuan logic of practicality.²⁰ This form of logic does not require a conscious calculus but rather is operative on the subconscious level. This sort of subconscious reasoning is also the subject of extensive theorising.

There is yet another way to understand social science as the mechanism for revealing the human mind's inner states as the driving force underlying social action. Human action is meaningful.²¹ People operate according to the meanings they attach to the objects and subjects in their world. These meanings in turn (especially when inter-subjectively grounded) provide reasons for action. They frame the human understanding of the environment (as well as the communication of that understanding) and after the framing, the meanings attached to subjects and objects in the human environment affect how people perceive interests and the calculus of securing those interests. It is here that the formulation of the mission of social science in terms of transparency is most forceful. For not only do obscure, structural and abstract systematic mechanisms come to light as a result of the social scientific endeavour, but the inner states of the human mind also emerge and are made transparent.

One of the most important tools in social science's systematic search for explanation is theory. Theory is the assertion explicating the (mostly) causal, patterned relations between phenomena: how phenomena cause one another.²² Constructing theory involves the tedious task of collecting data followed by the irksome effort of proving a theory right (or as Poperians put it, the continuous effort of falsification).²³ Theory is the high point of social scientific labour, the medium through which scientists present their originality and understanding of the operation of the social world and the whys and wherefores of the daily chaos confronting us. The scientific apparatus of theory is what exposes the hidden causal mechanisms of the social world, the logic of human actions and meanings, or stated differently, renders the inner states of the human mind transparent.

Theory and parsimony

But there is a catch. And that is the unbridgeable gap between the theoretical and the social worlds. Exploring this gap and how theory tries to bridge it can help to establish the existence of moral commitments and ideological inclinations that are by necessity and inherently involved in theorising. In other words, it can help us

²⁰ Vincent Pouliot, 'The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities', *International Organization*, 62 (2008), pp. 257–88.

²¹ While this understanding is most explicit in the constructivist approach to the social science it is by all means not exclusive to it.

²² Most theories are attempts at establishing and explicating the *causal* patterned relations between phenomena, yet causality is not a necessary element of theory as theory can try to establish and explicate *constitutional* patterned relations.

²³ Khunians would rather see the academic process as a continuous effort of shielding theory from falsification. For an engaging comparison of Popper and Khun, see Steve Fuller, *Kuhn vs. Popper: The Struggle for the Soul of Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). Fuller favours Popper and sees his philosophy of science as companion to democratic politics and 'the open society'. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

expose the *a priori* assumptions that comprise the inner states of the theoretician's mind which enable the process of theorising and hence are suitable candidates for disclosure under the reciprocal obligation of transparency. That will be the task of this section.

Usually, when examining the social world we are overwhelmed by the complexity, the number of variables at play, and the internal incoherencies.²⁴ When we contemplate history retrospectively, we identify processes caused by the interaction between many specific, contingent, and sometimes unimportant occurrences. More often than not we can only stand in awe at the complexity and incoherence of this social world. But this feeling doesn't stay with us when we try to look ahead and becomes particularly dim when we come to construct theories. We call on our theories to be coherent and parsimonious.²⁵ We insist on them displaying order and coherence that are absent in the social world they try to explain. A discrepancy then ensues between the complexity of our social reality and the parsimony of our social science theories. Although, ontologically speaking, social reality is a state of complexity, incoherency, and lack of patterned regularity, from the epistemological standpoint, a theory must have exactly the opposite qualities, namely parsimony, coherency, and patterned regularity.²⁶ Scholars as diverse as Kenneth Waltz, the neo-realist, and Richard Ned Lebow the constructivist, admit this discrepancy. The former writes, 'Much is included in an analysis; little is included in a theory. Theories are sparse in formulation and beautifully simple. Reality is complex and often ugly.'²⁷ The latter writes, 'Unlike our theories, life is wonderfully complex.'²⁸

This discrepancy between ontological status and epistemological requirements lends support to understanding theory as a heuristic device.²⁹ Reformulated to fit our purposes, heuristics can be understood as arguing and theorising the human inability to act rationally and plan ahead without the expectation of coherence and patterned regularity. Rationality involves patterns that can be evaluated and calculated, patterns that help us understand our surroundings, and plan ahead.³⁰ Accordingly, our rationality is what drives our search for coherence and patterned regularity where they do not exist,³¹ in the world around us. Rationality drives our insistence on theorising, theorising that by its essence conceptualises the world coherently and according to criteria that reflect patterned regularity. Or stated differently, theorising paves the way to rational planning. By shielding human thought from incoherencies the constructed coherencies operate as a cognitive map

²⁴ Thomas Gilovich, *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1991), p. 3.

²⁵ See footnote 6.

²⁶ As analysed above, these patterned regularities can be seen as universally or contextually applicable, depending on the theoretical approach.

²⁷ Kenneth N. Waltz, 'Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory', *Journal of International Affairs*, 44 (1990), p. 27.

²⁸ Richard N. Lebow, 'Power, Persuasion and Justice', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 33 (2005), p. 574.

²⁹ Thomas Gilovich, Dale W. Griffin and Daniel Kahneman (eds), *Heuristics and Biases: the Psychology of Intuitive Judgement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³⁰ See also Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, p. 201.

³¹ In a recent article Niko Kolodny attempted to demonstrate that there is no requirement for formal coherence as such, but that reason and rationality cannot do without coherence, Niko Kolodny, 'Why Be Disposed to Be Coherent?', *Ethics*, 118 (2008), pp. 437–63.

enabling rational planning (and at times the final demise of those planning; when they get real and confront the incoherencies and irregularities of social existence).³²

An important point to stress about theorising is that we all theorise. Rational beings cannot function without theorising, whether rudimentary theorising or institutionalised and professional theorising. Social science theories are not an exceptional realm belonging distinctly and solely to academia. Social science theory differs from the lay person's theory (who we can call here the lay theoretician) by being bounded by epistemological rules; by being a sophisticated body of rules and procedures that inform the act of theorising. It can be argued that the difference between lay theorising and professional theorising is a matter of quantity not quality, form not content. But I will return to this point later.

Theorising and ideology

Thus, theory faces the impossible task of finding order where none exists. For as much as theory is directed towards patterns, order eludes the social world. So, how does theory do the unperformable? Or stated differently, how do we construct theories? How do we filter out the complexity from our theories? From the sheer vastness of the facts and events that she deals with how does the theoretician determine what is theoretically important, what is less so, and what has no importance at all? What helps her to reduce social complexity to neat theoretical, namely parsimonious, assertions?

When we examine these questions thoroughly we cannot but be startled by the *naïveté* of the positivist account of social science. According to positivist theory, social scientists (like other scientists) observe facts from an external vantage point and using a strict methodology, objectively infer parsimonious and causal relations between different facts and phenomena. But that is not what happens in life; facts do not order themselves objectively into parsimonious theory³³ and social scientists require an extra-theoretical mechanism to sort and filter out data and construct parsimonious theory from the complexity of the social world. This extra-theoretical mechanism consists of *a priori* normative, ontological, and epistemological assumptions that constitute the inner states of the theoretician's mind and necessarily precede theory. It is these assumptions that enable the construction of parsimonious theory through sorting and filtering the sheer vastness of the data. There can be no theorising without *a priori* assumptions and this actuality gives theory its ideological inclination as those *a priori* assumptions are also the building blocks of ideological thought. In other words, there can be no theory without ideological inclination and normative conviction as these 'affect the process of

³² Compare with the seminal observation of Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, 'people rely on a limited number of heuristic principles which reduce the complex tasks of assessing probabilities and predicting values to simpler judgmental operations. In general, these heuristics are quite useful, but sometimes they lead to severe and systematic errors.' In 'Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases', *Science*, 185:4157 (27 September 1974), p. 1124. See also, Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 47–8.

³³ Hawkesworth, 'Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth', pp. 90–2; Stefano Guzzini, 'The Concept of Power: a Constructivist Analysis', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 33 (2005), pp. 498.

determining which data are relevant, which are less so, and which have no relevance at all'.³⁴ Yet, this extra-theoretical mechanism which is fundamental to theorising usually remains unacknowledged and undisclosed.³⁵ So the process of theorising is out of public sight and not made transparent. This lack of transparency is morally unjustifiable and, as argued below, those who seek to make the inner states of other human minds transparent should also, under the principle of reciprocity, lay open the inner states of their own minds.

But what does this imply in terms of the relation between theory and reality? First and most importantly, theories are far from accurate. They represent an imprecise version of reality by omitting certain variables and emphasising others in order to give a parsimonious reading of social reality.³⁶ Secondly, there is an unbridgeable gap between coherent, parsimonious, and regulated theories, and a reality that is incoherent, complex, and unregulated. Thirdly, if we humans need a regulated picture of reality and if theories provide just that kind of picture, then theories and theoreticians can have a powerful impact on society, at least potentially, because they can help us negotiate our way in this complex world. In Gramscian terms, theories are an instrument, perhaps a very powerful and important instrument, in the process of hegemonising our commonsense. They help to shape our expectations of our world and orient our praxis. The theories may carry their normative convictions and ideological inclination into our uncritical commonsense, hegemonise everyday conduct, and influence the shapers of domestic and foreign policy. This last remark brings us to the third section dealing with the acting of theories in the real social world.

Theory gets real

As important as reciprocity is the stakes in transparency are even higher. Theory has the propensity to affect the social world it attempts to explain. If, as argued in the previous section, theories come with moral convictions and ideological inclinations, and if theories indeed get real, then those convictions and inclinations can be translated into real policies. Consequently, the public has a vested interest in rendering the inner states of the theoretician's mind transparent and being able to see the moral basis for policies affecting people's lives.

As the creators of coherent cognitive maps theories enable forward-looking rational planning and thus, potentially, at least, they engender processes of social

³⁴ Piki Ish-Shalom, 'The Triptych of Realism, Elitism, and Conservatism', *International Studies Review*, 8 (2006), p. 441. See also, Beate Jahn, 'Liberal Internationalism – From Ideology to Empirical Theory – and Back Again', *International Theory*, 1 (2009), p. 424. This does not imply that theory is ideology (Here I part ways with Beate). The ideological inclination is one component among other components of theorising, and the academic culture of healthy scepticism along with methodological rigorousness help to distinguish theory from ideology, even though the two share a common foundation.

³⁵ It could be argued that the existence of those ideological inclinations and normative commitments in theory may give good reasons for disclosure, for example out of decency and civility, or out of epistemological concerns for the quality of theory. But by itself the existence of those ideological inclinations and normative commitments does not generate a moral obligation for transparency. To ground transparency as a moral obligation we need to relate the existence of those ideological inclinations and normative commitments to principles of justice, such as the principle of reciprocity.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 463–4.

changes. Various dynamics concretise this abstract potential, mechanisms that contribute to the effects of theory on the social world and they all involve publicising the information discovered *and* theorised. For one, theory can act to refute itself. By publishing politically-laden explanations and predictions theory can provide political actors with the tools to struggle against what they deem unwarranted socio-political processes. Alternatively, theory can be mobilised by policymakers to help them devise policies they wish to implement. Thirdly, theories might migrate into the public and political arenas and frame the commonsensical understanding of the world (mainly of policy elites). Thus, they may subtly help to shape policies. As we see below, in some cases involving this third alternative, theory may generate intricate dynamics and end up assisting policies that are contrary to the theoreticians' theoretical conceptualisations.

Regarding the first alternative, that of self-refutation, the most noticeable historical examples are Karl Marx's socio-political predictions and Otto Von Bismarck's introduction of social policies. When Marx presented his economic theory and its forecast that unavoidable economic processes would cause the rise of the proletariat and collapse of the capitalist economy and bourgeoisie order, the conservative Bismarck took it as a warning and introduced the first set of modern welfare laws. Thus, he alleviated the social tensions of the era and in so doing may have contributed to refuting Marx's economic theory.³⁷

A second example of self-refutation, more oriented to the modern notions of positivist social sciences, is Robert Putnam's theory of social capital and his involvement in the American public sphere. As explored at length by Ido Oren,³⁸ Putnam's theory of social capital and the importance of social capital to the vitality of civil society and polity led him to theorise and predict the decline of the American polity.³⁹ Yet, as a concerned citizen, Putnam refused to surrender to the pessimism encapsulated in his own theory. Becoming a civic activist, he established a civic organisation to struggle against his theory's prediction, seeking to revitalise American social capital and polity. If Putnam's civic efforts prove successful, Putnam the theoretician will be proved wrong and the theoretical indicators which Putnam believed point to the decline of social capital in the US will not successfully predict the future of the American polity. Political will may win the day and the theory Putnam constructed will ultimately refute itself. In Oren's words

[I]f Putnam's social reform campaign continues to gain momentum, he will have created a new social fact – growing public awareness of his thesis and the human volitions and decisions informed by this awareness. This fact will constitute a new antecedent condition for a new correlation between, on the one hand, postwar generations and an attitude of disinterest in television and, on the other hand, a *high* level of civic engagement. This new correlation will transcend and remove from actual operation, if not invalidate, the old correlation between (a) the postwar generations and television and (b) *lack* of civic engagement.⁴⁰

³⁷ Eibe Riedel, 'The Human Right to Social Security: Some Challenges', in Eibe Riedel (ed.), *Social Security as a Human Right: Drafting a General Comment on Article 9 ICESCR – Some Challenges* (Berlin Heidelberg: Springer, 2007), p. 19.

³⁸ Ido Oren, 'Can Political Science Emulate the Natural Sciences? The Problem of Self-Disconfirming Analysis', *Polity*, 38 (2006), pp. 72–100.

³⁹ Social capital is intimately linked to trust, which in the terms used here is a kind of inner state of human mind.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 97–8.

The second alternative, namely politicians consciously mobilising theories to devise policies, is found in John F. Kennedy and Walt Rostow's theory of modernisation.⁴¹ When Kennedy took office in 1961 he focused on US deteriorating relations with Latin America. Turning to academia, he recruited Rostow to his administration. Kennedy hoped that by implementing Rostow's modernisation theory he would bring about democratic change in Latin America and foster positive relations in the region.⁴² Indeed, for a while Rostow and his theory were agents of socio-political change and helped to establish and shape the Alliance for Progress. It was during the Alliance's heyday that the theoretical premises and policy recommendations of modernisation theory came to be implemented. Briefly therefore Rostow and his theory served as agents of change in the Americas. Put another way, theory 'got real' in the sense that theory was applied to the real world. Yet, as noted earlier, the complexities of the real world clash with the parsimony of theory; reality's incoherencies collide with theory's coherencies, and the contextualities of socio-political processes are incompatible with the universal assertions of theory. A series of events, spearheaded by Kennedy's assassination and his replacement by Lyndon B. Johnson (bringing his own agenda), eroded the agency of Rostow and his theory. Regardless of how partial and short-lived this agency was its actuality however can hardly be disputed. It seems that theoreticians and theories can at times act as agent of socio-political changes.

The policy promoted by Henry Kissinger whose realist orientations deeply affected US Cold War management offers a second example of 'theory getting real'. Surprising the world, Kissinger and Richard Nixon relented on the US position on China. Consequently, a semi-tri-polar global structure rose where the US and Soviet Union were super powers and China was for the first time acknowledged as a significant power. This semi-tri-polar structure allowed Kissinger to engage in the kind of diplomacy he believed in, one that was based on the model of the golden era of nineteenth century European diplomacy. This was the era Kissinger had researched for his doctoral dissertation, which was later published as his first book.⁴³ It focused on Metternich and Castlereagh's conduct of the famous Concert of Europe. According to Kissinger, Europe's multipolarity allowed the European diplomats to manoeuvre flexibly in and out of alliances in order to maintain the balance of power and safeguard international stability. According to Kissinger's realist theoretical framework, the enduring stability of Europe throughout the 'long nineteenth century' was the result of a balance of power that could be managed flexibly. Kissinger sought this flexibility in his diplomatic manoeuvring *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union and when orchestrating the clandestine preparations for Nixon's unanticipated visit to China in February 1972. Once they had established diplomatic relations with China, Nixon and Kissinger assumed themselves involved in a semi-tri-polar global structure and were sufficiently confident to allow greater flexibility in their relations with the Soviet Union: thus the launch of *détente*. This

⁴¹ Piki Ish-Shalom, 'Theory gets Real, and the Case for a Normative Ethic: Rostow, Modernization Theory, and the Alliance for Progress', *International Studies Quarterly*, 50 (2006), pp. 287–311.

⁴² A central role in Rostow's theory of modernisation is kept for what he termed the Newtonian conception, namely the awareness of the ability to change the environment. See, Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 4–12. This awareness is, in the terms use here, an inner state of human mind.

⁴³ Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812–22* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957).

example illustrates that classical realism with its theoretical understanding of the Balance of Power mechanism and the vehicle of Kissinger's agency, helped shape American policy en route to *détente*.

A third mechanism by which theory might 'get real' and so affect the social world is what I have elsewhere termed a hermeneutical mechanism.⁴⁴ Using the case of democratic-peace theory, I have demonstrated the process by which theories migrate from academia to the public sphere to frame the policy elites' commonsensical understanding of the world. More often than not this process is not initiated or controlled by the theoreticians themselves but rather dominated by middlemen – many of them scholars residing in Think Tanks who act as a transmission belt⁴⁵ – simplifying and politicising theory on its way to the public sphere. What subsequently dominate the public and political discourse are the public and political representations of the theory rather than the theory itself. These representations are not accurate reproductions of the theory since distortions of all kinds affect its content. Some distortions are intentional and aimed at furthering political agendas. Others are unintentional and caused by a genuine misunderstanding of the complexities of theorising. This being so, the offshoots of theory 'get real' in cases where theory goes through hermeneutical mechanism can be far removed from the content of the original theory and the intentions of its theoreticians. Democratic peace theoreticians did not intend their theories to be used to legitimise and justify wars of democratisation in the Middle East.⁴⁶ Yet, as consequence of both public misunderstanding of democratic peace theories and cynic political mobilisation⁴⁷ these theories were indeed used that way. Theories that credited themselves with identifying a force for peace⁴⁸ helped bring about war. Thus theories may (even inadvertently) spawn intricate dynamics and end up endorsing policies in conflict with their original objective.

Reciprocity, strong reflexivity, and transparency

So far we have explored why it is necessary for theories to reveal the hidden inner states of the human mind and how they achieve this. To state this differently, we have examined the theoretical reasons and methods for making the inner state of the human mind transparent. I also argued that the inner states of the theoretician's mind are essential to theorising and theoretical reasoning, or in other words, that reasoning which enables the construction of parsimonious and coherent theories out of the complexities and incoherencies of the social world. I also maintain that quite commonly theories 'get real' and affect reality (by various

⁴⁴ Piki Ish-Shalom, 'Theory as a Hermeneutical Mechanism: The Democratic Peace and the Politics of Democratization', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12 (2006), pp. 565–98.

⁴⁵ Joseph Lepgold, 'Is Anyone Listening? International Relations Theory and the Problem of Policy Relevance', *Political Science Quarterly*, 113 (1998), pp. 43–62.

⁴⁶ Piki Ish-Shalom, "'The Civilization of Clashes": Misapplying the Democratic Peace in the Middle East', *Political Science Quarterly*, 122 (2007–2008), pp. 533–54.

⁴⁷ Piki Ish-Shalom, 'The Rhetorical Capital of Theories: The Democratic Peace and the Road to the Roadmap', *International Political Science Review*, 29 (2008), pp. 281–301.

⁴⁸ As can be seen in the title of the first academic article that pointed out the phenomenon of the democratic peace, Dean V. Babst, 'Elective Governments – A Force for Peace', *The Wisconsin Sociologist*, 3 (1964), pp. 9–14.

mechanisms). That is to say, at times theories convey to the social world around them the moral convictions of the theoreticians constructing them (or when hijacked politically, convey an ideologically distorted version of the theoreticians' moral convictions to that social world). I wish now to argue that combining these three arguments with the moral and social principle of reciprocity ought to commit theoreticians themselves to transparency, that is to say to be willing to make their own minds' inner states transparent; to be ready to disclose that which is essential to the act of theorising, and which at times has serious ramifications for the real world.

Reciprocity

But first let us begin by briefly discussing the notion of reciprocity, highlighting several of its features relevant to my argument and some possible objections to it. Reciprocity is both a social and moral principle. It has a double function both as a generator of social interactions⁴⁹ and as justification for establishing duties, obligations, and rights based on these social interactions. For example, it is a crucial component in contractarian theories of politics, society, and ethics.⁵⁰ Lawrence Becker defined it as 'a matter of making a fitting and proportional return for the good or ill we receive'.⁵¹ Simon Blackburn defined it similarly, as the 'Practice of making an appropriate return for a benefit or harm received from another'.⁵² In its more traditional articulation of the theotic Golden Rule of Reciprocity, it mandates treating others as you would want them to treat you. The obverse side of this rule is Kant's Categorical Imperative of being willing to enact upon yourself those things you enact on others. In fact, we can generalise from these definitions and conceptions and say that reciprocity as a social principle transforms actions into interactions founded on mutuality and that as a moral principle it has a moral force which guides our understanding as to how our social life should be conducted and ordered.

This being said, it is crucial for some conditionalities and restrictions to be added to the working of reciprocity. We must note that the social interactions creating the contexts for reciprocity (and the mutuality arising from it) need not be harmonious, and can well be conflictual. Though however conflictual they are, they are still relations between social entities. For example, it is permissible for states to reciprocate proportional violence on those (states or other social actors) that enact violence upon them. Such retribution is sanctioned by the principle of reciprocity. Nevertheless, there is a further important qualification here. Reciprocity does not oblige identical reactions. The attacked state is not obliged (nor is it always permitted) to repay the attacker in exactly the same coin. Therefore, even if we

⁴⁹ Douglas J. Davis, 'Reciprocity', in P. A. B. Clarke and A. Linzey (eds), *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 721–2.

⁵⁰ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 88.

⁵¹ Lawrence C. Becker, 'Reciprocity, Justice, and Disability', *Ethics*, 116 (2005), p. 18.

⁵² Simon Blackburn, 'Reciprocity', in S. Blackburn (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 310.

accept retaliation and revenge as permissible ‘negative norms of reciprocity’,⁵³ we would not wish to sanction that ancient and ruthless principle of ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’. Reciprocity in the case of two quarrelling states permits the state which is attacked to enact some harm against its attacker. However, this reprisal should be conditioned by other moral principles besides reciprocity, such as distinction or non-combatants’ immunity.⁵⁴ Reciprocity and especially negative reciprocity should always be balanced by other normative principles and the practical considerations of a possible or impossible reaction.

Another important qualification regarding reciprocity is that it may seem that not all social interactions invite reciprocity. For example, when a parent feeds his child, it is not necessarily expected that the child will feed the parent (at least not in the immediate future). When a jailor jails a convict it is not expected, nor is it obliged or permissible for the convict to reciprocate by jailing the jailor. There is an underlying difference between the figures in the two examples that seems to invalidate the principle of reciprocity. This difference arises from the different roles of the figures. One interpretation of the two examples is that the different roles attract different social obligations and responsibilities which may override the obligations of reciprocity. In other words, in the face of (radically) different social roles, the ethical, social, and political force of reciprocity is rescinded.

But this interpretation is wrong. It is not that the interactions described by the examples are not based on mutuality, and do not justify reciprocity. Social mutuality comes in various shapes fashioned by the ‘social’ involved and the context that defines those interactions; in other words, the social context of the interactions is fundamental to how reciprocity is and should be carried out.⁵⁵ Moreover, the roles involved in the interactions are a major factor in defining the social context. Roles are institutionalised (formally or informally) and this institutionalisation guides the mode in which reciprocity is and ought to be carried out. For example, the child might be expected to feed (or facilitate the feeding of) her parent in the future when the parent gets old. We would also hope to find mutual relations of affection and care between parents and their children. This holds true for jailor and jailed. Though we would not expect the jailed to jail the jailor, we would like to see a social sub-system (jail) where mutual respect between the two could develop. Furthermore, we would also wish to expect the two actors to reciprocate not only as jailed and jailor but also as citizens of the same polity *and* as two sentient beings sharing a common humanity. This might constitute a different type of reciprocity, which is very important to the working of society and polity, that is generalised reciprocity; namely, that type of reciprocity which ties humans in an indirect yet fundamental web of mutual duties, obligations, and rights.⁵⁶ This being so, I suggest that the second interpretation of the above examples is the correct one. It is not that reciprocity is obviated by (radically)

⁵³ Alvin W. Gouldner, ‘The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement’, *American Sociological Review*, 25 (1960), p. 172.

⁵⁴ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument With Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 207–22. In the realm of distributive justice, reciprocity can be conditioned by egalitarian principles. See, Stuart White, ‘Liberal Equality, Exploitation, and the Case for an Unconditional Basic Income’, *Political Studies*, 45 (1997), pp. 318–9.

⁵⁵ Shlomi Segall, ‘Unconditional Welfare Benefits and the Principle of Reciprocity’, *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*, 4 (2005), p. 337.

⁵⁶ Becker, ‘Reciprocity, Justice, and Disability’, pp. 20–1.

different social roles, but that reciprocity and the modes in which it is and is ought to be carried out are shaped by its social contexts (including the diversity of the social roles involved).

It is with respect to the function of social roles in reciprocity that two objections to my argument for theoreticians' obligation of reciprocity can be made. Regarding the first interpretation that (radical) difference in social roles can neutralise the principle of reciprocity one can argue that the construction of theory is a special social role with its own unique specialisations, obligations, and rights that places the theoretician beyond the pale of reciprocity; as not obligated by it. The obverse side of reciprocity can also be brought in to support this objection (can we reasonably expect lay persons to write scholarly monographs theorising theoreticians?) and the unreasonableness of this expectation can be used to dismiss the theoretician's obligation to seek reciprocity. If the lay person should not and cannot write scholarly theoretical accounts regarding theoreticians how can we demand that theoreticians be obliged by the principle of reciprocity *vis-à-vis* the lay public? The two obverse facets of reciprocity are intimately linked and allegedly, refuting the obligations of the lay person will automatically refute those of the theoretician. If we cannot expect the lay public to produce theoretical treatises we should not demand that theoreticians commit themselves to the principle of reciprocity with its obligations, including that of transparency. The theoreticians have their own social role and accordingly, their own set of obligations and rights.

But when we apply the second interpretation – validated above – of the function of (radical) different social roles *vis-à-vis* reciprocity the two objections fall down. First, as analysed above, reciprocity does not obligate the sides to respond with identical acts and hence does not necessarily oblige the subjects of theorising to write scholarly accounts about their theoreticians. Additionally, as I argued, different social roles do not obviate reciprocity. They rather shape its expression; the specific acts it obligates. Considerations of practicality are also an important determinant in shaping the precise obligations of reciprocity, and therefore it is possible, within the perimeters of reciprocity that those who are the subject of theorising will reciprocate theoreticians' theorising by acts other than writing theoretical treatises. It may well be that demonstrations of curiosity and caring by the lay public will foster mutuality with the theoreticians that is sanctioned by the principle of generalised reciprocity and thus discharge their obligations of reciprocity. Curiosity and caring are closely linked, especially intellectual curiosity that often arises from caring for one's own surroundings. Curiosity can also engender increased caring when new information is collected and new data is processed. Caring in this context means caring for oneself (she who is being theorised), for the theoretician, for the theoretician's scholarly work, and for the social networks that tie them all together. Caring and intellectual curiosity thus can stand for the lay persons' reciprocal obligations for the theoreticians and the unreasonable expectation that the lay person can and might write a theoretical treatise does not disqualify the argument regarding the theoreticians' obligations of reciprocity. If the lay person demonstrates (or at least can legitimately be expected to demonstrate) care and intellectual curiosity it might be enough to establish an obligation of reciprocity for the theoretician.

Secondly, and more substantially, it should be noted that special as the social role of theory construction may be it does not constitute theoreticians as a separate

group outside society. Theoreticians are not external social observers but internal participants.⁵⁷ Their special social role *in* their society can therefore only grant them *more* responsibilities and obligations, not less, and this includes obligations arising from the principle of reciprocity. Theoreticians' status as internal participants is augmented by the argument above, that theorising is a universal phenomenon obligated by human rationality. Even if we are not all expert procedure-bound theoreticians, we all engage in theorising. We are all theoreticians to some extent, albeit lay ones. As Jürgen Habermas argues, joining these two ideas, 'In the model of communicative action, social actors are themselves outfitted with the same interpretive capacities as social-scientific interpreters; thus the latter cannot claim for themselves the status of neutral, extramundane observers in their definitions of actors' situations.'⁵⁸ Theoreticians, that is, are part of society and through their expertise in theorising owe more responsibilities to society, not less. They are producers of valuable knowledge; knowledge that can be translated into policies, and at times indeed is translated into policies. This beneficial potentiality and its actualisation burdens theoreticians with heavy responsibilities and ties them even more strongly to their societies. The intense social relations tying theoriser and theorised generate associational obligations and confirm the obligations of reciprocity.

The rules of reciprocity then commit the theoreticians. Yet, there is a third possible objection to my argument for the obligations of theoreticians to make their minds' inner states transparent. As reciprocity does not strictly sanction specific acts, it may be argued that the acts theoreticians are obliged by the principle of reciprocity do not include disclosing their minds' inner states. It might be claimed that theoreticians can discharge their obligation of reciprocity through other acts, say by demonstrating sincere concern for the societies they theorise about. Yet, this objection fails because the strictness of the acts sanctioned by reciprocity is a function (among other things) of considerations of justice and the power of the actors involved.⁵⁹ William Connolly argued that having power over others means having responsibility for them, 'For to acknowledge power over others is to implicate oneself in responsibility for certain events and to put oneself in a position where justification for the limits placed on others is expected.'⁶⁰ And the observation regarding the constitutional relations between power and responsibility also holds true with regard to the requirements stemming from the principle of reciprocity. Absolute or symmetric reciprocity exists between equally empowered participants. In a case where two actors participate equally in interactions, all things being equal, the moral force of reciprocity requires that they react to each other (reciprocate to each other) in the same manner, namely symmetrically, that is equally (depending, that is, on other moral principles and practical considerations). Inequality of power resources (including resources like powerful social roles) imposes different obligations, including discharging the requirements of reciprocity. Those with more power have more stringent obligations. And in the case of

⁵⁷ Smith, 'Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology', p. 92.

⁵⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Boston Beacon Press 1984), p. xiii.

⁵⁹ Segall, 'Unconditional Welfare Benefits and the Principle of Reciprocity', p. 337.

⁶⁰ William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 97.

theorising that power lies with the theoreticians. They are the more powerful in the interactions between them and the theorised public. First, they are equipped with the necessary technical training and know-how needed to disclose the hidden truths of society. Frequently they also have the material resources to do so. Second, as discussed above, by disclosing those truths theoreticians engender socio-political processes at times that affect the subjects of their theorising. Third, by disclosing hidden truths theoreticians lay bare the lay public. They reveal inner states of mind and intrude as it were into the privacies of the lay public. In that sense they are the more powerful and therefore their obligations are stringent. In the case of reciprocity, this means that nothing short of a commitment to full transparency can suffice to discharge their obligations of reciprocity. They who enact transparency on others should also be willing to commit themselves to transparency.

But questions now arise regarding the specifications for the reciprocal obligations of transparency. What is included and what is not included under this obligation of transparency? Can this obligation be discharged at all? And who is it that is obligated to provide transparency and to whom? I now turn to answering those questions.

Strong reflexivity

Before committing herself to transparency a theoretician must be aware of her own inner states of mind that inform and enable theorising. Therefore, self-reflexivity is a precondition for transparency. As explored extensively in feminist epistemology,⁶¹ reflexivity, or strong reflexivity, as Sandra Harding terms it, is characterised as

[R]equire that the objects of inquiry be conceptualized as gazing back in all their cultural particularity and that the researcher, through theory and methods, stand behind them, gazing back at his own socially situated research project in all its cultural particularity and its relationships to other projects of his culture – many of which (policy development in international relations, for example, or industrial expansion) can be seen only from locations far away from the scientist's actual daily work.⁶²

This conceptualisation of strong reflexivity includes many of the themes explored so far. First, the social world abounds with particularities and contextualities. Second, the researcher cannot set her own particularities aside when constructing a parsimonious and universal theory out of the social world's complexities and particularities.⁶³ Third, theory sometimes does get real and influences the real world. Indeed, it is impossible to discharge the reciprocal

⁶¹ See, for example, Ericka Engelstad and Siri Gerrard, 'Challenging Situatedness', in Ericka Engelstad and Siri Gerrard (eds), *Challenging Situatedness: Gender, Culture and the Production of Knowledge* (Delft: Eburon, 2005), p. 6; Sandra G. Harding, *The science question in feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 137–8; Sandra G. Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking From Women's Lives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 163; Harding, *Is Science Multicultural?*, p. 188; Potter, *Feminism and Philosophy of Science*, p. 140; Smith, 'Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology', p. 92.

⁶² Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*, p. 163.

⁶³ Though once again, the particularity implied by Harding is very much socially and materially located. The particularity I imply is more idealist as it is centred around a *priori* assumptions of various kinds and various (and undefined) origins.

obligation of transparency without first employing strong reflexivity, without being critically aware of those idealist assumptions and social and cultural commitments that make theoretical research both achievable and productive.

That is all very well, but can theoreticians actually discharge this obligation? Are they aware of all the *a priori* normative, social and cultural commitments that inform their theorising and render the act of theorising possible? Can they possibly reach the level of strong reflexivity or, for that matter Rosenau's explicitness, that the obligation of transparency requires? As committed as feminist epistemology is to strong reflexivity, its adherents are also aware of the difficulties in attaining this level of reflexivity. As Mary Hawkesworth justly points out, 'The notion of transparency, the belief that the individual knower can identify all his/her prejudices and purge them in order to greet an unobstructed reality has been rendered suspect.'⁶⁴ She explains further that 'the perspective of each knower contains blind spots, tacit presuppositions, and prejudgments of which the individual is unaware'.⁶⁵ Despite the demands of both the feminist epistemological project and the ethical project called for here, strong reflexivity may prove an illusive quest, bound to remain unattained due to human fallibility and the blind spots that conceal from individuals their minds' inner states: states of mind that inform their theorising and render the act of theorising possible. Hence, we are left with a grave doubt as to the practicability of discharging the reciprocal obligation of transparency.

Yet, this doubt is valid only insofar as we restrict the reciprocal obligation to the level of the individual researcher. It may be difficult for the individual to recognise and identify her own blind spots and assumptions, convictions and commitments. But once we broaden the scope of analysis, once we assign the obligation of transparency to the community of researchers *as* community, we can address the doubt of practicality and soundly establish this reciprocal obligation. Research is communally embedded and to a large extent conducted cooperatively and therefore some of the responsibilities and obligations of the theoreticians are collective.⁶⁶ Acknowledging this actuality resolves the difficulty of blind spots. Yes, we may be blind to the content and specificities of our assumptions, convictions and commitments but we can and should be aware of their existence and fundamental role. As this implies, there are two levels of strong reflexivity (enabling and initiating two levels of transparency). The first is a general awareness of the existence in theorising of *a priori* assumptions and social and cultural commitments and their crucial importance for theorising. The second is being aware of the exact content of those assumptions and commitments and the intricate ways by which they inform specific theories. The first, more general obligation is that of the individual theoretician. Each theoretician should be critically aware of the existence and importance of assumptions and commitments in theorising. Consequently, each theoretician is reciprocally obligated for first-level

⁶⁴ Hawkesworth, 'Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth', p. 92.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁶⁶ See also, Piki Ish-Shalom, 'Theorizing Politics, Politicizing Theory, and the Responsibility That Runs Between', *Perspectives on Politics*, 7 (2009), p. 312; Engelstad and Gerrard, 'Challenging Situatedness', p. 6; Laurel S. Weldon, 'Inclusion and Understanding: A Collective Methodology for Feminist International Relations', in Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True (eds), *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 62–87.

transparency; an obligation to be discharged by disclosing this critical awareness to the wider public. The second, more specific obligation should be assigned to the community of researchers *as* a community. In the communal setting of theoretical research theoreticians are already committed to critically scrutinising their colleagues' theories and exposing the assumptions, convictions and commitments embedded in them. It is part of the almost daily practice of theoreticians (at least critical theoreticians) to disclose the normative convictions and ideological inclinations implicit in other scholars' theories; to disclose those things that in the conceptualisation adopted here are seen as their colleagues' inner states of mind. Thus, it can be safely argued that the community of theoreticians is equipped and able to discharge the reciprocal obligation of second-level transparency, namely the communal obligation to disclose the existence and operation of particular and identified assumptions, convictions, and commitments in specific theories. Moreover, this obligation is already being practiced and discharged although it is not recognised as a moral obligation arising out of reciprocity.

Transparency

By committing theoreticians (both as individuals and community) to disclose their inner states of mind I do not intend (or advise) them to unveil their desire for cheesecake and Beethoven's string quartets, their abhorrence of cockroaches, distaste for cocktail parties, envy of their colleagues' success, or love of their spouses, etc. These preferences are unrelated to the construction of theories and thence to theoreticians' obligations of transparency.⁶⁷ The principle of reciprocity commits theoreticians to a willingness to disclose those inner states of their minds that are directly – albeit subtly and typically implicitly – related to the construction of theories; the ideological and moral convictions, beliefs, and desires which together constitute the extra-theoretical mechanism without which the construction of parsimonious theory from the unbounded social complexity would be impossible.⁶⁸ For example, and as I have explored elsewhere,⁶⁹ realism is intrinsically founded on a conservative scepticism regarding human rationality and fear of historical change. Realism is inseparable from conservative convictions, and these constitutive relations between theory and ideology are also true in general, across the theoretical spectrum. Ideological inclination and moral conviction are essential constituents of theory construction as they help to screen and prioritise data.⁷⁰ It is these kinds of inner states of the theoreticians' minds that are the subject of reciprocity and ought to meet the requirement of transparency.

This leaves us with one last question. To whom are the theoreticians obligated? To whom do they owe the accounts of individual first-level and communal second-level transparency? Or stated differently, what is the target audience for the

⁶⁷ Though those desires may be the motives and reasons for the action of theoreticians *as* sentient beings. As such, of course, they might be of interest to other theoreticians seeking to theoretically explain the social behaviour of the theoreticians *as* sentient beings.

⁶⁸ Thus there is no acute breach of the privacy of theoreticians, and whatever breach does exist is proportional to the above-established obligation of transparency.

⁶⁹ Ish-Shalom, 'The Triptych of Realism, Elitism, and Conservatism'.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 441. I want to repeat that this doesn't mean that theory is ideology.

reports on the assumptions and commitments that inform and enable the act of theorising? To answer this, let us be reminded that we are dealing here with social science theories: theoretical accounts that are not about anyone specific. Theories seek to answer general questions about societies, to reveal the causes of general social phenomena. Moreover, the causes given for these phenomena by social science theories are also described in general terms. Even the inner states of mind sought by theories as causes and disclosed by them are general in nature. They do not necessarily describe anyone specifically, but are states of mind spread across society as a whole. Theory by nature is general and abstract so that the reciprocity that binds theoreticians is the generalised reciprocity discussed above, the reciprocity tying humans in an indirect, yet fundamental, web of mutual duty, obligation, and rights. Theoreticians are not obligated to anyone in particular nor to any particular social institution. The individual first-level and communal second-level transparencies are generally owed to the societies and publics they study and theorise about. It might be that sociologists and political scientists' have obligations to specific societies; the ones they study and theorise about. Though I find it hard to concretise the boundaries of those societies because theories use a host of comparative methodologies and compare several societies in an effort to explain broad social phenomena. Moreover, societies also overlap and today as a result of globalisation there is a greater than ever tendency of societies to coalesce. However, with IR theoreticians, the answer is more straightforward. Humanity as a whole is the subject matter of the community of IR theoreticians. Therefore, it is to humanity as a whole that the community of IR theoreticians is reciprocally obligated by the two levels of transparency, preceded by two levels of strong reflexivity.

A brief exercise in self-reflexivity and transparency

Am I myself able to discharge the obligation of transparency? What kind of *a priori* assumptions help me to construct the theoretical argument advanced here?⁷¹ Ontologically, I am committed to a somewhat critical form of constructivism. Epistemologically, I am a post-positivist and use interpretative methodology to understand inter-subjective meanings and their constitutive role in constructing social reality. This confession should not surprise anyone who has made it through this article. Moreover, such self-reflexivity is not that difficult to achieve. It is not with regard to the ontological and epistemological issues that our blind spots obstruct us from self-reflexivity. After all, *a priori* ontological and epistemological assumptions are the most explicit assumptions in our research tool box and many of us identify ourselves as part of this or that theoretical camp.

But I can reflect on some additional *a priori* assumptions that guide my theoretical argument; moral and political *a priori* assumptions. The entry point to

⁷¹ Though strictly speaking the theory I advance is a moral theory, not a social science one. Thus, the full force of the argument for transparency is not applicable. However, I can safely argue that in this case the principle of reciprocity does apply, and that it is sufficient by itself. In other words, what I demand of social science theoreticians I must be willing to undertake myself, namely the practice of self-reflexivity and transparency.

such self-reflection is the vital function of transparency in democratic and deliberative political life. On the procedural level, transparency is a cleansing tool that helps forestall public corruption. But more substantially, transparency ensures the fundamental political right to know: to know 'who the decision-makers are, what procedures they employ, what their areas of interest are, and what the consequences of their decisions are'.⁷² Moreover, since transparency is a prerequisite for the exercise of public control over government, it has an important supportive role in achieving democratic legitimacy.⁷³ But more crucially from a deliberative democratic perspective, transparency is a prerequisite for truthful deliberation, whether in the form of John Rawls' original position or Habermas' Ideal speech situations,⁷⁴ and as such can help to democratically translate individual preferences into public good.⁷⁵

Reflecting on the fundamental importance of transparency for deliberative democracy helps to shed light on the moral and political convictions behind my argument for transparency. Intellectual reflection helps to bring about self-reflexivity and to make my commitment to deliberative democracy (and how it drives my argument for transparency) transparent. It also helps to explain my expectation that theoreticians will participate as theoreticians in the public deliberation, act as theoretician-citizens,⁷⁶ and enrich the public deliberation with their theoretical insights.

Furthermore, it is helpful in allowing me to clarify my application of the term 'community' to theoreticians. By community, I do not mean a group united by a complete belief system; who share, that is, a complete set of norms, values, stands, *a priori* assumptions, and expectations. Rather, I mean a group of people with certain core beliefs which unite them, but which diverge on many other important beliefs. What unites a democratic community is, among other things, its agreement to disagree, to discuss and truthfully deliberate and argue preferences, beliefs, and values. When I reflect on us – 'us' being social science and IR theoreticians – that is how I see community: we are joined by certain norms, values, commitments, and expectations, for example, truth-seeking and doing it publicly, openly, and with a sense of healthy scepticism. Yet we are diverged by numerous *a priori* assumptions, like how to reach the truth (epistemology), the content of that truth (ontology), and what to do with that truth once we attain it (ethics). The combination of agreement and disagreement is part and parcel of the internal composition of the community of IR theoreticians, stimulating our lively discussions and deliberations, sharpening our faculties as theoreticians, and helping us situate ourselves within the broader democratic community of our fellow citizens where we can and should act as theoretician-citizens.

⁷² Adrienne Héritier, 'Composite democracy in Europe: the Role of Transparency and Access to Information', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 10 (2003), p. 819.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 824.

⁷⁴ John S. Dryzek and Christian List, 'Social Choice Theory and Deliberative Democracy: A Reconciliation', *British Journal of Political Science*, 33 (2003), p. 26.

⁷⁵ Donatella della Porta, 'Deliberation in Movement: Why and How to Study Deliberative Democracy and Social Movements', *Acta Politica*, 40 (2005), p. 340.

⁷⁶ Piki Ish-Shalom, 'Theorization, Harm, and the Democratic Imperative: Lessons from the Politicization of the Democratic-Peace Thesis', *International Studies Review*, 10 (2008), p. 690.

Conclusion

Refuting the objections raised in Section IV leaves us with the argument presented here which is supported by the feminist epistemology argument. Theoreticians should be committed under the principle of reciprocity to two levels of transparency (individual and communal) preceded by two levels of strong reflexivity (also individual and communal); they should be willing to individually and communally disclose the inner states of their minds, those inner states which are essential to theoretical reasoning, to the construction of coherencies and parsimony from incoherencies and complexities. To theorise society and human conduct, theoreticians seek to disclose the inner states of the lay person's mind, making them transparent. Reciprocity as a moral principle is the requirement to treat others as you would want them to treat you and to be willing to enact upon yourself the things you enact upon others. Reciprocity as a social principle is what transforms actions into interactions founded on mutuality. Understood jointly, reciprocity should bring theory and theorising under the auspice of transparency. This obligation is augmented by the not infrequent occurrences of 'theory gets real', of theory having real world ramifications. Thus, theoreticians have to be willing to individually and communally disclose the inner states of their minds; the ideological inclinations and moral convictions, beliefs, and desires which together constitute the extra-theoretical mechanism that enables the constructing of parsimonious theory out of the unbounded social complexity. And, of equal importance, it is also in the interest of the public (here conceptualised as humanity as a whole) to hold theoreticians to their obligations arising from the principle of reciprocity. Put another way, the fusion of transparency, reflexivity, reciprocity, and parsimony is a rich source of ethical considerations that should be taken seriously by theoreticians as well as by the public.