

**POSSESSIVE INDIVIDUALISM AND THE DOMESTIC LIBERAL  
ROOTS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL THEORY**

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## **Abstract**

*Criticisms of realism and liberalism, traditionally the two dominant fields within international relations (IR) and international political economy (IPE) theory, have been widespread for the past two decades. What unites these critical theorists is their claim that IR/IPE theory is both ahistorical and decontextualised. What is missing from this critical account is a sustained historical examination of liberal ontology at the domestic level and how it relates to current mainstream IR/IPE theory construction. This paper will provide an overview of the basic assumptions, goals and insights of C.B. Macpherson's possessive individualist model and its relevance to the study of international politics. Its main hypothesis is that Macpherson's critique of the possessive individualist core of liberalism is equally valid at an international level of analysis because assumptions about the role of the individual, the state, and human nature within IR/IPE theory have been ontologically transferred to the international level in possessive individualist terms. The possessive individualist ethos is an identity that imbues intersubjective norms and values upon individuals, institutions and states. Through social iteration, states have embodied these liberal norms, values, and identities that entrench competition, hierarchy and inequality. IR/IPE theory, which draws its core assumptions from this liberal discourse, benefits from including Macphersonian insights because insufficient attention has been paid to the historical and ideological development of the liberal worldview, its effects upon the conceptualisation of international politics, and how this pervasive worldview inhibits potential alternatives. This leads to a discussion of the model's potential applicability in furthering a critical research programme of other areas of liberal capitalist modernity.*

## **C.B. Macpherson & Possessive Individualism: Applications for the Study of IR and IPE Theory**

Criticisms of *realism* and *liberalism*, traditionally the two dominant fields within international relations (IR) and international political economy (IPE)<sup>1</sup> theory, have been widespread for the past two decades. These criticisms come from several fronts including feminists, post-modernists, post-structuralists, Marxists, and critical constructivists. What unites these critical theorists is their claim that IR/IPE theory is both ahistorical and decontextualised. Mainstream IR/IPE theory is depicted as an ongoing self-referential<sup>2</sup> discourse within an existing domestic liberal ontology; however, there seems to be little attention paid to this fact by realists and liberals alike. Models of international politics are fashioned upon *a priori* claims about the essential nature of human beings in regards to drives, needs and goals. In doing so, these claims purport to explain the “observable.”<sup>3</sup>

What is missing from this critical account is a sustained historical examination of liberal ontology at the domestic level and how it relates to current mainstream IR/IPE theory construction. Realists and liberals do not merely resist insights from other critical perspectives because of their previous normative commitments (obviously this is the case), but this resistance is primarily due to the ingrained core identity of *possessive individualism* that C.B. Macpherson first identified in his seminal work *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*. This paper will provide an overview of the basic assumptions, goals and insights of Macpherson’s model and its relevance to the study of international politics. Its main hypothesis is that Macpherson’s critique of the *possessive individualist* core of liberalism is equally valid at an international level of analysis because assumptions about the role of the individual, the state, and human nature held domestically have been ontologically transferred to the international level in *possessive individualist* terms within IR/IPE theory. Macpherson argued that liberalism posited the individual as “the proprietor of his

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, the abbreviations (IR) and (IPE) will be used throughout for international relations theory and international political economy theory respectively.

<sup>2</sup> The self-referential nature has been pointed out by several critical scholars including Robert Cox *Production, power, and world order: social forces in the making of history* (1987) *Political economy of a plural world : globalization and civilization* (2002); James Der Derian, *Virtuous war: mapping the military-industrial-media-entertainment network* (2001); Jim George *Discourses of global politics: a critical (re)introduction to international relations* (1994); V. Spike Peterson, Anne Sisson Runyan *Global gender issues* (1992); RBJ Walker *Inside/outside: international relations as political theory* (1993) among others.

More importantly, this claim is evident in the works of many prominent realist and liberal scholars. For realist scholars see John J. Mearsheimer, “The Future of the American Pacifier” in *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 80 No.5 Sept/Oct 2001 pp 46-61; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: the struggle for power and peace* (1973); Kenneth N. Waltz *Theory of International Politics* (1979), “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 18, Issue 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 615-628, and “Structural Realism after the Cold War” *International Security* Vol. 25 No. 1 (Summer 2000) pp. 5-41.

For liberal scholars see Francis Fukuyama “The End of History?” *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989) pp.3-18, “Reflection on the End of History, Five Years Later” *History and Theory* Volume 34 Issue 2 Theme Issue 34: World Historians and Their Critics (May 1995), pp.27-43, “Their Target: The Modern World” *Newsweek* Vol. 138 Issue 25, 12/17/2001 pg.42-48, “The west has won. Radical Islam can’t beat democracy and capitalism. We’re still at the end of history” *Guardian* Thursday, Oct. 11, 2001 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/waronterror/story/0,1361,567333,00.html>; Robert O. Keohane “International Institutions: Can Interdependence Work?” *Foreign Policy* No. 110 Spring 1998 pp. 82-96, Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye *Power and Interdependence* 3rd Edition. New York: Longman, 2001; Andrew Moravcsik “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics” in *International Organization* 51 4 (Autumn 1997) pp. 513-553; Kenneth A. Oye ed. *Cooperation Under Anarchy* (1986); W.W. Rostow *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960).

<sup>3</sup> The claim that mainstream IR/IPE scholarship is self-referential is not revolutionary to those with a critical normative stance (e.g. Marxists, feminists, post-modernists etc.) towards capitalist modernity. For a discussion of how realism and liberalism are in the same “tradition” due to their acceptance of capitalist market relations, and of larger “sociology of knowledge” questions see Thomas J. Biersteker. “Evolving Perspectives on International Political Economy: Twentieth-Century Contexts and Discontinuities” in *International Political Science Review* Vol. 14, No. 1, 1993; Robert Cox “Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Theory” in *Millennium* 10 2 1981 and Michael Mastanduno, “Economics and Security in Statecraft and Scholarship” in *International Organization* 52 4 Autumn 1988.

own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor a part of a larger social whole, but an owner of himself.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, this ontology inhibited the creation of a coherent theory of social obligation causing society to become a “lot of free equal individuals related to each other as proprietors of their own capacities and of what they have acquired by their exercise.”<sup>5</sup>

If a *possessive individualist* identity and ethos is evident domestically, this same worldview is what individual leaders, diplomats, and scholars draw from. Looking for “objective” patterns and laws has only obscured the social dimension of existing structures of power and inequality because this basic ontology or worldview is so embedded and thus unproblematic. Through social iteration, states have embodied these liberal norms, values, and identities that entrench competition, hierarchy and inequality. While realists and liberals discuss the problem of anarchy (i.e. the absence of world government/authority) which does present significant barriers for co-ordination and co-operation, the very concept of *anarchy* is problematic because it invokes implicit “state of nature” arguments<sup>6</sup> and reifies the very thing they are observing and investigating. By adding Macphersonian insights to the existing critical IR/IPE literature, a more nuanced and detailed model emerges. For Macpherson, liberal conceptions of the nation-state help make up a system that “exists to uphold and enforce a certain kind of society, a certain set of relations between individuals, a certain set of rights and claims that people have on each other both directly, and indirectly through their rights to property.”<sup>7</sup> This worldview forms the core of their study of states, institutions and conflict. Contrary to mainstream scholars, these *possessive individualist*, market-based relations are neither normal nor permanent. They are the result of mutually constituted material and social forces developed historically.

Therefore, in terms of international politics, anarchy is indeed “what states make of it”<sup>8</sup> because ultimately people and states are not locked into permanent structures of thought, behaviour and identity. If an intersubjective culture is a key component in both domestic and international life, then only by inverting the ontology of human nature, from a given to one that is socially constructed, can a truer, “thicker” model of international politics emerge; thus, the discipline(s) of IR/IPE (and domestic political theory) would do well “to get rid of the concept of the state of nature and the theories based upon it.”<sup>9</sup> Instead of looking for immutable patterns or structures in international relations over time, a better approach would be to examine the cultural context that drives these theories in the first place, thereby providing a better empirical model from which to work. Macpherson’s life project was to expose liberal theory’s link to capitalist market relations and by this recognition, begin the journey to transcend capitalism. Macpherson’s implicit cultural argument about the co-constitution of the ideological elements of liberalism and nascent European (British) capitalism can be linked with the constructivist turn in IR/IPE. The *possessive individualist* ethos is an identity that imbues intersubjective norms and values upon individuals, institutions and states. Using constructivist insights about the interplay between agents and the *possessive individualist* structures they interact within provides a fuller and more powerful

<sup>4</sup> C.B. Macpherson. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962 p.3

<sup>5</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p.3

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent historiography of modern Western political theory’s ontology of the “state of nature” see Beate Jahn *The Cultural Construction of International Relations: the invention of the state of nature* (2000).

<sup>7</sup> C.B. Macpherson. *The Real World of Democracy* Concord: Anansi, 1992. p. 4

<sup>8</sup> A central theme of Alexander Wendt’s work in IR constructivism is that anarchy is inter-subjectively shared by states as to its rules, norms or lack of them. He, unfortunately, does not go deeply enough and implicitly accepts the dominant liberal ontology although he investigates and theorises about it differently. This paper seeks to go beyond a new description of liberal political theory and begin a discussion of how deeply embedded liberal social practices are and what they mean for people and humanity as a whole.

See Alexander Wendt “Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics” *International Organization* 46, 2 Spring 1992 pp. 391-425.

<sup>9</sup> Jahn. Introduction xvi

explanatory model. In turn, this helps synthesise and strengthen critical perspectives. In doing so, this paper is attempting to link Macpherson's domestic model of the liberal tradition to the study of international politics and to the construction of IR/IPE theory in much the same way other critical scholars (e.g. Robert Cox, Stephen Gill et al.)<sup>10</sup> have done with the writings of Antonio Gramsci.

### **C.B. Macpherson: Life and Project**

Throughout his career, Macpherson argued that liberalism was a double system of power: one political and the other economic. Therefore, a central problem of liberal theory was its focus on negative liberty (i.e. freedom *from*) at the expense of material equality. The inability to recognise the historical development of capitalist social relations created, in his mind, an internal contradiction that had yet to be reconciled by liberals. Thus, liberalism would continue to be self-contradictory until it recognised its *possessive individualist* core. Otherwise, liberalism merely legitimated an ongoing inequality and preventing individuals from meeting their full potential. The *possessive individualist* ethos is an entrenched and integral part of Western culture (and modernity). It permeates many, if not most, aspects of social, cultural and political life due to an ongoing process of liberal ideational socialization for the past three to four hundred years. For Macpherson, this process began with the rise of the liberal state, which developed as follows:

Its essence was the system of alternate or multiple parties whereby governments could be held responsible to different sections of the class or classes that had a political voice. There was nothing necessarily democratic about the responsible party system. In the country of its origin, England, it was well established, and working well, half a century before the franchise became at all democratic. This is not surprising, for the job of the liberal state was to maintain and promote the liberal society, which was not essentially a democratic or an equal society. The job of the competitive party system was to uphold the competitive market society, by keeping the government responsive to the shifting majority interests of those running the market society.<sup>11</sup>

It is this sheer scope or scale of Macpherson's vision, which explains why he remains critical to liberal theory and, by extension, to IR/IPE theory. His concern for individuals to have the requisite tools and resources available to develop themselves was for him, essential in achieving substantive and meaningful equality. He took his scholarship to be necessarily socially *active*; that is, to promote the realisation of a better, more just society. In this sense, it evokes Marx's claim that "philosophers hitherto have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it".<sup>12</sup> At issue was the very nature of who we are as individuals and as a society. Thus, Macpherson's goal was to include the social dimension of life within liberal theoretical discourse and helps explain why his *possessive individualist* model became a centrepiece for most of his writings throughout his career. However, there are numerous examples of "ethical thinkers" applying their ideas and work for social ends. What makes Macpherson unique? First, rather than writing off liberal theory as merely bourgeois ideology, he attempted the very difficult task of using liberal theory against itself to show how it failed to live up to its own values and principles. Thus, his "concept of possessive individualism was Marxist inspired...as was his ethical humanism, which was only superficially Millian."<sup>13</sup> Second, the attempted synthesis of liberalism and socialism, or the "retrieval" of liberalism, was to provide a basis for severing the liberal tradition from its capitalist

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<sup>10</sup> See Stephen Gill, ed. Gramsci, *Historical Materialism and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> Macpherson *Real World of Democracy* p.9

<sup>12</sup> Karl Marx. *Theses on Feuerbach XI* ([www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org)) Viewed Sept 12 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Jules Townshend. "C.B. Macpherson: Capitalism, Human Nature and Contemporary Democratic Theory" in *Marxism's Ethical Thinkers* Ed. Lawrence Wilde New York: Palgrave, 2001 pp. 144-168 p. 144-45.

envelope.<sup>14</sup> Only by understanding why liberal capitalist democracy was so resilient could it eventually be replaced with a socio-political system that valued human creativity and development for *all* citizens.

Macpherson's immanent critique of liberalism was formed within the social and political upheaval the world economic collapse and the rise of extremism. Macpherson's academic life<sup>15</sup> began at the University of Toronto followed with a "Masters at the London School of Economics under Harold Laski (1932-35), and returned to Canada to become a lecturer, mainly in the history of ideas, at the University of Toronto."<sup>16</sup> Upon his return to Canada and U of T, he began to put into practice the ideas and purpose of scholarship that germinated during his time at LSE. This coterie of scholars at LSE "devoted much of their time to impressing their ideas on the middle-class elite—their students...[because] in the field of the human sciences scholars had a choice whether consciously or unconsciously to support existing power relationships."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the role of intellectuals and their *ideas* are an integral part of society and what they study. Objectivity is neither possible nor desirable from this point of view. In fact, this view would become central to his interpretation and criticism of liberalism as often "solid political theorists in the liberal tradition have been compelled to deceive themselves."<sup>18</sup>

### ***Hobbes, Locke and Possessive Individualism: The Intersubjective Worldview of Modernity***

One quickly realizes that Macpherson saw his academic position as creating the ideas necessary to effect social change. This is evidenced in the period leading up to the publication of *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* that was, in the words of Townshend, a "period of gestation" as he began to develop his own vocabulary in "an attempt to get his ideas taken seriously by a liberal audience in the Cold War period."<sup>19</sup> As he did, he began to work out his "own perspective on the property/democracy relation, a vision destined to become a permanent feature of his thought."<sup>20</sup> When Macpherson's seminal work was published in 1962, it was both the culmination of his emerging scholarship about the liberal tradition as well as the future guiding force for all his subsequent work. The central issue for Macpherson was the two basic conflicting ontologies within liberalism. On the one hand, liberalism was concerned with the procedural aspects of democracy such as voting and participation in the public sphere as well as freedom *from* the extractive power of the state by guaranteeing individuals rights such as freedom of religion, association, speech etc. Macpherson referred to this conception as *protective democracy* and was well "suited to a market society".<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, liberalism was also concerned with the maximisation of individual development or *developmental democracy*. The contradiction lies in liberal theory's division of the political and the economic spheres of life that these rights were situated within. By accepting economic inequality as a function of human nature and of basic social organization, it made the full exercise of individual rights and self-development impossible.

Macpherson, in his work *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, examined much of the Anglo-American liberal tradition that extended from Hobbes to the Levellers, to Harrington and finally, to Locke. For the purposes of our discussion, the survey of his pivotal or seminal work will

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<sup>14</sup> C.B. Macpherson *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* London: Oxford UP, 1977. p.2

<sup>15</sup> For further full length treatments of Macpherson's life and work can be found in William Leiss (1988), Peter Lindsay (1999), and Jules Townshend (2000) respectively.

<sup>16</sup> Jules Townshend. *C.B. Macpherson and the Problem of Liberal Democracy* Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000. p.3

<sup>17</sup> Townshend. *Problem of Liberal Democracy* p. 10-11.

<sup>18</sup> C.B. Macpherson. "The Deceptive Task of Political Theory" in *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973. p. 203

<sup>19</sup> Townshend. *Problem of Liberal Democracy* p.12

<sup>20</sup> Townshend. *Problem of Liberal Democracy* p.13

<sup>21</sup> Townshend. *Problem of Liberal Democracy* p.21

be restricted to Hobbes and Locke because the argument will be made that Hobbes and Locke embody the core premises of *realism* and *liberalism* respectively. Macpherson attempted to root out the implicit social understandings liberal theorists had about their society from their ontological positions about human nature. He argued when “a writer can take it for granted that his readers will share some of his assumptions, he will see no need to point these out... A second reason for a theorist’s failure to state an assumption is that he may not be clearly aware of it.”<sup>22</sup> Both are germane because often liberal assumptions are taken as given or are so embedded that the full implications of the *possessive individualist* worldview are absent.

In the case of Hobbes, Macpherson takes a straightforward and clear interpretive approach. He views Hobbes’ theory of human nature as “reflection of his insight into the behaviour of men in a *specific kind of society*”<sup>23</sup> and that he starts by “assuming that Hobbes was trying to do what he said he was doing, i.e. deducing political obligation from the supposed or observed facts of man’s nature.”<sup>24</sup> In doing so, he was attempting to see the world Hobbes lived in. Hobbes lived through the Thirty Years War as well as the English Civil War. The Civil War had indicated to Hobbes that the natural “state of nature” was war and violence, which occurred when “men [sic] live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man against every man.”<sup>25</sup> As such, the life of people, according to Hobbes, became miserable and chaotic. There were no limits to people’s behaviour and no one to enforce them. This condition produced fear and “danger of violent death; and the life of man [sic], solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.”<sup>26</sup>

By accepting Hobbes’ account of his project at face value, Macpherson was able to analyse Hobbes’ assumptions—both stated and unstated—within a broader social context. What is intriguing about Macpherson’s approach is his implicit social constructivist argument. Hobbes did not base his conclusions on eternal laws but rather, his state of nature is a “statement of the behaviour to which men as they are now, men who live in civilized societies.”<sup>27</sup> Hobbes’ philosophy is revealed in how he “imported assumptions derived from contemporary society, and in the way Hobbes folded social postulates into his justification of the state.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, the *state of nature* argument was but one part of a larger project to convince the *Leviathan’s* readers of the need for the Sovereign. Hobbes needed people to realise what kind of society they lived in and who they were as citizens. In arguing that the ‘natural’ behaviour of men was being led by their passions, it explained “the behaviour of civilized men who, having lived under civil government, find themselves in civil war.”<sup>29</sup> In essence, the state of nature served as the logical extension along a continuum of behaviour of which they were all too well aware. Gone were references to the “divine right of kings” and instead, there was an empirical, rational basis for societal organisation. There was no preordained societal structure as Hobbes dispensed with the Aristotelian notion of inherently different classes of people and stated “nature has made men so equal, in the faculties of body, and mind.”<sup>30</sup> This fundamental equality dovetails with the emergence of capitalism in that the “*value*, or WORTH of a man, is as of all other things, his price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of their power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing dependant upon on the

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<sup>22</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p. 5-6

<sup>23</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p.13 (emphasis mine)

<sup>24</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p. 15

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *The Leviathan*. Ed. C.B Macpherson. London: Penguin, 1985. p. 185

<sup>26</sup> Hobbes. *The Leviathan* p. 186

<sup>27</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p.22

<sup>28</sup> Jules Townshend. “Hobbes as Possessive Individualist: interrogating the C.B. Macpherson thesis” *Hobbes Studies* XII 1999. pp 52-71. p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Hobbes in Morgan p. 620

need and judgment of another.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, each person has value according to his/her labour, money, or social position. Hobbes believed this rational secularisation of political theory was needed to provide more stable and permanent solutions to the social and political turmoil caused by the 17<sup>th</sup> century’s religious wars. This is the social and cultural milieu that surrounds Hobbes and his understandings of society and of human nature.

*John Locke: Liberal Hero and Guide*

While liberals have viewed Thomas Hobbes as a political foil, John Locke, in sharp contrast, has served as an important model both in inspiration and guidance. Despite this open affection, few liberals have taken the time to seriously examine the social implications of his ideas and their connection to nascent capitalism; rather, they focus on his model of limited constitutional government, which has become the hallmark of Anglo-American democratic political thought and institutions. This is perhaps not surprising given the fact that his writings “seem to have everything that could be desired by the modern liberal democrat. Government by consent, majority rule, minority rights, moral supremacy of the individual, sanctity of individual property—all are there, and all are fetched from a first principle of individual rights and rationality.”<sup>32</sup> Because Locke’s ideas have become so revered within liberal thought, using Macpherson’s nodal concept of *possessive individualism* is necessary to expose the embedded values that imbue the cultural, political and ideological foundations of modernity, and by extension, the ontology of international political theory.

A key Macphersonian insight is that the focus on the limits of the state upon the individual obscures the role of the *market* in society and *its* effects upon the individual. What is left out in most liberal accounts is the fact that “the liberal-democratic state, like any other, is a system of power... It, like any other state, exists to maintain a set of relations between individuals and groups within the society which are power relations.”<sup>33</sup> Locke’s ideas helped to create an entrenched set of behaviours and relationships through social iteration that creating a market society with eventual democratic trappings. While not as austere as Hobbes or as pessimistic in his outlook, Locke relied upon the concept of individual equality as the centrepiece of his theory. For instance, he stated that all are “born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection.”<sup>34</sup> For him, this equality produced a state of freedom or “liberty” that was as “natural” as the state of nature was for Hobbes. An important difference lay in his claim that people are “*equal and independent*, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.”<sup>35</sup> For Locke, people’s natural state of affairs was generally peaceful towards their neighbours—an important contrast to Hobbes’ assumptions and tie in with the era after the *Thirty Years’ War* where the monarchy was reestablished albeit in a more limited constitutionalised form.

Locke, like Hobbes, created a hypothetical environment of pre-civilised life without ever setting out how to actually prove his hypothesis. What we are left with is the transition between this *perfect* state and the type of society Locke wants to create. Locke, like many other European thinkers, grappled with the discovery of the New World and the cognitive dissonance it created. Finding intact societies outside of any possible knowledge of Christianity “led to a radical redefinition of the nature, history and destiny of humankind. In other words, it triggered a radical change in European

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<sup>31</sup> Hobbes in Morgan p.605

<sup>32</sup> Macpherson. *Political Theory* p. 194.

<sup>33</sup> Macpherson *The Real World of Democracy* p. 38

<sup>34</sup> John Locke. “Two Treatises of Civil Government” in *Classics of Moral and Political Theory* Ed. Michael L. Morgan. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992. p.739.

<sup>35</sup> Locke in Morgan p. 739



culture.”<sup>36</sup> Perhaps Locke had the pre-modern native society in mind when he proposed his prehistoric “society” that saw a man’s “labour fix a property in: whatever is beyond this, is more than his share, and belongs to others.”<sup>37</sup> Land was initially used primarily for subsistence and therefore of little commercial value. One could only use or consume a finite amount of resources within the “commons” and therefore the distribution of wealth was relatively even. It is a key foundational element of his overall model because of the transition from this ahistorical state of nature to a society his readers would recognise.

Thus, on the one hand, all individuals had the *natural right* of equality but on the other, these rights changed when people entered *civil society*. In Locke’s chapter on property in *The Second Treatise*, he attempts to “transform the natural right of every individual to such property as he needed for subsistence, and as he applied his labour to, into a natural right of *individual* appropriation, by which the more industrious could rightfully acquire all the land, leaving others with no way to live except by selling the disposal of their labour.”<sup>38</sup> This transition was accomplished through the introduction of currency. Money changed the entire social equation for Locke because with its advent, it became “some lasting thing that men might keep without spoiling, and that by mutual consent men would take in exchange for the truly useful, but perishable supports of life.”<sup>39</sup> The growth in population made land more scarce and by people contracting themselves into a society they have “given up their pretences to their natural common right.”<sup>40</sup> This produces inequality since each person will labour in such a manner as to benefit themselves the most, but the ways in which this is accomplished will be different, therefore producing different outcomes. Thus, the “core of Locke’s individualism is that every man is naturally the sole proprietor of his own person and capacities—the absolute proprietor in the sense that he owes nothing to society for them—and especially the absolute proprietor of his capacity to labour.”<sup>41</sup>

As Locke brings the ahistorical *state of nature* of his model more and more into focus, his prescriptions and observations about his own society become clear. Locke’s model is at once both simple and nuanced. Locke believed that a society is just if the “men have so *consented to make one community or government*, they are hereby incorporated, and make one body politic, wherein the *majority* have a right to act and conclude the rest.”<sup>42</sup> What constitutes the *majority*, however, is central to Locke’s worldview, or ontology of a liberal society because once men have contracted themselves out of the *state of nature*, they have put “on the bonds of civil society... and no man can be exempted from the laws of it.”<sup>43</sup> Macpherson argues that putting on these “bonds” has a specific ideological function. Locke assumed that the “propertyless were a majority in England at the time he wrote... [thus], Locke was assuming that only those with property were full members of society and so of the majority.”<sup>44</sup> The concept of consent also is linked with Locke’s conception of rationality. Those with property were more “rational” than those without and since Locke assumes the propertied class’ consent gives legitimacy to governmental authority, majority rule is accepted and affirmed. Although this propertied “majority” may have internal differences in terms of government policy (e.g. level of taxation etc.), each member must “consent to whatever is acceptable to the majority, for without this there can be no government revenue, hence no adequate protection of the institution of property.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Jahn *The Cultural Construction of International Relations* p. 115

<sup>37</sup> Locke. in Morgan p. 747.

<sup>38</sup> Macpherson. *Political Theory* p. 231

<sup>39</sup> Locke in Morgan p.752

<sup>40</sup> Locke in Morgan p.752

<sup>41</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p. 231.

<sup>42</sup> Locke in Morgan p.779

<sup>43</sup> Locke in Morgan p.768

<sup>44</sup> Macpherson. *Political Theory* p. 252.

<sup>45</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p. 254.

Locke's model of society is, therefore, premised on differential *rationality* that ontologically privileges property and those possessing it. Consent, legitimacy, sovereignty, and the rule of law all stem from it. Just as Hobbes posited assumptions about society and human nature that reveal popular social attitudes and understandings of the day, so too does Locke. By examining Locke's arguments, Macpherson teases out unstated assumptions to bring a fuller picture of Locke's social worldview as well as its implications. For example, in neglecting the fact that subsistence wages for the working class was "in effect an alienation of life and liberty"<sup>46</sup>, Macpherson claimed Locke took it for granted "that labour was naturally a commodity and that the wage relationship gives [a person] the right to appropriate the produce of another's labour was a part of the natural order."<sup>47</sup> By doing this, Macpherson was taking the interpretation of Locke back "to the meaning of it must have had for Locke and his contemporaries."<sup>48</sup>

### **Reaction to Macpherson's Thesis**

Macpherson's claims were bound to cause a stir if not a controversy in how the liberal tradition was discussed and written about. First, he claimed the liberal worldview or ontology of the West was built upon *possessive individualist* assumptions that are inherent within and inexorably linked to capitalism. While not revolutionary at first glance, Macpherson attempted to force liberalism to come to terms with its own internal contradictions and in so doing, created a series of *anomalies*, which defied easy refutation and solutions. Second, he achieved this crack or fissure in the liberal paradigm by linking liberalism to the emerging market society in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century that had been largely obscured with the rise of liberal democracy vis-à-vis the state (i.e. universal suffrage, and later with the Keynesian welfare state). This development, in turn, blunted the effects of *laissez-faire* liberalism<sup>49</sup>. Third, despite these changes and adaptations, liberalism remains internally contradictory because it attempted to reconcile individual freedoms with the *possessive individualist* ethos. This ethos has permeated Western political, social and cultural thought and has produced a truncated and impoverished role for political obligation. Taken together, Macpherson was attempting to combine his normative socialist prescriptions and *a priori* assumptions about human nature and society with a discursive immanent critique. This daunting, monumental task necessitated a response. Liberals harshly rejected his thesis by claiming his uncovering of "anomalies" was nothing more than a misinterpretation and misreading of the liberal canon by an outside quasi-Marxist. This liberal resistance lies in Macpherson's fundamental purpose: to juxtapose a *possessive individualist* ethos or identity, inherent within the works of liberal thinkers, with liberalism's stated goals of individual freedom and equality. By linking them together, Macpherson was attempting to use liberalism against itself in order to break and ultimately transcend its link with capitalist market relations. This resistance, however, was also due to whom Macpherson was and his credentials. For many, it was a question of whether he was qualified to condemn a philosophical tradition that brought about universal suffrage, human rights and an end to slavery.

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<sup>46</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p. 220.

<sup>47</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p.220.

<sup>48</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p.220. This is one very evident passage, within Macpherson's seminal text, that evokes a "proto-constructivist feel or impression. By taking liberal thinkers' (of which Locke is pre-eminent) ideas to their logical conclusion as well as inferring social, cultural, and ideological attitudes and beliefs of the time period, Macpherson is attempting the difficult task of simultaneously providing immanent critique as well as retrieving the best aspects of liberal thought. The sheer complexity of the task is no doubt partially to blame for the resistance to Macpherson's ideas as well as the misunderstandings arose from critics from all over the political spectrum.

<sup>49</sup> See Karl Polanyi *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* Boston: Beacon, 1957 and John G. Ruggie, "International Regime, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order." *International Organisation* 36(2) 1982 pp.379-415.

For liberals, it was clear that Macpherson was an enemy from outside the tradition and the attempt, through *immanent critique*, to link John Locke—again the *patron saint* of the liberal tradition—with a philosophical defence of structural, social inequality. They charged that Macpherson’s depiction of the market was far too negative and his lack of detailed alternatives made his project purely abstract and ultimately of limited application. Two common threads that seem to knit much of this liberal critique together are his assertions about human nature and what he believed constituted a fully developed life. Essential to their critique was the rejection of the Macphersonian notion of capitalism’s inherently exploitative nature as there was no “necessary correlation between material provision and spiritual happiness”<sup>50</sup>, no way to measure fulfilment in the first place<sup>51</sup>, and that capitalism was, in essence, the straw man for Macpherson’s need to derive “all politics from a single principle”.<sup>52</sup> Another problem was how to promote or raise the consciousness of those who could benefit from the move to socialism because many prefer the “benefit of consumption, even at the expense of self-development.”<sup>53</sup> The basis for Macpherson’s critique was his conception of human nature, and the needs and wants that came with its definition which Macpherson acknowledged was “both an ontological and a historical problem.”<sup>54</sup> His privileging, however, of some aspects of human characteristics was an “intellectual muddle”<sup>55</sup> and implicitly totalitarian.<sup>56</sup> This is an interesting charge given how liberals often implicitly take their own ontology as given and treat it as a universal expression of humanity. For example, rather than producing artificial wants and needs, capitalism was in fact, a response to the core characteristics of the people who live under it.<sup>57</sup> Macpherson defended his definition of human nature by claiming that providing a non-problematic model was extremely difficult and that he was in good company with all the ethical theorists in the Western tradition.<sup>58</sup>

Marxist critics were also critical of Macpherson’s attempt to reconcile liberalism’s internal contradiction through a synthesis of liberalism’s ideals with a Marxist critique of the state and capitalist social relations. Thus, many of these theorists believed that their model *alone* was sufficient to replace liberal capitalism and thus, his *possessive individualist* model sought to supplant their *paradigm* as well. Many deemed Macpherson to be on a fool’s errand, and conceded far too much to liberal notions of individualism. Furthermore, many argued that he had no adequate view of transition and implicitly advocated a vanguardist, elite-driven model of social and political change. For example, Woods questions his commitment to the Marxist tradition in asking whether Macpherson’s “abandonment of class struggle and the revolutionary agency of the proletariat really constitute a radical break in his thought, or is it implicit in the very foundations?”<sup>59</sup> She continues her probing of Macpherson’s Marxist commitment by claiming that his “project implies a particular audience and assigns to that audience a predominant role in the transformation of society... [and] implies that socialism—if it comes at all—will be a gift from a segment of the ‘educated’ ruling

<sup>50</sup> Townshend *Problem of Liberal Democracy* p. 102

<sup>51</sup> John Dunn. “Democracy Unretrieved, or the Political Theory of Professor Macpherson” *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 4 No. 4 (Oct. 1974) pp.489-499 p. 495.

<sup>52</sup> K.R. Minogue “Humanist Democracy: The Political Thought of C.B. Macpherson” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 9 No. 3. p. 376.

<sup>53</sup> Townshend *Problem of Liberal Democracy* p. 106-107.

<sup>54</sup> C.B. Macpherson “Needs and Wants: An Ontological or Historical Problem?” in Ross Fitzgerald, ed. *Human Needs and Politics* Rushcutters Bay: Pergamon, 1977 p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> B. Wand “C.B. Macpherson’s Conceptual Apparatus” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 4 No. 4 1971 p. 526

<sup>56</sup> Townshend *Problem of Liberal Democracy* p. 101. This comment is not uncommon from liberals and indicates that they miss the point of Macpherson’s critique.

<sup>57</sup> Minogue p. 387

<sup>58</sup> C.B. Macpherson “The Criticism of Concepts and the Concept of Criticism” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 5 No. 1 1972 p.143

<sup>59</sup> Ellen Meikins Wood “Liberal Democracy and Capitalist Hegemony: A Reply to Leo Panitch on the Task of Socialist Political Theory” in *Socialist Register* London: Merlin , 1981 pp 169-189. p 172.

class.”<sup>60</sup> Wood’s charge that Macpherson has, at best, a watered-down commitment to Marxism is echoed in Svacek’s critique—albeit in a more sympathetic light. He agrees with Wood that in trying to rescue the best aspects of liberalism by separating it from capitalist relations, he “employs the weapon of his own justificatory ethic...[and] we must describe him a five-sixths of a Marxist.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, Svacek argues that Macpherson can “be seen to be *in* the Marxist tradition but not *of* it.”<sup>62</sup> Panitch reinforces this characterisation and extends it by placing Macpherson’s work in a broader Marxist discussion about the need for a *revolutionary* transition. He notes that Marx himself believed in the “possibility of a peaceful transition in Holland, England and the United States”<sup>63</sup> indicates that Marx was open to the possibility of more than one road to socialism.

### ***Problems With Macpherson’s Possessive Individualist Model***

When the liberal and Marxist critiques/attacks of Macpherson are taken together, they reveal significant but not fatal flaws in his model. In terms of strengths, his model provides a penetrating account of the liberal tradition through the technique of immanent critique. The dual ontology of the individual as infinite consumer coupled with the individual as developer of his/her own capacities indicates that liberal thought is internally contradictory. Moreover, his idea of individuals being endowed with a wide array of natural abilities and attributes promotes an inspiring view of individuals and human beings. Much of the resistance to his model is partially ideological but is more often due to a misreading of his overall purpose. Macpherson notes with gratification that Svacek believed that “I have sometimes contributed a valuable increment to Marx’s analysis, as in his view that my net transfer of powers is more precise and more discriminating than Marx’s concept of surplus value.”<sup>64</sup> This comment was due to Macpherson’s belief that it is a “test of my critics’ understanding of my analysis whether or not they understand the concept of the net transfer of powers. Few do; Svacek does.”<sup>65</sup> Despite Macpherson’s provocative thesis and his uplifting view of humanity, his model is not without weaknesses. For one, he lacks a detailed model of transition from the existing capitalist order to a socialist one. Others include problems over the authoritative allocation of work and compensation between people and between professions. These, in turn, raise issues about whether hard work, initiative, and individual drive would cease to exist in Macpherson’s idyllic society. What he does propose is a “pyramidal councils system, with direct democracy in the lowest level of the neighbourhood and workplace, and thereafter election of delegates by one level to the next, higher one.”<sup>66</sup>

At the centre of these theoretical problems is the concept of *human nature*. The reason that liberals focus on reward, initiative etc. in individualist terms is because of possessive individualism—the centrepiece of Macpherson’s model. Possessive individualism provides a truncated view of humanity and of human nature. Macpherson argues that if “you start from the assumption that there is a permanent unchanging nature of man [sic], then you are forced to subsume all changes, such as increase in desires to, under his innate nature.”<sup>67</sup> This argument, however, can be applied equally to Macpherson’s conception of human nature since he argues, “political theory hinges on its penetration of its analysis of human nature.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, while his

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<sup>60</sup> Wood p. 172-173.

<sup>61</sup> Victor Svacek “The Elusive Marxism of C.B. Macpherson” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 9 No.3 1976. pp.395-422. p. 419

<sup>62</sup> Svacek p.419 emphasis in original

<sup>63</sup> Leo Panitch “Liberal Democracy and Socialist Democracy: The Antinomies of C.B. Macpherson” *Socialist Register* London: Merlin , 1981 pp 144-168. p 153.

<sup>64</sup> C.B. Macpherson “Humanist Democracy and Elusive Marxism: A Reply to Minogue and Svacek” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 9 No. 3 1976. pp. 423-430 p. 424

<sup>65</sup> Macpherson “Humanist Democracy” p. 424

<sup>66</sup> Morrice p. 659

<sup>67</sup> Macpherson *Democratic Theory* p. 34

<sup>68</sup> Macpherson *Democratic Theory* p. 51.

definition of human nature is much broader in scope, it still assumes that human beings desire and have the capacity for “judgement and action, for aesthetic creation and contemplation, for the emotional activities of friendship and love, and sometimes for religious experience.”<sup>69</sup> This description has an *a priori* justification and implicit definition of an ideal society, which flows from this understanding—just as much as the liberal theorist. Therefore, Morrice makes an excellent point by stating that Macpherson “placed himself in a paradox of relativism: his conception may be historically different from other, but may in time come to be criticized as irrelevant and inadequate.”<sup>70</sup>

This potentially quite damaging charge against Macpherson can be blunted, if not muted by linking it to a broader discussion of human nature within the field of linguistics. Is human nature fixed or the product of historically contingent social and political forces? This paradox can be partially resolved by using the ideas of Noam Chomsky, the noted American linguist, social critic and activist. While no serious exploration of Chomsky’s work will be attempted here, what will be examined are his notions about human nature and cognition as well as his political views, which implicitly spring from his scholarly work. For instance, Chomsky “regards creativity, imagination, and invention as key factors that render the human species unique... Ordinary creativity is evidenced in the everyday linguistic practices of people who are able to produce original statements and to translate those of others... Rather human nature provides us with a generative framework that enables us to make sense of and order our experiences.”<sup>71</sup> Therefore, creativity is “free action within the framework of a system of rules.”<sup>72</sup> This conceptualisation of human nature avoids the “either/or” dichotomy through the introduction of *abduction*, which can be defined as “a process in which the mind forms hypotheses according to some rules and selects among them with reference to evidence, and presumably other factors.”<sup>73</sup> This means human knowledge is based upon an active mind participating in the outside environment due to biological capacity, and our subsequent interpretation of the said environment. Thus, there is an empirically verifiable world “out there” that can be understood.

This has important implications for Macpherson’s model. Macpherson is arguing that liberal notions of the individual and society are throwbacks to earlier conceptions and justifications of a particular type of society that are no longer valid. The claim that Macpherson’s own model could become outdated is weakened significantly when Macpherson normative claims are combined with his immanent critique of liberalism’s ontological contradictions *and* Chomsky’s ontological and epistemological foundations. For example, Macpherson makes a good case for the creative capacity of human beings and the liberal inadequacy of providing an appropriate environment for them to flourish. A particularly strong argument is Macpherson’s claim that when “democracy is seen as a kind of society, not merely a mechanism of choosing and authorising governments”<sup>74</sup>, the empowerment of human beings will have begun. This definition of society has strong linkages to Chomsky’s social and political thought. For Chomsky, the “just society has something to do with what best meets the requirements of human nature and needs”<sup>75</sup>, and dovetails with Macpherson’s notion of people having the capacity for “judgement and action, for aesthetic creation and contemplation...”<sup>76</sup> noted earlier. The main contribution Chomsky brings to Macpherson’s model is

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<sup>69</sup> Morrice p. 656

<sup>70</sup> Morrice p. 656-657.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Wilkin. “Chomsky and Foucault on Human Nature and Politics: An Essential Difference?” *Social Theory and Practice* Vol. 25, No. 2 (Summer 1999) pp. 177- 210 p. 186-87.

<sup>72</sup> Noam Chomsky “Interview With Noam Chomsky: Linguistics and Politics” *New Left Review* No. 57 (1969) 21-34, p. 31.

<sup>73</sup> Noam Chomsky *Rules and Representations* Oxford: Blackwell, 1981. p. 36.

<sup>74</sup> Macpherson *Democratic Theory* p. 51

<sup>75</sup> Wilkin p. 203

<sup>76</sup> Morrice p. 656

grounding its core ontological assumptions in a better empirical framework linked to the natural sciences.

#### ***Why the Possessive Individualist Model Still Captures the Basic Ontology of Modernity***

By examining the liberal and Marxist reaction to Macpherson's thesis, it helped identify its contributions to both traditions as well as identify some definite weaknesses in his model. By adding in Chomskyan insights from his work in linguistics, it strengthens the case for using Macpherson's ideas at an international level of analysis. First, Macpherson's immanent critique of liberalism makes his model well suited to critique the ideological traditions that international political theorists implicitly draw from. Second, having integrated Chomskyan insights into the model, it allows human nature and society to be co-constituted—that is to say, human creativity, behaviour, and ideas are bound up in the societies in which people find themselves. Thus, differences in societies over time and between societies are a function of humanity's diversity and societies that do not recognise and affirm this diversity can be empirically deemed inferior. Third, this ability to evaluate a given society allows for a detailed examination of IR/IPE theory since it has European cultural assumptions from which it derives *universal* principles. Fourth, his model connects well with the constructivist turn in IR/IPE, which emphasises the inseparable nature of agents and structures and therefore provides a link to an already established set of models and vocabulary. The last point is salient in using Macpherson's model internationally. Making the link between the debates surrounding Macpherson and *possessive individualism* and the debates within IR/IPE may not seem obvious; however, connecting his model to an existing vocabulary make acceptance more likely.

Capitalist expansion and market ideology—both of which are an integral part of liberalism, helped fuel the eventual global dominance of European civilization. When Macpherson is connected to the origins of this dominance, his work provides a model to understand the cultural ideology that one, provided the impetus behind European hegemony and two, provided the worldview that justified and legitimated European expansion and control. The legitimation function provided by mainstream IR/IPE scholarship is at the heart of critical scholarship and Macpherson's domestic model fits within this critical current of thought because it shares with critical IR/IPE scholarship an attack on the ontology of modernity itself. It will become clear that Macpherson provides a crucial domestic—international disciplinary bridge that will provide a further clarity to the study of international politics by providing a broader, more detailed historical and ideological base using constructivist insights.

#### ***Why Does Macpherson Make a Difference in Studying International Politics?***

We can link Macpherson to the critical IR/IPE literature because it shares a similar notion about the purpose of theory. As Robert Cox notes, problem-solving theory “takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action”<sup>77</sup> while critical theory “stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about.”<sup>78</sup> What perhaps separates Macpherson's model from some other critical approaches is that it does not get caught up in notions of discourse and metaphysical/philosophical debates. While important, these debates often do not further actual change and can actually inhibit dialogue with those the criticism is presumably trying to reach. Rather than attempting to deal with the philosophical issues related to post-modernist, anti-foundational epistemology, using Macpherson's *possessive individualist*

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<sup>77</sup> Cox p.128.

<sup>78</sup> Cox p.129.

model at an international level of analysis avoids this philosophical quagmire by linking the basic tenets of the model to a broad historical, ideological canvas, and demonstrating that *possessive individualism* is what mainstream scholarship implicitly draws from.

His model avoids the charge of relativity through immanent critique and through his conception of human nature. The latter is not without its problems as was evident in the discussion about Macpherson's domestic model. Clearly, his immanent critique of liberal theory has analytical and explanatory power; however, his conception of human nature is undertheorised and not immune to the same kind of argument he is making against liberal theory. That is why his ideas need a constructivist ontology added to them. In doing so, human nature and society become co-constituted—they are both ontologically privileged. In some sense, Macpherson seems to have implied this co-constitution in his work but never developed this reasoning further. What he did do, however, was to bracket liberalism's own valuing of developing one's human powers with liberalism's contradictory acceptance of capitalist inequality. By doing that, his model becomes more immune to liberal attacks because by rejecting the value or worth of human development, liberals would be undermining their own belief system. Macpherson's definition of human nature can be further improved by employing Chomsky's notion of a core human nature of which society, ideas, behaviour are a constituent part. Thus, this avoids the dichotomy of universality versus diversity.

When applied internationally, his overall argument remains valid. His immanent critique reveals that IR/IPE theory posits states in the same manner as domestic liberalism does to individuals. States become autonomous individuals who have ownership, control and sovereignty over their territory (e.g their property), and thus have unfettered and unlimited access and use of resources. When examined from a constructivist approach, this liberal culture is seen as natural and normal because the international system constitutes "actors with certain identities and interests, and material capabilities with certain meanings"<sup>79</sup> Because these interests and identities of states are *possessive individualist*, the effect is a reified international social structure that reinforces a culture of anarchy and entrenches mistrust, insecurity, global inequality and hierarchy. Much of mainstream IPE and IR theory is thus predicated upon the idea that the international politics is a self-help, anarchical system. There are different interpretations of what anarchy is but the image of competitiveness is always near the surface. He noted that the "seventeenth-century view of individuals as the essential proprietors of their own personal capacities emphasizes the limited social responsibility of individuals to society."<sup>80</sup> Taken together, Macpherson's model grounds a critical analysis on a temporal, real world, empirical footing because it posits that *possessive individualism* is a part of almost all social relations. Conceptions of international politics, economics, the environment, and development are all affected by the *possessive individualist* ethos and worldview. Not recognising this mindset or worldview as temporally bounded (i.e. within the past 300-400 years) makes it appear normal, natural and invisible. Hence, any attempts to reform international institutions, policies, and practices will be ultimately prove futile because the *possessive individualist* worldview will not be questioned since its assumptions are drawn from unexamined assumptions from the domestic sphere—where we all actually live.

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<sup>79</sup> Alexander Wendt. "Constructing International Politics" in *International Security* Vol. 20, No.1 (Summer 1995), pp. 71-81 p. 76.

<sup>80</sup> Michael Clarke and Rick Tilman. "C.B. Macpherson's Contributions to Democratic Theory" in *Journal of Economic Issues* Vol. XXII No.1 March 1988 pp. 181-296 p 183.

## **An Overview of the IR Constructivist Project**

The constructivist approach is a part of the IR discipline's development over the past two decades. Most constructivists "hold the view that the building blocks of international reality are ideational as well as material."<sup>81</sup> Its rise was due, in part to a "third debate" within IR scholarship (the first two being realism vs. idealism and scientific testing over historical reconstruction) that "began to challenge the epistemological consensus that sustained all such debates."<sup>82</sup> Alexander Wendt has been a major contributor to IR constructivism and several of his articles have sparked debate about the role of anarchy in IR theory. An early piece is "noteworthy... [as] it was IR's first sustained exploration of agency and structure."<sup>83</sup> For example, he states that "social structures include material resources like gold and tanks. In contrast to neorealists' desocialized view of such capabilities, constructivists argue that material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared understandings in which they are embedded. For example, 500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons."<sup>84</sup> Thus, material capabilities, in and of themselves, do not predispose state behaviour. What matters is the "social structure, which varies across anarchies. An anarchy of friends differs from one of enemies, one of self-help from one of collective security and these are constituted by structures of shared knowledge."<sup>85</sup>

Since the advent of the term *constructivism* in IR/IPE theory, the term has been increasingly associated with those scholars (e.g. Wendt, Adler, Katzenstein et al.) who do not reject standard empirical social science practice. The main purpose of this sociological approach is that it bring out "new and meaningful interpretations of international politics... [and] has rescued explanation of identity from postmodernism."<sup>86</sup> Hopf argues that all constructivists insist that "all data must be 'contextualised,' that is, they must be related to, and situated within, the social environment in which they were gathered in order to understand their meaning."<sup>87</sup> Conventional constructivists want to "discover identities and their associated reproductive social practices, and then offer an account of how these identities imply certain actions. But critical theorists have a different aim... to elaborate on how people come to believe in a single version of a naturalised truth."<sup>88</sup>

This begs the question of why the concept of emancipation is incompatible with the goals of "normal science". Part of the answer may lie in the tacit assumptions of "conventional constructivism" as it has so readily "achieved the status of a third recognized approach with[in] International Relations Theory"<sup>89</sup> because it is not a radical reassessment of the international system either politically or economically: it seeks to simply understand this system better. The apparent synergy between and its rivals (i.e. neo-realism and neo-liberalism) has led some to claim that this type of constructivism has "tended to replicate liberal arguments, conclusions, and

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<sup>81</sup> John Gerard Ruggie. "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge" *International Organization* 52, 4 Autumn 1998 pp. 885-885 p. 879.

<sup>82</sup> Vendulka Kubáľková, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert. "Constructing Constructivism" in *International Relations in a Constructed World* Eds. Vendulka Kubáľková, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert Armonk: Sharpe, 1998 pp. 1-21 p.13

<sup>83</sup> Harry D. Gould. "What Is at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?" Vendulka Kubáľková, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert pp. 79-98 p 84

<sup>84</sup> Alexander Wendt "Constructing International Politics" in *International Security* Vol. 20, No.1 (Summer 1995), pp. 71-81 p.73

<sup>85</sup> Wendt "Constructing International Politics" p. 78

<sup>86</sup> Jeffrey T. Checkel. "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory" *World Politics* 50:2 1998 pp 324-340.

<sup>87</sup> Ted Hopf. "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory" *International Security* Vol. 23, No. 1 (Summer 1998) pp. 171-200. p. 182.

<sup>88</sup> Hopf p. 183-4

<sup>89</sup> Caroline Kennedy-Pipe "International History and International Relations Theory: a dialogue beyond the Cold War" *International Affairs* 76, 4(2000) pp. 741-754. p. 751.



predictions about the future of international relations as a result.”<sup>90</sup> Wendt seems to fall into this category in his creation of ideal types of anarchy that are either “Hobbesian, Lockean or Kantian”<sup>91</sup> which create and induce a unique set shared values based upon these “logics” of anarchy. Therefore, despite his groundbreaking, maverick, articles that stirred up IR scholarship circles, Wendt does not advocate a radical break with mainstream scholarship in that he does not question the validity or existing “constructions” of international politics; moreover, his writings do not discuss the question of the economic and political identities and relationships and their relationship to capitalism. Thus, while their ontological notion that a “social structure” exists between states which in turn creates inter-subjective norms, values and practices, is a refreshing change, the way in which this structure is understood and studied has normative and ideological roots that are striking similar to those whom they are attacking. This seems to indicate that conventional constructivists generally accept capitalism, and like realism and liberalism, is a “criticism from within the tradition.”<sup>92</sup>

### ***Realism and Hobbesian Anarchy: Battle of the Sovereigns***

In order to illustrate how Macpherson’s nodal concept of *possessive individualism* can be combined with constructivism to produce a credible, insightful critical approach to IR and IPE, a survey of selected major realist and liberal thinkers will follow and their respective ideas will be interpreted and discussed through a *possessive individualist* lens. To begin, Realism is by far the oldest tradition within international relations claiming thinkers back to Thucydides; because of this lineage, its relationship to liberalism (i.e. liberal capitalism) understandings of politics is obscured. Recognising ideological divisions, as well as the dominant position liberal capitalism holds reveals the fact that scholars and their ideas are, in fact, a part of what they study. Therefore, theories and approaches are “contingent upon, and reflect substantial portions of the context in which they are formulated.”<sup>93</sup> Thus, despite Hopf’s claim that conventional need not follow critical theorists in self-consciously recognizing “their own participation in the reproduction, constitution, and fixing of the social entities they observe,”<sup>94</sup> *not* doing so reinforces existing structures and makes the status quo appear normal and natural.

Some key modern realist theorists that embody much of the implicit Hobbesian cultural worldview are Hans Morgenthau, John Mearsheimer and Kenneth Waltz. Each emphasise a different variant of realism but all have possessive individualist assumptions. They were selected due to their stature within the realist tradition and their effect on the discipline itself. Morgenthau helped define the modern realist tradition for over a generation. He was a “refugee from the Nazis, and his European education and experience provided a breadth of outlook and an historical orientation which gave him insights, which came more slowly to more parochial American students.”<sup>95</sup> The dystopian Nazi experiment helped condition his views towards society and human nature that parallels how the English Civil War helped to condition Hobbes’ worldview. As such, Morgenthau sought to “tame Americans’ optimism about human nature, science, and reform... [as] a distressingly large number of scholars equated good intentions with a successful foreign policy, assumed that democracy could control, if not extinguish, base human instincts, [and] believed that democracies could avoid wars and that a peaceful world could encourage democracies.”<sup>96</sup> Thus, it

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<sup>90</sup>Jennifer Sterling-Folker. “Competing Paradigms or Birds of a Feather? Constructivism and Neoliberal Institutionalism Compared” *International Studies Quarterly* 44, 2000. pp. 97-119. p. 98.

<sup>91</sup>Wendt *Social Theory of International Politics* p. 247.

<sup>92</sup>Biersteker, p. 19.

<sup>93</sup>Biersteker. p.7

<sup>94</sup>Hopf p.184

<sup>95</sup>Robert Jervis “Hans Morgenthau, Realism and the Study of International Politics” *Social Research*, Vol. 61 Issue 4 Winter 1994 pp. 853-76 p. 853.

<sup>96</sup>Jervis p.853-4.

is not surprising that he would attempt to set out a more “realistic” understanding of international politics.

Morgenthau’s description is a fascinating account of how culturally constructed mainstream IR theory has been. For example, he claimed that “politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature...[which] has not changed since the classical philosophies of China, India, and Greece endeavoured to discover these laws.”<sup>97</sup> This static view of human nature and society has the effect of reifying interstate relationships by enforcing an inter-subjective view of the world, which holds that conflict is the “result of forces inherent in nature. To improve this world one must work with those forces, not against them... [as] moral principles can never be fully realized.”<sup>98</sup> It also directly relates to the Hobbesian assumption that this state of affairs thwarts “every man’s [sic] desire for ‘commodious living’ and for avoidance of violent death, that every reasonable man [sic] should do whatever must be done to guard against this condition.”<sup>99</sup> Because of Morgenthau’s parsimony as well as his appeal to “common sense”, he quickly enabled modern realism to become the “nearest approximation to a reigning paradigm or, at least a dominant orthodoxy in international politics.”<sup>100</sup> This dominance, however, is based upon “making facts fit the theory” in that he felt comfortable claiming that “a perfect balance of power will scarcely be found in reality, it assumes that *reality being deficient in this respect*, must be understood and evaluated as an approximation of to an ideal system of balance of power.”<sup>101</sup> In essence, Morgenthau was couching realism’s *normative* utility on the back of its “descriptive and explanatory *validity*.”<sup>102</sup>

One of the key challenges to realism was the liberal focus on domestic politics. Morgenthau claimed that we “assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power... we listen in on his conversation with other statesmen; we read and anticipate his very thoughts.”<sup>103</sup> According to Keohane and Nye, this realist approach “deprecates domestic politics by suggesting that the national interest must be calculated in terms of power, relative to other states, and that if it is not, the result will be catastrophic.”<sup>104</sup> For example, Keohane notes “balance of power theories and national security imagery are poorly adapted to analysing problems of economic or ecological interdependence... Applying the wrong image and the wrong rhetoric to problems will lead to erroneous analysis and bad policy.”<sup>105</sup> For neo-liberals, the role of institutions helps to alter interests and promote co-operation. This claim allows for the *possibility* of change in sharp contrast to realism. Moreover, they note that state “choices reflect elites’ perceptions of interests, which may change in several ways... Practices or interests that are accepted in one period become downgraded or even illegitimate”<sup>106</sup>. While realists see patterns of balancing and of national interest, they seem uninterested in what the content of those interests and why power is used: they seem only interested in power.

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<sup>97</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau *Politics Among Nations: the struggle for power and peace* 5<sup>th</sup> Edition New York: Knopf, 1973. p. 3-4.

<sup>98</sup> Morgenthau p.3

<sup>99</sup> Macpherson p.19

<sup>100</sup> Bahman Fozouni. “Confutation of Political Realism” *International Studies Quarterly* 39 1995 pp. 479-510 p. 479.

<sup>101</sup> Morgenthau p.8 emphasis added

<sup>102</sup> Fozouni p 495.

<sup>103</sup> Morgenthau p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye *Power and Interdependence* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. New York: Longman, 2001 p. 37.

<sup>105</sup> Keohane and Nye p.7.

<sup>106</sup> Keohane and Nye p. 284.

### ***The Continuing Relevance and Resilience of Realism***

This liberal attack on realism has not abated or subsided; however, despite the challenge to its hegemony, it remains a dominant force in IR/IPE theory, especially in Anglo-American academic circles. Two prominent scholars who have responded to some of this critique over the past two decades have been John Mearsheimer and Kenneth Waltz. Both are excellent examples of realist thought both in terms of force of argumentation as well as illustrations of basic *possessive individualist* ontology. Mearsheimer's work is often directly opposed to liberal scholarship and current trends such as European integration. His work seems to take on a rearguard attack of opposing approaches. In doing so, he reveals core cultural assumptions about human nature and society. For example, in a recent article, Mearsheimer views the international system, especially in Europe and Asia as particularly unstable. The current stability is "based largely on auspicious distributions of power that make war highly unlikely... The most likely scenario in Europe is an eventual American exit coupled with the emergence of Germany as a hegemonic state."<sup>107</sup> He further argues that if Germany became responsible for its own defence, it would probably acquire its own nuclear arsenal and increase the size of its army."<sup>108</sup> Mearsheimer's description of realist *anarchy* is useful in seeing how differently European states currently "see" their interests rather than the ones he believes they should and/or will follow. In addition, his views are, again, at odds with a lot of liberal scholarship. For example, the image of the United States acting as the "lid covering a simmering cauldron of European insecurity" seems to be predicated upon *a priori* assumptions about the balance of power and presents an ontology akin to the Hobbesian "gladiator". The fascinating part of his analysis is apparent straightforward evaluation of nuclear weapons as merely modern forms of offensive/defensive capabilities. Because he utterly rejects any notion of social understanding that could frame nuclear weapons use differently, he neglects even the ideational "taboos" of using nuclear weapons by such hawkish American realists as John Foster Dulles, Robert McNamara and Dean Rusk.<sup>109</sup>

### ***Waltz & Structural Neo-realism: The Scientific & Empirical Defence of Hobbesian Anarchy***

Relying upon a reified notion of "anarchy" to justify a set of international political understandings and related prescriptions indicates an unwillingness to entertain any notion of a social and political context: power politics simply exists. This timeless, ahistorical nature of international politics is mirrored in many other realist scholarly works—most notably Kenneth Waltz. Waltz's theoretical framework provides for a more nuanced and "scientific" model of international politics. While sympathetic to many of Morgenthau's and Mearsheimer's normative assumptions, Waltz sought to provide a rational, predictable model of behaviour that transcends time and place based upon scientific principles. He achieved this by deducing his theory from a reading of history. He was impressed by "the striking sameness in the quality of international life throughout the millennia."<sup>110</sup> Thus, this view of continuity led him to "generate a parsimonious theory which explicitly sought to omit the influence of the units, and thereby make the purely defined international structure ontologically primitive."<sup>111</sup> In essence, Waltz has attempted to provide a cross-section of international politics throughout time and examine its core features.

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<sup>107</sup> John J. Mearsheimer "The Future of the American Pacifier" in *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 80 No.5 Sept/Oct 2001 pp 46-61 p. 47.

<sup>108</sup> Mearsheimer p. 50

<sup>109</sup> see Nina Tannenwald. "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use" *International Organization* 53, 3 Summer 1999 pp. 433-468

<sup>110</sup> Kenneth Waltz *Theory of International Politics* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979. p. 66.

<sup>111</sup> John M. Hobson "What's at stake in 'bringing historical sociology back into international relations'? Transcending 'chronofetishism' and 'tempocentrism' in international relations" in *Historical Sociology of International Relations* Eds. Stephen Hobden and John M. Hobson Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. pp. 3-41 p. 39.

Waltz is a key realist scholar to examine because his work is clear and straightforward, which has bolstered the realist school in the face of challengers; however, as ambitious his attempt is in its scope and scale, it fails to account for cultural understandings of the state and the individual. For instance, he differentiates between domestic and international political structures in that domestic systems are hierarchical while the international system is anarchical. There is nothing revolutionary in this dichotomy, but what is revealing is his characterisation of the international anarchical environment. He argues that in an anarchical environment, “each unit’s incentive is to put itself in a position to be able to take care of itself since no one else can be counted on to do so.”<sup>112</sup> Moreover, he equates the international politics to a competitive market where “international political systems, like economic markets, are individualist in origin, spontaneously generated and unintended.”<sup>113</sup> Thus, a weak state must be always “concerned with its *relative* power. The power of others—especially great power—is always a threat.”<sup>114</sup> Both descriptions harken back to the earlier Hobbesian description of individuals in the state of nature—the domestic equivalent of international anarchy. It also relates to *possessive individualism* in that “each state is a separate, autonomous, and formally equal political unit.”<sup>115</sup> As such, states perform tasks, “most of which are common to all of them; the ends they aspire to are similar.”<sup>116</sup> States are equal “individual” units that have similar interests of security and power. Stronger states dominate weaker states and thus set the “rules of the game”. At one level, Waltz’s model of international politics is again simple, elegant and straightforward. States act to enhance their power and security: international politics is viewed through this prism and states’ actions are interpreted and understood in these terms. At a deeper level, it reveals a model predicated on *presentism*—or the construction of theory based upon the shifting sands of contemporary politics. In some instances his theory’s “conceptual neatness of a system defined in terms of a single type of unit may actually reflect the empirical world. But when it does not, the difficulties of diversity need to be faced rather than avoided.”<sup>117</sup> It is no wonder that such an approach to “the study of international relations was popular during the Cold War, when structures did seem to be unchanging.”<sup>118</sup>

### ***Implications of Realist Thought in the post-Cold War Era***

Waltz’s claim that international politics is timeless coupled with the geo-political reality of the Cold War also reveals how deeply embedded core cultural assumptions are about how people and states interact. Waltz’s theory embeds these notions under the guise of a scientific model. His model is static and does not allow for change. This is particularly evident in Waltz’s more recent work after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. In many ways, his thoughts and perceptions echo and mirror those of Mearsheimer. For example, in his piece “Structural Realism After the Cold War”, he asks how the post-Cold War international system has changed “so profoundly that old ways of thinking would no longer be relevant? Changes *of* the system would do it; changes *in* the system would not”.<sup>119</sup> He posits that changes in the “structure of the system are distinct from changes at the unit level”<sup>120</sup>, which creates a dichotomy between the domestic and international political spheres. For him, it is the number of great powers that drives state action as several, relatively equal states creates inherent instability within the international system. He further asserts

<sup>112</sup> Waltz *Theory of International Politics* p. 107.

<sup>113</sup> Waltz *Theory of International Politics* p. 91.

<sup>114</sup> Jack Donnelly *Realism and International Relations* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. p. 18.

<sup>115</sup> Donnelly p.17.

<sup>116</sup> Waltz *Theory of International Politics* p. 96

<sup>117</sup> Barry Buzan and Richard Little. “International systems in world history: remaking the study of international relations” in Hobden and Hobson pp. 200-220 p.213.

<sup>118</sup> Stephen Hobden. “Historical Sociology: back to the future of international relations?” in Hobden and Hobson pp. 42-59 p. 55.

<sup>119</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz. “Structural Realism after the Cold War” *International Security* Vol. 25 No. 1 (Summer 2000) pp. 5-41 p. 5.

<sup>120</sup> Waltz. “Structural Realism p.5

that to “explain war is easier to understand the conditions of peace. If one asks what may cause war, the simple answer is anything.”<sup>121</sup> Again, the historical and political context is unimportant, as the *security dilemma* and the *balance of power* remain permanent fixtures of international politics. Thus, the post-Cold War era is not different from previous periods because “even if all states became democratic, the structure of international politics would remain anarchic. The structure of international politics is not transformed by changes internal states, however widespread the changes may be.”<sup>122</sup> Waltz argued at length that neo-realism was a superior, scientific model to replace *classical realism* because “the ultimate concern for states is not for power but security [and for] the purpose of developing a theory, states are cast as unitary actors wanting to at least survive, and are taken to be the system’s constituent units.”<sup>123</sup> However, in applying such a rigid definition of anarchy, Waltz has *a priori* assumptions, which are embedded in his notion of structure.

This has important implications, both in terms of theory and what questions are asked (or not asked). Particularly troubling is again the sharp contrast between the domestic and international domains. For example, in his 1988 piece, Waltz notes that how “secure a country is depends on how it compares to others in the quantity and quality of its weaponry, the suitability of its strategy, the resilience of its society and economy, and the skill of its leaders.”<sup>124</sup> The language and description indicates constant competition, aggression and fear of the “other”—definite characteristics of a Hobbesian ontology. In addition, given the fact that Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics* came out with the onset of the Reagan inspired arms race, it seems ironic that the Soviets, under Gorbachev did precisely the opposite of what Waltz’s theory would have predicted. As such neo-realism “took it for granted that the Soviet Union and the United States would remain in a bipolar world by virtue of their capabilities, regardless of any changes in domestic politics.”<sup>125</sup> As Gorbachev allowed Eastern European states to determine, one by one, their own political fates, this transformed the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. Nothing had changed from within the “structure” of the international system: nuclear weapons arsenals, armies, tanks, nuclear subs etc. all remained a part of each other’s “capabilities”. What did change was the inter-subjective relationship between the two superpowers. Gorbachev relied on a “substantially changed image of the adversary, a considerably narrower conception of the national interest, and a reconceptualization of security itself.”<sup>126</sup> Clearly, the neo-realist description of anarchy did not hold because Gorbachev and the Soviet Union did not understand it that way, and because of that fact, the system changed. Waltz, of course, would again not characterise the events of 1989-1991 as a change *of* the system but *in* the system because international anarchy and the security dilemma still exist—only the units have been altered.

#### ***Realist Anarchy as Hobbesian Possessive Individualist Culture***

Realist ontology, when seen through a constructivist lens, bears out Macpherson’s argument domestically. The commodious, self-interested individual lives in a world that is solitary, nasty, brutish and short. Hobbes used his “state of nature” argument to justify the imposition of an absolute sovereign that all citizens would rationally agree amongst themselves to follow. Again,

<sup>121</sup> Waltz. “Structural Realism p.8

<sup>122</sup> Waltz “Structural Realism” p.10

<sup>123</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz “ The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 18, Issue 4 (Spring 1988). pp. 615-628 p. 617-18.

<sup>124</sup> Waltz “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory p. 627

<sup>125</sup> Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil. “Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire’s Demise and the International System” *International Organisation* Vol. 48 Issue 2 (Spring, 1994) pp. 215-247 p. 217.

<sup>126</sup> Koslowski and Kratochwil. p.233

given the pivotal moments in Hobbes' life, it is not all that surprising that he saw the world this way. Many others also intersubjectively shared his worldview. Hence, in an international environment with no world or global Sovereign but only state gladiators, realists accept this view of anarchy and thus, according to this worldview, prescribe a response to this hostile environment.

Macpherson's model illustrates that this environment, like its domestic counterpart, is historically contingent and neither eternal, natural nor permanent. Unlike its domestic counterpart until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, realist anarchy looked eternal and immovable due to the lack of international institutions. Now that such institutions exist, the realist argument and ontology is weakened. This is because these institutions have changed the intersubjectively shared norms and values of states and between states. This is analogous to the changes in England from the time of Hobbes (i.e. English Civil War) and the time of Locke (i.e. Glorious Revolution). In the case of the latter, a limited constitutional monarchy combined with a protection of property and enhanced powers of Parliament, created a shift in intersubjectively held norms, values and beliefs about the role of the government and the need for the steady, iron fist of an absolute Sovereign. This optimism has carried the liberal tradition far both domestically and internationally and yet its Lockean *possessive individualist* core remains intact.

Given the prominence of realism in the study of international politics, its assumptions and ontology need to be studied and critiqued. Needless to say, within mainstream scholarship, liberals of various persuasions have attacked realism but leave out the cultural and historical context in which realism is a part of. Given the embedded nature of market relations inherent within domestic political theory, this is not altogether surprising. To understand international politics and how we conceptualise it, we must recognise this connection to domestic theory. Beginning with Hobbes, anarchy became reified (albeit with some justification given Hobbes' experiences), which helped create an inter-subjective identity for the "self" and the "other". In turn, this reification has been reinforced repeatedly over time making it appear both normal and natural.

#### ***Possessive Individualism and Lockean Anarchy: The Culture of International Rivalry***

As noted in the discussion about John Locke, Locke attacked Hobbes' conception of human nature and the *state of nature*. By providing a more positive view of human nature, Locke was able to justify the set of social relations that came with constitutional monarchy. From there, the brutal, but perhaps more honest, account of market society put forth by Hobbes was hidden by the rational, peaceful conception of human nature. Survival was replaced by rivalry and peaceful, non-lethal competition. This worldview has helped propel liberalism as a dominant global ideology. The earlier overview of Locke's model and its underlying assumptions is also crucial in understanding the ontology of international liberal theory. If there is to be one thing gleaned from that discussion, it is the fact that Locke was almost entirely concerned with limiting the state and did not problematise the market or its effects on society. Given that there is no international "state" to contend with, and that market relations are largely unproblematic for liberals, this core *a priori* worldview posits markets as beneficial and positive. This is particularly relevant when examining how liberals theorise so-called international co-operation and how developing nations fit into its overall framework. Liberalism seems to depict developing nations as being either at an earlier stage of development than developed nations<sup>127</sup> who should logically adapt in order to compete, or they are largely peripheral to its theoretical concerns—much like the poor and propertyless in Locke's model.

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<sup>127</sup> See W. W. Rostow *The stages of economic growth: a non-communist manifesto* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1971.

Locke provides a vision of society that believed in the powers of reason and the possibility of peaceful co-existence with one's neighbours. This is derived from his theory of property relations and his belief it could be replicated. In essence, "Locke's political theory provides a justification for the global expansion of the civil society system, developed first in Europe (particularly Britain) resting on a money economy with the free circulation of commodities."<sup>128</sup> His theory "provides a justification for the prevalent form of western economic and political organization."<sup>129</sup> Thus, "property relations and representative government lie at the heart of international relations not least because representative governments are a dominating force in contemporary international politics and because in general they favour certain types of property relations."<sup>130</sup> This echoes and reinforces Macpherson's claim that "the liberal-democratic state, like any other, is a system of power... It, like any other state, exists to maintain a set of relations between individuals and groups within the society which are power relations."<sup>131</sup>

Locke's ideas about property relations and the need for representative government to protect it remain at the heart of international political theory. This is due to Locke's belief in the right of property as a basic human right through one's labour and effort. Just as "water running in the fountain be everyone's, yet who can doubt but that in the pitcher is his only who drew it out?"<sup>132</sup>, Locke employs this idea to the colonization of the New World—North America in particular. For instance, this helped limit claims to ownership by the native nomadic population and, on the other hand, provides a useful basis to the claims of the colonizers to the land they have cultivated."<sup>133</sup> This combined with the earlier discussion of money in justifying inequality within a civil society indicates that his social conception of property provided a justification for capitalist social relations, which Macpherson, in turn, has identified as *possessive individualist*.

Thus, if Locke's theory has provided an historical, intersubjective, cultural understanding domestically, which justified the export of this cultural vision of humanity through colonization and imperialism, then it is also logical and appropriate to contend that liberals will implicitly use this understanding in discussing and theorising international political matters such as security, trade, inequality, poverty, the environment etc. Three key liberal theorists that embody principles of this implicit cultural worldview are Francis Fukuyama, Robert Keohane, and Andrew Moravcsik. Each emphasises a different aspect or variant of liberalism; however, despite the differences in approach and subject matter, all three share basic *possessive individualist* assumptions. To begin, Francis Fukuyama can be perhaps best described as a key *promoter* of liberal values and norms and an apologist for its benefits to individuals and societies. He argues that "the combination of liberal democracy and capitalism has proved superior to any alternative political/economic system, and the reason lies in its ability to satisfy the basic drives in human nature."<sup>134</sup> This basic premise, developed further in his controversial book *The End of History and the Last Man*, posits that the fall of communism has shown that liberal capitalism is the most ideal, modern and advanced model for civilization developed thus far. As such, the pockets of resistance to its inevitable march are on the wrong side of history.

While much has made of his "end of history" sound bite—some of it over played by his critics, what is clear is his unabashed belief in liberalism's inherent superiority. For example, in the

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<sup>128</sup> Howard Williams *International Relations and the Limits of Political Theory* London: MacMillan, 1996 p 91

<sup>129</sup> Williams p. 92

<sup>130</sup> Williams p. 92.

<sup>131</sup> Macpherson *The Real World of Democracy* p. 38

<sup>132</sup> John Locke *Two Treatises of Government* London: Dent, 1977 p. 118

<sup>133</sup> Williams p. 101.

<sup>134</sup> Martin Griffiths. *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations* London: Routledge, 1999 p.69

wake of the World Trade Centre attacks, many have questioned the validity of his “end of history” thesis. In an article written shortly after the attacks, Fukuyama noted:

If we looked beyond liberal democracy and markets, there was nothing else towards which we could expect to evolve; hence the end of history. While there were retrograde areas that resisted that process, it was hard to find a viable alternative civilisation that people actually wanted to live in after the discrediting of socialism, monarchy, fascism and other types of authoritarianism... believe that in the end I remain right: modernity is a very powerful freight train that will not be derailed by recent events, however painful. Democracy and free markets will continue to expand as the dominant organising principles for much of the world.<sup>135</sup>

What is fascinating about his position is how culturally specific his worldview appears to be. He explicitly links capitalist free markets to democratic governance and thus obscures Macpherson’s insight that liberal democracy is a “system of power,”<sup>136</sup> which entrenches inequality. Advocates of globalisation are often quick “to identify democracy with free markets. There is, of course, very little historical justification for this identification. It derives almost exclusively from the coincidence of liberal parliamentary constitutionalism in Britain with the industrial revolution and the growth of a market economy.”<sup>137</sup> Thus, perhaps obscuring is not even the right term as he freely acknowledges that equality does not refer to one of “economic station: Lockean principles of property have been widely accepted, and therefore Americans have accepted a fair degree of economic inequality throughout their history. The ‘passion’ for equality refers, above all, to a passion for equal recognition, that is, an equality of respect and dignity.”<sup>138</sup> Given the fact that for two-thirds of its history, most Americans were disenfranchised (i.e. slavery, property, race, gender), it is highly disingenuous to assert that they have accepted their oppression so “passionately”. Furthermore, the idea of “recognition”, which is a key component of his overall model, neglects the fact that fundamental equality, respect and dignity cannot occur without a society attempting to ameliorate material inequality amongst its citizens.

Fukuyama succeeds in bifurcating the political and the economic systems of power within liberalism and yet links them as part of an ultimate well-functioning model of society; however, he is not original in doing so. His approach has clear connections to Locke’s conceptions of history and society: both are ahistorical and serve the interests of the ruling class. For example, Fukuyama’s omission of the fundamental lack of consent (and thus legitimacy) mirrors Locke’s model in *Two Treatises*. Locke too missed the crucial importance of true consent within his system of government in that “lawful government is fixed on all men whether or not they have property in terms of estate, and indeed whether or not they have made an express compact... and it appears that the result of Locke’s work was to provide a moral basis for a class state from postulates of equal individual natural rights.”<sup>139</sup> Locke thus recognised that there are inherent differences in people, and that by accident of birth or by gifts of nature, there would be differences in the levels of material and social benefits amongst individuals. And to Locke, these differences often were due less to luck than to the character of individuals. For instance, he “advocated the harsh treatment of able-bodied unemployed in workhouses, because their unemployment was due to their moral

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<sup>135</sup> Francis Fukuyama “The west has won. Radical Islam can’t beat democracy and capitalism. We’re still at the end of history” *Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/waronterror/story/0,1361,567333,00.html> Thursday, Oct. 11, 2001.

<sup>136</sup> Macpherson *Real World* p.38

<sup>137</sup> Robert W. Cox “Global Perestroika” in *The Theoretical Evolution of International Political Economy: A Reader* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Eds. George T. Crane and Abba Amawi New York: Oxford Up, 1997. pp. 158-172. p. 163.

<sup>138</sup> Francis Fukuyama. “Reflection on the End of History, Five Years Later” *History and Theory* Volume 34 Issue 2 Theme Issue 34: *World Historians and Their Critics* (May 1995, pp.27-43. p. 40.

<sup>139</sup> Macpherson *Possessive Theory* p. 249-50



depravity”<sup>140</sup> and so he did not view them as “full members of the body politic and had no claim to be so” and did not live a “fully rational life.”<sup>141</sup>

The idea of rationality in relation to a proper functioning society and in the character of individual states themselves is mirrored in Fukuyama’s claim about the inherent superior nature of liberalism. For example, he argues:

Western institutions are like the scientific method, which, though discovered in the West, has universal applicability. There is an underlying historical mechanism that encourages a long-term convergence across cultural boundaries, first and most powerfully in economics, then in the realm of politics and finally (and most distantly) in culture. What drives this process forward in the first instance is modern science and technology, whose ability to create material wealth and weapons of war is so great that virtually all societies must come to terms with it. The technology of semiconductors or biomedicine is not different for Muslims or Chinese than it is for Westerners, and the need to master it necessitates the adoption of certain economic institutions, like free markets and the role of law, that promote growth. Modern technology-driven market economies thrive on individual freedom—that is, a system where individuals rather than governments or priests make decisions on prices or rates of interest.<sup>142</sup>

Thus, Western culture is an integral part of modernity, is rooted within science and the pursuit of knowledge itself. States must adapt to Western technology, and must reproduce its social and political structures in order to compete. Those who do not or cannot compete (e.g. native societies in the New World, the modern Third World, the former Soviet Bloc) are relegated to the dustbin of history. Particularly revealing is how Fukuyama attempts to analyse the cultural variables within Islam, which would explain or account for its resistance to liberal modernity. He rejects looking at the economic or political context of Islamic fundamentalism and instead, describes it as an irrational, pathological response to the myriad of benefits available under liberalism. This illustrates that Fukuyama’s outlook is largely ahistorical, and is culturally bound because he neglects so much relevant historical data. by portraying economic inequality as natural, normal and unproblematic. Moreover, despite his liberal values of political equality, respect, and belonging, his worldview entrenches hierarchy and competition in much the same way as realists do. The main difference is how this competitive culture is underneath the polite, liberal veneer of freedom and equality.

#### ***Keohane and the Cultural Worldview of Complex Interdependence***

This veneer is one of the major sources of criticism levelled at liberals from both realists and Marxists because it demonstrates a lack of focus on power—either by states or other non-state actors. It is not that liberals do not recognise power or non-state actors as important. In fact, they have stressed the importance of such actors. What liberals seem to have is an optimistic view of how these actors use power because they have an *a priori* belief in positive-sum outcomes in the marketplace. For example, in terms of North-South relations, liberals “simply assume that open economic policies will improve LDC opportunities, without considering the political and power relationships between North and South...[but] critics argue, North-South relationships are highly asymmetrical, with LDC’s far more dependent.”<sup>143</sup> Within this debate, Robert Keohane has

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<sup>140</sup> Townshend, *Problem of Liberal Democracy* p. 64.

<sup>141</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p. 221.

<sup>142</sup> Francis Fukuyama “Their Target: The Modern World” *Newsweek* Vol. 138 Issue 25, 12/17/2001 pg.42-48.

<sup>143</sup> Theodore H. Cohn *Global political economy: theory and practice* New York: Longman, 2000 p. 100.

tirelessly promoted, throughout his writings in IPE, the need to study the effects of international regimes, their potential positive-sum benefits, and the rise of “complex interdependence.” His research agenda gained wider acceptance due to the decline of relative American economic power, which occurred in part because its allies in Europe and Japan caught up from their war devastated lows. Nonetheless, the debate over a changing political landscape helped to “motivate research programs in hegemonic stability theory, regime theory and the role of institutions, and the link between domestic politics and foreign economic policies.”<sup>144</sup>

Regimes can be defined as “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations.”<sup>145</sup> A crucial element in this definition is who sets what these rules, norms and values are. For Keohane, although there are “asymmetries in dependence that are most likely to provide sources of influence for actors in their dealings with one another,”<sup>146</sup> he and partner Joseph Nye have a rather “benign view of the effects of asymmetrical interdependence on smaller states. Indeed, they argue that interdependent relationships increase the opportunities for bargaining and permit smaller states to achieve their objectives.”<sup>147</sup> This is evident in Keohane’s defence of how multilateral institutions function within the international system. For example, he notes that “great powers such as the United States exercise enormous influence within international institutions. But the policies that emerge from these institutions are different from those that the United States would have adopted unilaterally.”<sup>148</sup> By creating these institutions, their very structure begin to create “social” relationships between states that can slowly transform their interests and interactions; however, what values that go into these institutions, and their overall mandate in the first place, will shape and structure subsequent interaction. If the argument is that we are better off with a multilateral approach to international decision-making and problem solving rather than simple unilateralism, it is obvious that regimes have value; The argument, however, is neither that simple nor straightforward.

To this end, Keohane and Nye completed detailed case studies of Canada-U.S. relations, Australia-U.S. relations as well as the regimes relating to oceans and monetary governance in order to test and illustrate their theoretical model. They qualified the nature of the respective case studies in that they were not be construed as “a definitive treatment of the effects of complex interdependence on bilateral relations.”<sup>149</sup> Their first edition of *Power and Interdependence* debuted in 1977, the second in 1989, and the latest in 2001. What is striking about their research programme is their confidence in it, and how little they believe it needs to change in light of developments over the past twenty-five years. They claim, “anonymous referees polled by our publisher have told us that our basic argument remains relevant... [and] our analytical framework is, we believe, enhanced by the continuing significance of the two main sets of forces that we tried to understand in 1977: rapid technological change and the continuing importance of state interests in shaping the global political economy.”<sup>150</sup> Given the OPEC crisis, the New Economic Order (NIEO) and its collapse, the 1980’s Debt Crisis, structural adjustment programmes by the IMF and the World Bank, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, it seems incredible to claim that their text needs few revisions or updates. Even more remarkable is their admission, in the first edition, that

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<sup>144</sup> Michael Mastanduno “Economics and Security in Statecraft and Scholarship” *International Organisation* 52, 4 Autumn 1998, pp. 825-854 p. 838.

<sup>145</sup> Stephen Krasner. “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables” in *International Regimes* Ed. Stephen Krasner Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983 p.2

<sup>146</sup> Keohane and Nye *Power and Interdependence* p. 9.

<sup>147</sup> Cohn p.89

<sup>148</sup> Robert O. Keohane “International Institutions: Can Interdependence Work?” *Foreign Policy* No. 110 Spring 1998 pp. 82-96. p.88.

<sup>149</sup> Keohane and Nye p. 189.

<sup>150</sup> Keohane and Nye xvi

their case studies were preliminary and not representative. How strange that Canada-U.S. relations have not been studied further given the fundamental shift in the two nations' relationship due to the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA. Furthermore, there is little mention of the widening gulf between the developed and developing as well as between citizens other than to say its "causation is difficult to pinpoint since several changes have been occurring at the same time. Part of the cause is Schumpeter's 'creative destruction' as technology has been substituted for labour as part of the information revolution."<sup>151</sup>

### ***Complex Interdependence and Liberal Exclusionism: The Third World as Afterthought***

Their description of "causation" is an illustration of liberalism's ability to obscure and blot out its own internal contradictions. By not re-examining their case studies in light of twenty-five years of historical developments or their model's applicability to states more dependent and less culturally similar, Keohane and Nye do a disservice to scholarship and to the pursuit of knowledge. Given Keohane's penchant for a positivist social science, through the replication of data and falsification, it seems hypocritical to claim that their model continues to be valid and have explanatory value. From a different vantage point, however, their model functions to maintain the "limits of the possible" and the "prevailing socio-economic system and set of power relations."<sup>152</sup> That they exclude the study of the Third World—which contains over two-thirds of the world's population—indicates that what we study is always situated within a social, political and economic context. Thus, there is no "objective study", and the separation of the scholar and object is a convenient fiction as "theory is always for someone and for some purpose."<sup>153</sup>

In terms of the liberal tradition, Keohane's oversight is consistent with Locke's exclusion of those who were extraneous to his argument. In this case, the exclusion is due to a lack of understanding of the developing nations' role in the international system and the deeply embedded cultural assumptions based upon the "prototypical European or North American state... and the tradition of taking states and their underlying communities for granted."<sup>154</sup> In essence, developing nations are unproblematic because they are viewed with cultural blinders. Thus, Keohane, like Kenneth Waltz, sees states as similar units although he recognizes their complexity and permeability. In doing so, he reinforces the cultural logic of anarchy when in fact, "hierarchy is a concept that better describes the structure of the interstate system than 'anarchy.'"<sup>155</sup> The most intriguing part of this observation is the fact that Keohane does not recognise this hierarchy but rather, sees legally equal states that have varying degrees of success both politically and economically. This again mirrors the contradiction in Locke's assumption of fundamental equality on the one hand, and the belief that "some—the men of property—were more rational than others—the men without property. The propertyless were less rational because of their economic position resulting from the free alienation of their labour."<sup>156</sup> Moreover, due to their lack of rationality, it required the "discipline of supernatural sanctions as well as legal ones,"<sup>157</sup> and Locke's contradictory notions were due to "an emerging bourgeois society which demanded formal equality but required substantive inequality of rights."<sup>158</sup> This contradiction is noted in states' formal

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<sup>151</sup> Keohane and Nye p.255

<sup>152</sup> Stephen Gill. "Epistemology, ontology and the 'Italian School'" in *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* Ed. Stephen Gill New York: Cambridge UP, 1993 pp. 21-48 p. 23.

<sup>153</sup> Cox p. 28

<sup>154</sup> K.J. Holsti "International Relations Theory and Domestic War in the Third World: The Limits of Relevance" in *International Relations and the Third World* ed. Stephanie Newman New York: St. Martin's, 1998 pp. 103-132. p. 109

<sup>155</sup> Carlos. Escudé "An Introduction to Peripheral Realism and Its Implications for the Interstate System: Argentina and the Condor II Missile Project" in Newman pp. 55-75 p. 65.

<sup>156</sup> Townshend *Problem of Liberal Democracy* p. 65.

<sup>157</sup> Townshend *Problem of Liberal Democracy* p.65.

<sup>158</sup> Macpherson *Political Theory* p.247.

international legal equality and yet exposing poor states, through structural adjustment, to “global economic competition, aiming to make them efficient capitalist economies”<sup>159</sup> that seldom is successful and only furthers poverty and inequality.

The problem with Keohane’s basic *ontology* of international politics is his affinity with realism itself. Keohane’s model shares important *a priori* methodological assumptions with realism. He argues that realism is a “necessary component in a coherent analysis of world politics because its focus on power, interests, and rationality, is crucial to any understanding of the subject.”<sup>160</sup> The main objection or criticism may be summarised by describing realism as “particularly weak in accounting for change, especially where the sources of change lie in the world political economy or domestic structures of states.”<sup>161</sup> Keohane still congratulates Waltz for providing an elegant, parsimonious model that can conform to standard social science practice of providing various testable hypotheses. This empirical characterization of realism does not address deeply held culturally based assumptions about the role of individuals, society and the economy. For example, he states that power becomes like money in economics: ‘in many respects, power and influence play the same role in international politics as money does in a market economy’.<sup>162</sup> By comparing power to money, it evokes the implicit power relations between those who have money and those who do not. This image is evoked because Keohane is accessing an ideological position he both implicitly and explicitly accepts. Macpherson had argued that describing society in these terms allows money to define interests in terms of who can best afford to pay for them. Thus, those states with more fungible power will determine the beliefs, values and subsequent actions that scholars objectively study through their parsimonious, empirical models. International anarchy is understood in terms of insecurity, rivalry and competition because the basic ontology of domestic society and individuals has not been questioned or examined. Until it is, any notion of international co-operation will continue to be defined by the most powerful states with the most wealth and resources rather than using that power and resources to help those disadvantaged states.

#### ***Moravcsik and the Goal of a Purely Empirical Liberal Empirical Model***

Implicit within the liberal worldview of Fukuyama and Keohane is the inherent benefit of liberal institutions, norms and values. Andrew Moravcsik, the third liberal theorist under discussion, does not reject this basic premise but attempts to divorce *any* normative aspects in devising a liberal theory of international politics. In a key article *Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics*, he contends that liberal insights such as “state society relations—the relationship of states to the domestic and transnational social context in which they are embedded—have a fundamental impact on state behaviour in world politics.”<sup>163</sup> At issue is his belief that liberal theory is a strong and appropriate alternative to realism and institutionalism. In essence, Moravcsik contends that Keohane and other neoliberals have given far too much away to the supposed strengths of realism. Its lack of paradigmatic status has “permitted its critics to caricature liberal theory as a normative, even utopian ideology.”<sup>164</sup> He thus seeks to “move beyond

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<sup>159</sup> Oswaldo de Rivero *The Myth of Development: Non-Viable Economies of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* Halifax: Fernwood, 2001 p. 90.

<sup>160</sup> Robert O. Keohane “Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond” in *Neorealism and its Critics* ed. John Gerard Ruggie New York: Columbia UP, 1986. pp. 158-203 p. 159.

<sup>161</sup> Keohane “Theory of World Politics: p. 159

<sup>162</sup> Keohane “Theory of World Politics: p. 167 and quoting Arnold Wolfers *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1962 p. 105.

<sup>163</sup> Andrew Moravcsik “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics” *International Organization* 51, 4 Autumn 1997, pp. 513-553 p. 513.

<sup>164</sup> Moravcsik “Taking Preferences Seriously” p. 514

this unsatisfactory position by proposing a set of core assumptions on a general restatement of positive IR theory can be grounded.”<sup>165</sup>

Moravcsik then proposes three core assumptions of Liberal IR theory—the primacy of state actors, states represent domestic interests, and the configuration of interdependent state preferences determines state behaviour.<sup>166</sup> Taken together, these assumptions “imply that states do not automatically maximize fixed, homogeneous conceptions of security, sovereignty, or wealth per se, as realists and institutionalists tend to assume.”<sup>167</sup> He seems to suggest that domestic politics plays a larger role than other IR approaches suggest. International behaviour is affected and mediated by domestic concerns. His third assumption of policy interdependence comes into play and is defined as the “set of cost and benefits created for foreign societies when dominant social groups in a society seek to realize *their* preferences.”<sup>168</sup> This, in turn, affects what states do as they seek to fulfil goals of its domestic constituency and is set against the wishes of other states’ domestic constituencies. Compromise is essential and the degree of compromise for a specific issue is dependent upon the relative size of the countries involved, the issue itself, and the domestic factors within those states.

This interstate, or as Moravcsik says *transnational*, relationship is a two-level analytical approach that does not neatly separate domestic and international politics. Thus, the “expected behaviour of any single state—the strategies it selects and the systematic constraints to which it adjusts—reflect not simply its own preferences, but the configuration of *all* states.”<sup>169</sup> By doing so, his model of international politics seems to suggest that international politics, and the conception of anarchy have a much more open-ended structure than realist scholars contend. For instance, realists assume that power is the balance of states’ capabilities. Moravcsik argues that external capabilities (i.e. international) can be due to *very* strong examples of domestic preference. He cites the examples “Hitler’s remilitarization of the Rhineland, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Chechnya. In each case the relative intensity of state preferences reshaped the outcome to the advantage of the ‘weak’.”<sup>170</sup>

#### ***Moravcsik’s Approach: Realist-Liberal Synthesis or Liberal Takeover?***

Moravcsik’s powerful restatement of Liberal IR theory has not stopped with the above article. He has since taken aim at how many realist scholars are employing mid- range theories that encompass many principle insights from the liberal perspective. He argues that recent realist work has served to “deepen and broaden the proven explanatory power and scope of the liberal, epistemic and institutionalist paradigms.”<sup>171</sup> He and co-author Jeffrey Legro propose three core assumptions of realism—rational unitary political units in anarchy; state preferences are fixed and in conflict; primacy of material capabilities<sup>172</sup>—just as Moravcsik did in describing the core assumptions of liberalism. What is interesting about this distillation is their claim that few realists actually follow these basic assumptions, but implicitly use concepts and assumptions from liberal scholarship. Without summarising the entire article, Moravcsik and Legro compare recent realist scholarship to the liberal domestic preferences literature, to epistemic community literature, or to

<sup>165</sup> Moravcsik “Taking Preferences Seriously” p. 515.

<sup>166</sup> Moravcsik “Taking Preferences Seriously” p. 515-520

<sup>167</sup> Moravcsik “Taking Preferences Seriously” p. 519.

<sup>168</sup> Moravcsik “Taking Preferences Seriously” p. 520 emphasis added

<sup>169</sup> Moravcsik “Taking Preferences Seriously” p.523.

<sup>170</sup> Moravcsik “Taking Preferences Seriously” p.524

<sup>171</sup> Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik “Is Anybody Still A Realist?” *International Security* Vol. 24, No. 2 (Fall 1999), pp. 5-55 p. 7.

<sup>172</sup> Legro and Moravcsik p.12-16

institutions.”<sup>173</sup> At the end of this scholarly tour, the authors emphasize that the works cited provide “innovative and valuable contributions to scholarly understanding of world politics... They belong among the most fruitful advances in recent international relations scholarship.”<sup>174</sup> At issue for them is a better empirical IR scholarly enterprise. Moravcsik and Legro are attempting to synthesise both liberal and realist perspectives in order to provide better models, theories and hypotheses upon which to study the complex world of international politics. They contend that the central issue is “the distribution of material resources, the distribution of preferences, the distribution of beliefs, and the distribution of information... [and] correspond to the four major categories of modern rationalist international relations theory, namely realist, liberal, epistemic and institutionalist theories.”<sup>175</sup>

From this brief survey of Moravcsik’s work thus far, he clearly wants to delineate an empirical model and theory of international politics that provides parsimonious insights into the actions of states. This is evident in other works such as his critique of constructivist literature pertaining to the European Union where he questions the ultimate value of the constructivists’ work in noting they “have contributed far less to our empirical and theoretical understanding of European integration than their meta-theoretical assertions might suggest—certainly far less than existing alternatives.”<sup>176</sup> He also has issues with critics of the European Union’s so-called democratic deficit. His clashes with realist and constructivist scholars have more to do with social science theorising than the ultimate prescriptions they may put forth. In attempting to acknowledge the realist-liberal synthesis that is taking place, he is also claiming that what is observable has to be understood and theorised through an empirical model.

Moravcsik’s empiricism in the name of objectivity and lack of normative bias has important implications. In another article discussing the democratic deficit in the EU, this approach is evident. He describes critics of the EU as overly critical and idealistic. He observes that the critiques are drawn from comparisons to “ancient, Westminster-style, or frankly utopian form of deliberative democracy. While perhaps useful for philosophical purposes, the use of idealistic standards no modern government can meet obscures... the real-world practices of existing governments.”<sup>177</sup> To be fair, he does note how limited the functions of the EU bureaucracy, and EU parliament are in many respects. The way he presents his argument is the most revealing. His objections to various critiques are that they are overly normative and neglect the simple fact that the EU specialized in “those functions of modern democratic governance that tend to involve less direct political participation.”<sup>178</sup> He seems to define democracy simply as institutional mechanisms that channel various preferences. Given that power still resides largely at the national level, he does not see EU governance as all that problematic. This is illustrated in his account of areas that the EU does wield significant influence—he argues that bureaucratisation is balanced by “direct accountability via the EP [European Parliament] and indirect accountability via elected national officials.”<sup>179</sup> This argument is very similar to those who support multilateral institutions. They are legitimate because state representatives and/or appointees have democratic mandates and thus, indirectly at least, have the tacit support of their respective populations. Moravcsik, given his stated goals of providing a meaningful context for domestic politics in international state behaviour, should be well aware of how often ill informed much of the public is regarding the often esoteric and arcane nature of EU or other multilateral negotiations. This lack of information often gives governments a veritable “blank

<sup>173</sup> Legro and Moravcsik see p. 25-33, 34-39, 41-43 respectively.

<sup>174</sup> Legro and Moravcsik p. 45

<sup>175</sup> Legro and Moravcsik p. 46

<sup>176</sup> Andrew Moravcsik “Is Something Rotten in the State of Denmark: Constructivism and European Integration” *Journal of European Public Policy* 6:4 Special Issue 1999 pp 669-681 p. 670

<sup>177</sup> Andrew Moravcsik “In Defence of the ‘Democratic Deficit’: Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union” *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol. 40 No. 4 pp. 603-24 p. 605.

<sup>178</sup> Moravcsik “In Defence of the ‘Democratic Deficit’” p. 606

<sup>179</sup> Moravcsik “In Defence of the ‘Democratic Deficit’” p. 611

cheque” to conclude agreements even when this may have little to do with stated objectives at election time.

This attempt at academic objectivity and neutrality is clearly evident in a 2003 IR roundtable sponsored by the *International Studies Association*. Its purpose was to elicit responses to address inter-paradigmatic and inter-epistemic issues and concerns. Out of the many issues and back and forth debate that came with this dialogue, two main issues stand out, which indicate Moravcsik’s core academic “value-set” and help shape his academic theorising and illustrate the implications of these values. The first is his definition of social science as a positivist, rational and empirical exercise; the second is that social science seeks to find cause and effect relationships—not to “directly interrogate our deepest moral intuitions and ideals about politics... it does not explore the basic epistemological or metaphysical bases of our apprehension of reality.”<sup>180</sup> The first point is fairly straightforward. His piece outlines his empiricist argument, which is quite similar to previous articles discussed earlier, but in this case, it is in even more blunt and frank form. He recounts the synthesis that has occurred between liberals and realists by setting out models, assumptions, and theories and then testing them. For him, this is a very uncomplicated process. Basically, one observes the world, makes hypotheses based upon observation, and then tests to see the results. He takes resistance to, or rejection of this process, as accepting theoretical pluralism “for its own sake.”<sup>181</sup>

This so-called resistance came from just about everyone else participating in the forum. The three most outspoken were Friedrich Kratochwil, Yosef Lapid, and Steve Smith. Kratochwil notes that Moravcsik’s position regarding empiricism is “hardly tenable anymore”<sup>182</sup> because “we cannot test our ideas against reality as all our questions to nature are already phrased in a theory (or language); we test only theories against other theories.”<sup>183</sup> Another point he makes is the scientific enterprise is very complicated because “honesty is required and plays a decisive role when a scientist has to decide to abandon his [sic] tenaciously held beliefs...”<sup>184</sup> Steve Smith echoes these concerns in that dialogue and synthesis “assumes either a common set of methodological and epistemological assumptions or assumptions that are, at the very least, not mutually exclusive.”<sup>185</sup> The argument is not whether there are standards but that “the standards for assessing work within any one approach must be the standards of *that* research tradition.”<sup>186</sup> Lapid criticizes Moravcsik for failing to make “even a single reference to dialogue... in Moravcsik’s wholesale repudiation of metatheory-driven (as opposed to problem-driven and theory-driven) scholarship... [and] his spirited effort to sharply differentiate scientific and non-scientific discourses.”<sup>187</sup>

The claim about a value-free, problem solving social science was a huge point of contention. Kratochwil is concerned that Moravcsik’s conception of social science could prove “useful for propagating schools and reproducing them... As teachers, it is our duty to educate

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<sup>180</sup> Andrew Moravcsik “Theory Synthesis in International Relations: Real Not Metaphysical” *International Studies Review* Vol. 5 March 2003 Forum entitled “Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations” p. 133

<sup>181</sup> Andrew Moravcsik “Theory Synthesis in International Relations” p. 131

<sup>182</sup> Friedrich Kratochwil “The Monologue of Science” *International Studies Review* Vol. 5 March 2003 Forum entitled “Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations” p. 124

<sup>183</sup> Kratochwil “The Monologue of Science” p. 124

<sup>184</sup> Kratochwil “The Monologue of Science” p. 125

<sup>185</sup> Steve Smith “Dialogue and the Reinforcement of Orthodoxy in International Relations” *International Studies Review* Vol. 5 March 2003 Forum entitled “Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations” p. 142.

<sup>186</sup> Smith “Dialogue and the Reinforcement of Orthodoxy” p. 143.

<sup>187</sup> Josef Lapid “Through Dialogue to Engaged Pluralism” The Unfinished Business of the Third Debate” *International Studies Review* Vol. 5 March 2003 Forum entitled “Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations” p. 130.

students by encouraging self-reliance, stimulating imagination (even if it needs to be disciplined), and instilling in them a critical attitude toward orthodoxies instead of simply training the aspiring young people like Pavlovian dogs to salivate at the master's voice."<sup>188</sup> He does not want orthodox gatekeepers who use his or her "position as an evaluator of departments to prevent unorthodox scholars from being appointed... This type of professionalism has taken its toll on the field."<sup>189</sup> Moravcsik presents an impressive array of scholars to illustrate his contention that U.S. *professional* academia is broadly based. Smith argues that his entire list shares his social science approach. The danger in doing so is that defining work as "relevant for activities of the state... is a powerful disciplining force."<sup>190</sup> This is crucial because objectivity is but a hidden discourse to implicitly serve the existing set of power relations. In other words, for one to accept Moravcsik's challenge, one would have to agree that "academic work reports on the world and does not of necessity have to take normative positions about it."<sup>191</sup>

Taken together, his desire to provide more unity and/or synthesis within IR theory—especially between realism and liberalism—evokes at least three previous discussions about the role of theory and the scholar as agent. First, his belief that realism can be subsumed or integrated under a broader Liberal IR theory is contextually related to the last fifteen years of the Cold War era. Mastanduno makes the argument that multipolar world politics creates incentives for integration—great powers tend to be economic interdependent... that scholarship responds to the particular features of the international environment, and the resulting patterns become institutionalised in academic life."<sup>192</sup> He again recounts various "cycles" of scholarship that oscillate from security studies to economics and back again. Cold War thinking is clearly absent from Moravcsik's writing as he argues that domestic political factors played a key role in the Soviet Union's disintegration and thus the domestic-international nexus needs to be studied much more closely. Second, his desire to synthesize realism and liberalism reinforces Biersteker's contention that both are from the same ideological tradition (i.e. capitalism) and Moravcsik affirms it by seeing much common ground between realism and liberalism. The third, and most important, is Moravcsik's approach and his positivism supports Macpherson's critical approach. Macpherson was very sceptical of positivism and strongly believed that scholars had an important function in either legitimating or critiquing existing power relationship within society. Moravcsik sees the study of politics as largely unproblematic, apart from methodological obstacles, because he implicitly accepts society as it is—one structured along *possessive individualist* lines.

#### ***Liberalism as Lockean Possessive Individualist Culture***

Out of the discussion of the three liberal scholars' work, they share important similarities. Fukuyama is the most normative and outspoken apologist for liberalism. He views capitalism and democracy as teleologically beneficial to those who adopt and accept its ethos. Inequality is but a temporary condition but is also necessary to maintain capitalism's dynamism and constant innovation. Keohane, in a much more subtle way, also accepts this positive description. While acknowledging that power accepts outcomes, he also believes that positive-sum gains are possible much more frequently than realists contend. His work on regimes and international institutions leads him to contend that such structures can mediate the effects of anarchy and lack of information between states. Moravcsik, of the three, perhaps is the strongest proponent of liberalism because he clearly states his assumptions and frames them in a non-ideologically and non-normative way. By appealing to a positive social science that is out to observe and study the

<sup>188</sup> Kratochwil "The Monologue of Science" p. 127.

<sup>189</sup> Kratochwil "The Monologue of Science" p. 127-128

<sup>190</sup> Smith "Dialogue and the Reinforcement of Orthodoxy" p. 142.

<sup>191</sup> Smith "Dialogue and the Reinforcement of Orthodoxy" p. 142.

<sup>192</sup> Mastanduno p. 827, 829.



world, he embeds capitalist social relations in his research. Particularly striking is his contention that social science is not the study of morality and ethics because it is different from “symbolic art, philosophy, rhetoric, journalism and historical description.”<sup>193</sup> Hence, his role is to study politics as a natural scientist would study natural phenomena.

The purpose of this paper could not be any more different. To claim that one is non-normative implicitly and logically accepts existing power relations as given. Moravcsik notes that discussions about “causal theory and the empirical record of world politics”<sup>194</sup> need to be justified and I could not agree more. Integrating one’s research with core ontological, epistemological, and sociology of knowledge questions, helps give a clearer and more nuanced picture of society and its politics by placing one’s scholarship and one’s societal function in historical perspective. Not doing so allows the beliefs, values, and practices of liberalism as typified by Fukuyama, Keohane, and Moravcsik to dominate political and ideological “thinking space.” The purpose of this paper was to link this discourse to the embedded nature of market relations within the liberal tradition. Moreover, while liberals would agree with possible domestic sources of international politics, they do not link the core societal beliefs, so epitomised by the ontology of Locke and other prominent thinkers of the liberal canon, to the international system. Thus, just as in the case of realism, this link must be made explicit in order to see the reification of global hierarchy, a hierarchy so prevalent domestically.

Given realism’s penchant for describing and theorising international politics in terms of conflict, mistrust and insecurity, liberalism’s focus on co-operation, non-state actors, and institutions makes it well suited to replace much of realism’s pessimism. To some extent, the advent of regional and multilateral institutions have provided better information gathering and sharing between states, which has allowed for greater inter-state understanding and the reduction of severe conflicts. Despite this positive development, liberalism does not seriously address the historical origins and progression of domestic politics. Its attempts to alter the dynamics of international politics will ultimately prove futile if the possessive individualist ethos remains. Thus, on the surface, the realist-liberal debate would seem to suggest significant differences in their respective ontologies; however, despite the apparent differences, both approaches share many important assumptions about the state, the market and the individual. There even seems to be greater agreement amongst realist and liberals themselves on this point.

Macpherson proves instructive in explaining why this agreement can take place. His nodal concept of *possessive individualism* links the liberal view of international politics to a competitive individualist understanding of the international system consisting of legally equal states mediated through an acceptance of capitalist market relations. Thus, liberal notions of co-operation and interdependence entail conforming to capitalist market practices such as free trade, economic competitiveness and comparative advantage, which inevitably result in winners and losers. Therefore, liberal prescriptions and practices—not unlike realist ones—constitute a culture. Thus, despite the liberal criticisms heaped upon realism for its static and reified conception of anarchy, liberalism itself entrenches its own version of anarchy through interstate rivalry, competitiveness and hierarchy through trade and commerce, and a through a discourse of co-operation, interdependence and equality.

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<sup>193</sup> Moravcsik “Theory Synthesis in International Relations” p. 133.

<sup>194</sup> Moravcsik “Theory Synthesis in International Relations” p. 133

### ***An Overview of Macpherson's Contribution to Political Theory***

This paper has attempted to re-examine C.B. Macpherson's contribution to political theory, political science and its connection to international political theory. His main contribution is in his systematic study of liberalism. In theory, practice, and as a worldview, liberalism has become globally hegemonic. He achieved a theoretical penetration of this worldview through *immanent* critique using insights from Marx's notion of *surplus value* to include the entire ensemble of social relations. He desired to retrieve the best aspects of liberalism by extricating it from the inherent inequality of capitalism. This attempt was not well received by either liberals or Marxists (among others). In essence, he was examining the ideology that drove the engine of modernity. His overall model was not without flaws but the main thrust of his argument remains valid.

The broad implications of his project allows for an examination of international political theory. The working hypothesis of this paper has been that the ontology of domestic liberalism is evident and an inherent component of international political theory including its key concepts of anarchy, survival, co-operation, rivalry, and self-interest. These are tied to domestic understandings of individuals living within society and of human nature itself. These *a priori* assumptions drive theoretical understandings of international politics and help to reify the very subject under study. This observation is, in and of itself, not revolutionary. Other critical perspectives have commented on the self-referential nature of mainstream scholarship. What Macpherson brings to bear is a critical historical understanding of liberalism from a domestic level of analysis. He also refused to make an either/or dichotomy between empirical social science and normative commitments. His model also avoids a descent into post-modern epistemology, and thus making it potentially more accessible to a wider audience, which was Macpherson's approach by using the vocabulary of the liberal discourse. This paper has therefore humbly attempted to extend his model through an examination of international political theoretical discourse through *immanent critique* and linking his model to the constructivist turn in IR/IPE.

### ***What does a Macphersonian IR/IPE Research Programme Look Like?***

Embarking on such an endeavour is ambitious and daunting. Obviously, the paper only begins to sketch out the most basic and barest assumptions of what it might look like since its major purpose was to establish the relevance of his model to the study of international politics. The first component of such a research programme is to develop key concepts and definitions that will provide a clear and direct method of employing this model. Any such development must include a conscious normative component, and the belief that objectivity is itself another form of normative commitment. Continuing the integration and connection to constructivism will help in this regard due to its focus on rules, norms, practices, identities etc., and the fact that constructivism has a ready made set of methodological tools that provide for immediate dialogue with IR/IPE scholars. Once a working model is developed, further *immanent critique* of mainstream IR/IPE theory and theorists is necessary to demonstrate the model's scope and breadth. From there, international political models such as international security, co-operation, and development can be examined and critiqued along with the ideational discourse(s) that legitimate them.

In terms of practical application, the potential scope and breadth is quite broad. Many environmental issues and global poverty stem from the possessive individualist worldview, which assumes that individuals possess an almost infinite range of desires that require continuous, ongoing consumption. This worldview is embodied in the realist/liberal paradigm through the concept of *anarchy*. If core socio-cultural values create identities that entrench domestic inequality and hierarchy, then it seems logical to conclude that international political models will also reflect

these values and create similar outcomes. Possessive individualist states seek to maximise their self-interest, ultimately at the expense of weaker states. One need only look at the huge disparities between the developed world and the developing world to realise this. The effects of possessive individualism taint all models of development, politics, security, and the environment. This is clearly not sustainable in the long-term. In order to address these issues, they must be first recognised, and then new models designed to break out of the existing realist/liberal paradigm. This requires a re-examination of the effects of global capitalism both domestically and internationally. The liberal insight about the “transnational” nature of international politics is only useful if it describes how political ideology determines interests and preferences both domestically and internationally. Macpherson is useful in connecting these two domains through his historical critique of the liberal capitalist worldview that all states work within. To address global poverty and inequality, environmental stress and international conflict, there needs to be a new ethos of cooperation that helps to create new relationships, and new identities of the “self” and the “other” through social iteration both within states and between states. The benefit of using Macpherson’s work is that he examined the ideological core of the modern world, and concluded that we needed to transcend the 17<sup>th</sup> century *possessive individualist* identity in order to broaden our sense of community and humanity. This conclusion is just as valid today.



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