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The postcolonial perspective: an introduction

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In this article I consider what it means to theorise international politics from a postcolonial perspective, understood not as a unified body of thought or a new ‘-ism’ for IR, but as a ‘situated perspective’, where the particular of subjective, embodied experiences are foregrounded rather than erased in the theorising. What the postcolonial has to offer are ex-centred, post-Eurocentric sites for practices of situated critique. This casts a different light upon the makings of international orders and key epistemological schemes with which these have been studied in international relations (IR), such as ‘norms’. In this perspective colonisation appears as a foundational shaper of these orders, to a degree and with effects still under-appraised in the discipline. The postcolonial perspective is thus deeply historical, or rather genealogical, in its dual concerns with, first, the genesis of norms, or the processes by which particular behaviours come to be taken to be ‘normal’. Second, it is centrally concerned with the power relations implicated in the (re)drawing of boundaries between the normal and the strange or the unacceptable. Together, these concerns effectively shift the analysis of the ideational processes underpinning international orders from ‘norms’ to the dynamic and power-laden mechanisms of ‘normalisation’. In addition, I show how theorising international politics from a postcolonial perspective has implications for IR’s conceptions of time, identity, and its relationship to difference, as well as agency.

This forum emerged from a series of workshops entitled ‘Interrogating the Use of Norms in International Relations’ that were held successively at the University of Sydney, and ahead of the International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Conference in Montréal. The purpose of the workshop series was to set in conversation scholars who use the concept of norms, a hallmark of ‘conventional constructivism’ (Hopf 1998; Wiener 2009), and scholars from a variety of theoretical perspectives who chafed against limitations that the concept was seen to impose on appraising the ideational processes that shape international interactions. The success of the ISA workshop and the large participant waiting list it generated suggested that the conversation was overdue. This forum is the second to emerge from it.¹

The four articles by Ayse Zarakol, Julia Gallagher, Robbie Shilliam, and Vivienne Jabri that are regrouped here critically engage with the concept

¹ Cf Volume 2, Number 13 of *International Studies Perspectives* (2012).

of norms from a set of postcolonial and non-Western perspectives. In characterizing them as ‘postcolonial’, however, I tread a fine line between drawing out their common concerns, and resisting the definitional gesture of nailing postcolonialism as a unified theory or indeed a school of thought for international relations (IR). This is not merely because of some ‘-ism’ fatigue; it goes to the heart of what is distinctive about the postcolonial (see also Young 2003).² The postcolonial offers foremost an ex-centred, post-Westphalian *place* from where to envision the international system.³ To say this is not only to say that it seeks to displace the starting point for theorizing in order to undo the discipline’s Eurocentric moorings, the need for which Jabri expounds in her contribution (see also Matins 2013). It is also to say that it offers a *perspective*, in the strongest possible sense that location, and the particular, matter centrally to the type of envisioning that is sought once these moorings are loosened. Epistemologically, the postcolonial perspective offers what has been termed, in the science and technology feminist scholarship, a ‘partial perspective’ that is deeply embedded in ‘situated knowledges’ (Haraway 1988, see also Shiva 1997).

The impulse for bringing together constructivists and postcolonial scholars into a conversation around norms was a persisting sense of almost overlaps and missed opportunities. Both are centrally concerned with the making of international order. Indeed, norms or, in Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink’s (1998, 894) classic definition, ‘shared ideas, expectations and beliefs about appropriate behaviour’ are ‘what gives the world structure, order and stability’. Along with its foundational conceptual twin in the history of constructivist thought, ‘identity’, ‘norms’ have served to foreground the ideational structures ordering the anarchic international system.⁴ Each author in this forum engages pointedly with the constructivist norms scholarship on a particular set of norms and, in doing so, shows the extent to which these ordering processes appear differently from

² In a similar manner and outside IR, Robert J. C. Young (2003, 7) who was tasked with writing the volume on ‘Postcolonialism’ for Oxford University Press’s Very Short Introduction series begins by establishing the impossibility of a ‘postcolonialism’ or ‘postcolonial theory’ (‘here is no single entity called “postcolonial theory”’).

³ This explicitly encompasses those non-Western countries that have managed to eschew the full experience of colonization, such as Thailand, showcased in Ayse Zarakol’s contribution to this volume.

⁴ The contributions in this forum centre upon ‘norms’ in view of the concept’s foundational role in the emergence of constructivism (see Katzentstein 1996; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998), and in particular as a catalyst for a prolific empirical research programme (see Finnemore and Sikkink 2001 for such an assessment). This focused engagement necessarily leaves off-limits some of constructivism’s more recent conceptual spin-offs, such as emotions (but see Widmaier and Park 2012 for an engagement in the context of the workshop series), practice, or argumentation.

a postcolonial perspective. Hence, my purpose here is, first, to flesh out the postcolonial perspective and what it entails for theorizing international politics, before setting up the conversations around norms that take place in the pages of this volume.

The postcolonial as sites for a situated critiques

The category of thought that best captures what the postcolonial has to offer is that of *experience*. The philosophical moorings of ‘experience’, in turn, are to be found in Sartrean phenomenology, which puts forward embodied consciousness, as opposed to abstract reason, as a starting point for knowing the world.⁵ Experience offers a counterweight to a particular emphasis on reason, which is directly bound up with the historical and conceptual workings of colonization. In his analysis of the ‘denied links’ between liberalism and Empire, Uday Singh Mehta (1999) shows how the reaction of British Liberal thinkers (Locke, James and John Stuart Mill, Macaulay) to the confrontation with the ‘strange and the unfamiliar’ of the new peoples that the Empire was bringing under its rule was one of elision and active erasure. Nor was this merely the expression of the difficulty of apprehending the unknown; Mehta shows how it went to the core of liberalism’s political project. It was a necessary precondition to being able to uphold and spread the liberal ideal of the rational individual as a universalizable model, and the necessary founding stone of modern democratic rule *anywhere*.

The educational programmes of the Empire, which were especially dear to these British founders of liberalism, were key sites for the practices of erasure of the life worlds and subjective experiences of the colonized other. These imperial pedagogues, such as Thomas Macaulay, were ‘norm entrepreneurs’ in their own right (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998), intent on socializing the Indians into the norms of British civility; thus for example when he wrote: ‘we must at present do our best to form a [...] class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect’.⁶ Mehta shows how operationalizing liberalism’s normative ideals into practical imperial policies turned on constructing the colonized subject as the irrational child or the deviant to be gradually brought into the fold of the rule of reason. Herein were also laid the seeds of the constructs that would sustain the subsequent development of the Empire’s practices of violent repression, such as those deployed to quash the Mau Mau insurgency in colonial Kenya in the 1950s, which turned on

⁵ These links were rendered explicit by Sartre’s writing the original preface to the postcolonial classic, Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*.

⁶ Macaulay’s 1835 *Minute on Indian Education* is quoted in Mehta (1999, 15).

apprehending indigenous demands for independence and land rights as expressions of barbaric, tribal deviances (Doty 1996; see also Lecour Grandmaison 2005). To quote Mehta (1999, 18) at some length, in the context of appraising the thought of James Mill:

[...] the specific, but, more relevantly, the strange and the unfamiliar, are at the epistemological mercy of a rationality that is vouched for in advance of ‘viewing’ and certainly experiencing the strange and the unfamiliar. The project of the empire is inscribed in [epistemological schemes that] relentlessly attempt to align or educate the regnant forms of the unfamiliar with its own expectations. Liberal imperialism is impossible without this epistemological commitment – which by the nineteenth century supports both the paternalism and progressivism – that is, the main theoretical justifications – of the empire. [...] when the strategy of education or realignment through political change is unserviceable, Mills’s *History* and numerous others that share its convictions impute to the unfamiliar an impenetrable inscrutability that eviscerates their potential as forms of life and terminates the quest for understanding them.

Historically, then, not only were the practices of colonization infused with liberal ideals, they were key to spreading – or indeed diffusing, in the language of norms constructivism – their underpinning normative and epistemological tropes; in particular, the conjoining of the rational with the universal.⁷ This was also the point at which were written off as ‘irrational’ the particular, the local, the subjective; in a word, all that conjured the experiential realm of the colonized other. By contrast, a key figure in Mehta’s work is Edmund Burke, who exemplifies a radically different attitude to the strange and the unfamiliar. Mehta shows how, to the ‘cosmopolitanism of reason’ that powered the spread of these liberal ideals and acts of erasure, Burke opposed a ‘cosmopolitanism of sentiment’, founded in both an acute attention to the local and the particular, and a profound awareness of the impossibility of truly appraising them from where he stood – and which ultimately led Burke to advocate, at its heyday, a retreat from empire. Burke remains an ambiguous figure of imperial history from a postcolonial perspective, notably on account of his early support of slavery, the contemporary legacy of which lies at the core of Shilliam’s contribution in this volume. Yet, Mehta’s provocative recovery

⁷ Mehta is careful to point that this ideal universal reason that liberalism entrenched is of course a much older trope of Western political thought (notably of Ancient Greek and Enlightenment thought). His point rather is that colonization provided liberalism with the historical circumstances for its operationalization into a concrete political project whose reach was potentially global; and for which education and the ideal of progress comprised two central pillars (Mehta 1999, 198).

serves to unsettle the habitual, liberal reading of his conservatism, which serves to re-affirm reason and progress on the same side.

For all of these reasons, then, the particular, the local, and the subjective invoked under the broad heading of ‘experience’ offers an important counterpoint to the universalizing pull that is at work in liberalism’s epistemological schemes; but also, as all the contributions in this forum draw out, in those of the norms constructivist scholarship in IR. To replace it in its theoretical context, IR liberalism provided the initial niche for the deployment of constructivism (see notably Wendt 1992), such that this contiguity between liberalism and constructivism is now classically underlined in IR theory textbooks (see, e.g., Panke and Risse 2007).

From a postcolonial perspective, then, the challenge becomes how to mobilize the particular and the local, in their infinite richness, as sites for deploying a form of theorizing that, by way of this grounding, seeks to avert the pitfalls of a universalization that was a key historical driver of colonization in the first place. This, not merely to right a historical wrong, but to explore what epistemological resources the perhaps too hastily erased strange and unfamiliar may yield for appraising the contemporary dynamics of international politics. In this sense, then, foregrounding, and mining, the particular, without already collapsing it back (yet again) onto the universal, constitutes an important epistemological commitment in deploying postcolonial perspectives for the study of international politics.

Nor is this to give up the possibility of theorizing. In the same way that to rehabilitate experience against the liberal overweighting of reason is not to abandon reason, but simply to shift back the balance so as to open up new places from where to theorize. What is eschewed here, specifically, is a particular form of theorizing that conflates the general with the universal. That is, it is a form of generalizing that works to erase its own standpoint, in order to do what Donna Haraway (1988, 581) has called the ‘vision from nowhere’. Against this, Sartre (1943) first, in Hegel’s wake, had proposed a form of theorizing that, grounded not in reason but in consciousness and in embodied experiences, explicitly foregrounds the viewpoint of the theorizer. In a different critical tack, second, Donna Haraway’s work unearths the ‘where’ that seeks to erase itself, since it derives its strength from this erasure: it is the idealized epistemological viewpoint of modern science, which upholds the universal as the utmost criteria for knowledge production. This in turn is instrumental to the sciences’ (including the social sciences’) claims to objectivity; to authority; and thus to social and institutional power (see also Aronowitz 1988).

Both Sartre and Haraway thus show how situated perspectives offer different starting points for theory-building; ones that seek not to deny the partiality of perspective, but instead use it to deliberately delimit the claims

to be able to generalize about the social world. This is out of a profound recognition of the distinctness of that world which, by contrast with the natural world, is always already constructed.

This is pertinent to the norms constructivist scholarship for two reasons. First, because the constructedness of the social is of course its theoretical starting point. Yet there is a tension, as old as the social sciences itself, between studying that constructedness, and seeking universals; which is ultimately sustained by the (even older) myth of human nature. The role of this myth and its associated quest for generalizable universals in the development of constructivist thought in IR at large has been analysed elsewhere (see Zehfuss 2002; Epstein 2013b). Second, and more specifically, with regards to the study of norms, because of a particular conflation of the descriptive and the prescriptive that occurs when the universal comes into contact with the practical and therefore the ethical, as it did when the British liberal thinkers encountered empire. That is, when the universal shifts from being an epistemological ideal (a quest for the ultimate essence that explains human behaviour) to a normative ideal (an absolute from which conclusions are drawn about how humans should behave, to better accord with that essence). A key purchase of Gallagher's analytical perspective in this forum is that, in shifting the question from how (and by whom) norms are diffused to why these normative ideals are constructed in the first place, it draws out how norms perform specific psychological functions that have more to do with constituting, and holding together, the identity of the actors (or norm entrepreneurs) and their capacity to act, than they do with any good behaviour that may (or may not) ensue.

Situated perspectives, then, provide an epistemological *via media* that averts the pitfalls of *both* universalism and relativism. In Haraway's (1988, 584) words, 'such preferred positioning is as hostile to various forms of relativism as to the most explicitly totalizing versions of claims to scientific authority' whose inherent links to colonialism she also expounds. As Haraway (1988, 581) shows, the unmarked position – the ultimate place of power – is that of Man and White. Against this, then, only 'partial perspective promises objective vision' (Haraway 1988, 583). Similarly, to the disembodied gaze of modern liberal reason that erases the unfamiliar to-be-colonized, Mehta (1999, 41–45) opposes Burke's own embodied 'viewing'; a looking at that is both deeply embedded in one's own cultural sensibilities, and yet deeply aware of the limits such moorings impose when appraising other cultures. It is a way of seeing that breeds, at the very least, empathy, if not quite understanding; and averts the automatic foreclosure or indeed purposeful blindness to the strange and the unfamiliar. Two centuries apart, Burke's situated perspective echoes a classic statement of the postcolonial perspective, Frantz Fanon's (1952) description of the

painful consciousness of viewing, and being viewed, from within a 'black skin' forever trying to don a 'white mask' so as to remain inconspicuous. His black body stands in the way of him being able to occupy that unmarked place that would cast him, in the eyes of the terrified little boy and his mother sitting opposite him in the train, as a normal, rational, human being; as opposed to a potentially dangerous savage.⁸

The postcolonial perspective, then, is a necessarily partial perspective that foregrounds grounded, embodied experiences, steeped in colonial histories, as the basis for engaging epistemologically. The scholars regrouped here are each in their own way and with Haraway (1988, 589) 'arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition for being heard to make rational knowledge claims'. Each author does so by engaging pointedly with the constructivist norms scholarship on a particular set of norms and theoretical concerns; but five broad axes of engagement and theoretical commitments also run through all contributions.

First, all contributions seek to orchestrate a shift from 'norms' to 'normalization' in order to better capture the role of social power in making normative international orders. Second, I show how the trope of the encounter is yielded by this commitment to the experiential and centrally at work in the contributions here. The third axis of engagement is a critique of the epistemological frames that have been deployed to study norms. Fourth, and also stemming from the experiential emphasis, each contribution brings to bear a particular temporality that sets into relief the linear, progressive time that implicitly underwrites much of the constructivist norms scholarship. A final implication of emphasizing situatedness is that the postcolonial perspective foregrounds the subjective. The postcolonial scholars here draw out how this in turn changes the appraisal of identity and agency in IR theory.

From norms to normalization: returning power to the ideational analysis of international order

In a postcolonial perspective, colonization appears as a crucial ordering mechanism of the contemporary state system. It staked out the continent with the largest number of states, Africa. It was a key driver of the 'norm diffusion' (Acharya 2004; Park 2005) that saw the spreading around the globe of the modern institution of statehood and its constitutive norm of

⁸ In a particularly poignant passage, Fanon (1952) describes his experience of sitting in a train in France opposite a mother and her little boy, and his powerlessness at the sheer fear that he seemed to be provoking in the child, by virtue of his colour.

sovereignty. In IR, these material effects have yielded an extensive body of work, dependency theory, albeit one that seems to have fallen out of favour. Its ideational effects, by contrast, have received scant attention from the scholarship explicitly concerned with the normative structuring of international order. Furthermore, this silence contrasts with the attention that has been granted by ideas- and norms-minded scholars to decolonization (see, e.g. Jackson 1993; Barnett and Finnemore 1999; Crawford 2002; Barnett 2011)⁹ and to the human rights broadly diffused in its wake, as Shilliam shows in his contribution. Colonization, moreover, bore all the trappings of ‘appropriateness’ (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; March and Olsen 1998). At the time of the 1884–85 Berlin conference where, to announce Gallagher’s contribution, European powers ‘chopped up’ Africa among themselves, colonizing was more than just accepted as simply what states did, or even in a consequential fashion (for the benefits it yielded). It was rationalized and legitimized by reference to the normative ideals of *la mission civilisatrice* (the civilizing mission), to use the consecrated term of the French colonial state, which was explicitly couched in the language of human rights (see Lecour Grandmaison 2005).¹⁰ More than a mere historical oversight or an empirical omission, then, from a postcolonial perspective this silence raises questions with regards to the constructivist appraisals of norms within their own terms.

The neglect of the role of power in shaping ideational international orders has been a long-standing critique levelled at conventional constructivism. It is in fact what led to the initial branching off of a more ‘critical constructivism’ (Hopf 1998), for whom the practice of critique requires ‘de-naturalising the taken-for-granted’ that entrenches such orders, to use the expression of the seminal introductory essay by Jutta Weldes *et al.* (1999), in the first edited collection that brought together IR scholars who were explicitly concerned with postcolonial dynamics

⁹ Neta Crawford is an exception here insofar as she extensively considers the history of colonization. Nonetheless, her constructivist concern with change leads her to focus foremost explicitly on ‘decolonization’. Likewise, in his lucid and sobering history of humanitarianism, although Michael Barnett (2011, 56–57, for example) draws out its links to colonialism, the very fact of taking humanitarianism and the ‘moral awakening’ it heralded (p. 58) as his starting points leads him to be more interested in the dynamics of anti-slavery movements than in those that lead to enslavement in the first place. Shilliam develops this critique of anti-slavery norms more extensively in his contribution.

¹⁰ Similarly to Mehta, Lecour Grandmaison (2005) provocatively recovers one of the most revered democratic theorist, Alexis de Tocqueville, and through detailed historical analyses of his speeches on the floor of the *Assemblée Nationale* reveals the extent of his engagement in favour of the French colonial enterprise in Algeria. Burke and Tocqueville thus reveal the extent to which postcolonial perspectives can unsettle conventional readings of figures who are traditionally taken to be the arch-conservative anti-democrat, and the liberal democrat, respectively.

(Roxanne Lynne Doty, Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Himadeep Muppidi), who all eschewed the concept of norms. At this juncture took root a line of divide between norms constructivism on the one hand, and a postcolonial IR in its early beginnings, on the other.

The twin concerns with genesis and with power relations, in turn, are the defining foci of the genealogical approach, which has deep affinities with the postcolonial perspective.¹¹ A first key implication of returning power to the appraisal of norms is that it shifts the focus from norms to the dynamic process of *normalization*: the drawing of the original line between the ‘normal’ and the ‘abnormal’ that occurs in a particular place and at a particular time; and that, in the postcolonial context generally, as in Macaulay’s case, means writing over older lines. Second, holding this dynamic process and this point of origin constantly in sight may guard against the sort of presentism that has tended to bias the study of the normative international orders towards progressive norms.¹² The third implication concerns the duty of critique: a common postcolonial problématique running through these texts is how to make the postcolonial ‘situatedness’ reveal the processes of normalization that underwrites the international system.

The encounter

The encounter is a key trope of postcoloniality and is centrally at work in all the contributions to this forum. At base, the colonial experience was a confronting encounter with absolute difference and complete alterity that is constitutive, to paraphrase Jabri, of both the colonized and the colonizer (see also Inayatullah and Blaney 2004). Zarakol’s contribution isolates the encounter particularly clearly as a constitutive *moment* that stands just before, and that may in fact not necessarily unravel into, formal colonization; yet, nonetheless, decisively shapes enduring uneven power relations. In this regard her analysis draws out the extent to which the problématiques of coloniality and modernity are tightly bound up (see also Jabri’s contribution). Her piece is replete with sites of these encounters between the modern and the premodern: the palace of a kingdom, Siam, that was ultimately never colonized; the Paris exhibition of 1878, which constituted

¹¹ Donna Haraway’s thought encapsulates the genealogical method. For the genealogical approach in IR, see Milliken (1999) and Bartelson (1995). For a broader analysis of the relationships between poststructuralism and postcolonial perspectives from within IR, see Sajed (2012) and Matins (2013).

¹² Although this has started to be rectified (see, e.g., Bob 2012), in its first decade the norms constructivist scholarship has tended to focus mostly on ‘good’ norms (for similar assessments see also Finnemore and Sikkink 2001; Landolt 2004; Blaney and Inayatullah 2012; MacKenzie and Sesay 2012).

the stage of one of the first encounters between Japan and the West. Here and elsewhere, Zarakol works on the edges of modernity, both spatially and temporarily, to appraise the ways in which the non-West (here, Thailand and Japan; elsewhere also Russia and Turkey; see Zarakol 2011) negotiates its encounters with a modernizing, colonizing West. In doing so she locates for us the space of postcoloniality broadly as the space beyond the modern West. She is centrally concerned with how that space was shaped through the very processes that constituted international society. As she writes, ‘modern international society was built on a dynamic of *stigmatization* – many, but especially non-Westerners, whether they escaped formal colonization or not, joined it at a disadvantage, and the various pathologies of *stigmatization* have been incorporated into modern national narratives and state identities’ (Zarakol, this volume). In her work the concept of ‘stigma’ provides a lens for highlighting how the encounters have been negotiated by states that stand on the receiving end of the expansion of international society, whether these have a colonial past or not (see also Adler-Nissen 2014).

In Jabri’s contribution, the international itself is the site of the foundational encounter that yields a postcolonial subjectivity, and the possibility for the postcolonial subject (whether a state or an individual) of deploying its specific form of political agency, which is her primary concern. Jabri here builds on and fruitfully expands the postcolonial scholars’ insight that the ‘post’ in ‘postcolonial’ suggests a *location beyond*; what Homi Bhabha (2004) has appraised as space of hybridity. Elsewhere Jabri (2012, 2013) has distinguished between two types of spaces beyond the state: that of ‘cosmopolitanism’, which is saturated with enduring colonial or neo-colonial dynamics that play out particularly saliently in chosen issue areas such as security (Jabri 2012); and the ‘international’, which refers instead to the space that is recovered as the site for the deployment of a genuinely postcolonial agency. Bhabha’s ‘hybridity’ captures the paradigmatic space of a ‘split’ postcolonial subjectivity, where the encounter is constantly being (re)negotiated internally.

In her contribution Jabri herself stages a productive encounter between the fields of IR and postcolonial studies. Jabri takes up where Bhabha (2004, 31) leaves off when he asks, in what is also an exemplary formulation of the postcolonial partial perspective:

[...] what the function of a committed theoretical perspective might be, once the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world is taken as the paradigmatic starting point.

Jabri shows that IR is precisely the discipline that has the resources to build on this starting point: the answer lies in IR’s core concept, ‘the

international' – so long as it is not collapsed onto 'the cosmopolitan'. The international is what is constructed by the postcolonial subject coming into contact with (or indeed, as the cases may be, barging into; by way of independence struggles) this autonomous sphere of political action, and founding in it a distinct form of postcolonial agency.

The subterranean effects of the colonial encounter rippling through contemporary IR lie at the core of Gallagher's concerns. Having worked extensively on and in the ultimate postcolonial continent, Africa, a key theme running through her writings is how colonial pasts shape the normatively driven, 'good' behaviour of powerful actors in the contemporary international system; both that of former colonial states (Gallagher 2009) but more broadly also, as she shows in her contribution here, that of international organizations such as the World Bank, for example, in their efforts to promote the norms of good governance. The postcolonial encounter is also at the heart of Shilliam's article as an epistemological trope, as I will show below.

Postcolonial orders of power/knowledge

All the contributions in this forum draw out the extent to which these normative international orders are coextensively orders of action and epistemological orders. Jabri's theme of 'authorship' illuminates the extent to which writing the rules of international order is bound up with those, not only for acting within it, but also for studying it. Gallagher for her part considers the psychic drivers that sustain this nexus of knowledge and action, and shows how the cognitive categories through which the world is 'engaged with', to use her expression, establish particular courses of action. Turning his attention explicitly to the epistemological roots of IR constructivism, Shilliam analyses the politics of knowledge production underwriting the making of a science that is explicitly concerned with the constructedness of the social world; particularly as these are revealed when that science encounters non-white, non-Western, formerly colonized societies – including within one and the same person, the postcolonial scholar. Here, and although he distances himself from this field, Shilliam echoes a central problématique that was initially tabled by the field of subaltern studies; for example, with Gayatri Spivak's (1998 [1981]) figure of the Western-trained Sudanese scholar, and the disjuncture she experiences when she applies her scientific tools, charged as they are with the value-judgements of the (white, Western) cultural contexts they were shaped in, to the study of female circumcision in her culture.

Shilliam, however, deliberately seeks a social rather than individual standpoint from which to engage the interpretative problématique. Taking a

sociology of knowledge approach, he returns power to the analysis of the conditions of knowledge production by raising the question: ‘who has the authority to interpret?’. He shows how the attribution of authority to the interpretive, constructivist scholar replicates a much older distribution of power, steeped in colonial, paternalist relations, between those who have the power/knowledge to speak, and those who are, once again, spoken about or for. He shows how specific epistemological schemes serve to layer over and entrench this old division of power and labour. For example, the classical sociological distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies, which places the ‘legitimate interpreter’ of the social worlds’ constructedness squarely within the latter, thereby *de facto* denying any such interpretative faculties to the former. At the heart of Shilliam’s contribution is the question, central to the practice of critique, of the scholar’s responsibility to find new ways of knowing and writing; both in order to break this cycle of complicity, but also to better appraise the constructedness of (others’) social worlds and the agency of those who construct them. To seek these, Shilliam thinks with someone who embodies the conjunction of knowledge and action, the Jamaican sociologist, novelist, and activist Erna Brodber.

Zarakol’s critique of the norm’s cascade model similarly addresses the complicity of the norms scholarship in reproducing the old hierarchies underwriting international order. Moreover, her contribution casts the discussion about the conditions of production of scientific knowledge in a broader historical context, by reminding us of the extent to which the tools of modern science, such as cartography, were constitutive of projects of imperial conquest. In the encounter she etches between the British explorers and the Siamese king, in which the former scoffs at the maps of the latter, she offers a dramatization of the key gesture of erasure by which the modern West imposed its criteria for what constitutes legitimate (here, geographical) knowledge (see also Shiva 1997). This was the gesture that preceded the authoring of new maps by which the West appropriated new territories; first cognitively, then politically.

Liberal progress, postcolonial temporalities

The contributions in this forum all set into relief the linear temporalities and the teleology of progress that underwrites constructivist analyses of norms (see also Blaney and Inayatullah 2012; Engelkamp *et al.*, 2012; Epstein 2012; MacKenzie and Sesay 2012). Zarakol’s moments of encounter between the modern West and the ‘premodern’ rest offer counterpoints to the ‘tipping points’ of the norm cascade model (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998); which unfold inevitably into ‘socialization’, followed by the ‘internalization’ of the new norm, sometimes inflected by its ‘localization’

(Acharya 2004) or its ‘contestation’ (Wiener 2004). To the extent that, if they do not, then the norm’s ‘arrested development’ (Bailey 2008) becomes a subject worthy of study in its own right. Zarakol’s moments by contrast are genuinely open and unscripted – in fact in the cases she chooses, they do not result in the familiar scripts of colonization into which many similar encounters between the West and the ‘premodern’ rest have unfolded. Jabri offers a nuanced critique of the ‘developmental perspective’ that has sustained analyses of the expansion of an international social order, first, in the English School, but also, notwithstanding more recent self-reflective efforts to distance oneself from such a teleology, in the norms constructivism literature as well. In her engagement with Fanon, Jabri suggests a disruptive, interruptive temporality associated with what she refers to as postcolonial ‘presence’ in the constitution of the international. In drawing on psychoanalysis, Gallagher mobilizes a completely different temporality, one that troubles the progressive sequencing that underwrites the norms of ‘good governance’. The temporality she foregrounds is the timelessness of the unconscious, which simply does not know the distinction between past and present that makes this sequencing possible in the first place. The liberal arrow of progress, then, is at odds with these circular, messy, lived temporalities; and it is brought into question by the new domains of knowledge that serve to reveal them, such as psychoanalysis.

What the authors in this forum all highlight, moreover, are the epistemological blinkers wrought by this teleology of progress. Zarakol shows how the norm cascade model’s sequencing has curtailed constructivism’s ability to appraise the many more complex ways of negotiating the norms that fail to map onto its neat stages. Shilliam for his part illustrates how this in-built linear directionality has predetermined the scholarly assessment of the dynamics of enslavement as a ‘progressive transformation’, thereby foreclosing the ability to appraise how they continue to ripple through the present and shape what it means to be the descendants of slaves. What the postcolonial perspective is perhaps best poised to draw out, then, are the political effects that are wrought by these blinkers. For they grow old roots: in analysing liberalism’s ‘internal conceptual space’ Mehta (1999, 198) shows the extent to which its ‘teleology of progress’, its ‘deference to gradualism’, which fuels the belief in educating the native into British norms, and its ‘political paternalism’ are tightly bound up.

More broadly, this linear time that underwrites norms constructivism is problematic in a postcolonial perspective, which is instead deeply aware of the extent to which the temporal lines between ‘the colonial’, ‘the postcolonial’, or ‘the decolonial’, to use Shilliam’s expression, are blurred (see also Taylor 2012); such that the efforts to ‘decolonize of the mind’, to use Kenyan novelist and activist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s (1986) expression,

require being pursued long after formal decolonization is over. To appraise the international system from a postcolonial perspective is to be acutely sensitive to the extent to which the past bears upon the present in ways that defy any attempt to package it away into neatly sequential analytical categories or 'stages'.

Constructivist identities, postcolonial subjectivities

Another terrain that seems to offer the promise of a fruitful exchange between constructivist and postcolonial IR scholars is that of identity. The links between 'identity' and 'norms' are well developed in the norms constructivist literature, insofar as the latter provides the bedrock for the former (Katzenstein 1996; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 2001; for critiques of this conceptual coupling see Epstein (2011, 2012)). In fact, arguably, constructivism's mainstreaming of identity helped to open up IR to other disciplines that are better versed in the mechanisms of its construction, paving the way for the use in IR of the types of psychoanalytical tools that Gallagher deploys in her analysis. Yet postcolonial scholars have long mined the nexus of norms and identity formation, out of the driving concern to rehabilitate the realm of the experiential. The specific forms of alienation at work in the postcolonial condition have proven an especially fertile terrain for analysing the role of norms in the formation of the subject, or what Foucault (2009, 55–59) has analysed as 'normation', which he contrasted with 'normalization'. Normation captures the initial drawing of a norm across the blank page of subjectivity, as it were, that is effected notably by education. 'Normation' thus prepares the ground for the work of discipline, for the ulterior and ongoing reigning in effected by disciplinary normalization.

Postcolonial scholars have a wealth of knowledge to offer on what it means for one's identity to be molded by norms that are molded elsewhere, over which one has neither authorship nor authority, and with which there will therefore always be a painful misfit, that 'localization' or 'contestation' cannot come close to capturing. The figure of Frantz Fanon here is key, first, because of his extensive analyses of the structural conditions that shape this subjective experience (Fanon 1952, 2002). Second, as Bhabha (2004, 47) underscores, it was Fanon who inflected the master–slave dialectic away from the historical materialism that had marked postcolonial analyses, and towards a Lacanian reading that enabled the appraisal of the psychic mechanisms of the postcolonial condition, ushering in the tools of psychoanalysis.¹³ Psychoanalytic tools are also what Gallagher reaches out for, albeit those of Melanie Klein rather than Lacan, to turn the mirror around and consider the subjectivity of those of the former colonizers.

In this sense, her contributions and Jabri's (which focuses on the post-colonial subject) work on either side of the postcolonial mirror.

More broadly, however, this move from the material to the ideational in postcolonial studies is similar to that which yielded constructivism in IR. Yet, that promise of an exchange between these two fields on the workings of identity first requires effecting two decisive conceptual shifts: from 'norms' to the dynamic processes of 'normation' and 'normalization', as we have seen, but also from 'identity' to 'subjectivity'. Elsewhere I have shown how 'the subject' provides a more adequate conceptual base than the constructivist concept of 'self' for unpacking the workings of both identity (Epstein 2011) and its relationship to agency (Epstein 2013a). Jabri problematizes these themes specifically for postcoloniality.

In summary, the postcolonial offers first and foremost a place where to theorize *from*. It offers a situated perspective, in which the *where* of theorizing – both as a concrete, historically determined place; and in terms of the subjective and embodied experiences of the theorizer – is inseparable from the *what*. Second, the postcolonial perspective foregrounds the importance of an original, perhaps not always violent but necessarily traumatic, in terms of the depths of the changes set into motion, encounter between a self and a very different other; as encapsulated in the classical trope of the noble savage. Third, postcolonial perspectives underscore the extent to which power relations undergird the norming of the international. This concern with how power inflects ideational international orders requires, fourth, a shift from the static concept of norms to capturing the dynamic processes of normalization; or the ways in which particular behaviours were first established as normal, and others ruled out as unacceptable. Fifth, the postcolonial perspective is characterized by a different temporal sensibility to that which underwrites norms constructivism, one that is marked not by the neat sequencing at work in what I have called the liberal arrow of progress, but by the persisting presence of the (colonial) past.¹⁴ Sixth and bound up with the trope of the encounter, the experience of difference is much more centrally foregrounded in the problematizations of identity, subjectivity, and agency than in norms constructivism.

¹³ This distinction continues to run through postcolonial IR scholarship today, which tends to hail either from a historical materialist Marxian tradition (see notably Chakrabaty 2000), for which capital constitutes a core analytical category; or from poststructuralism (Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Robert Young). For two good overviews of the former and latter traditions in IR, see Matins (2013) and Sajed (2012), respectively. Capital is not key emphasis in this forum, which focuses instead on the norming dynamics of the international system.

¹⁴ Although norms constructivism is the focus here, the liberal arrow of progress as I have called it is also at work in other key concepts in IR and comparative politics, notably 'development' and 'democratization' (see Inayatullah and Blaney 2004 for an extensive critique).

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What made the modern world hang together: socialisation or stigmatisation?

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Contrary to what is often assumed, norm-internalisation does not always lead to compliance. Normative judgements may be simultaneously internalised and outwardly rejected. Non-compliance is at times a result of hyper-awareness of the particular origin of norms, rather than an unwillingness of the would-be-recipients to do 'good' deeds, or their inability to understand what is 'good'. Such is often the case for non-Western states, as I demonstrate in this article by utilising the sociological concepts of *stigma* and *stigmatisation*. In its inability to acknowledge this dynamic, which has its roots in the colonial past of the international order, the constructivist model of norm-diffusion commits two errors. On the one hand, it falls short as a causal