

**Beyond Dichotomies:
A Reflexive Engagement of Critical Reflexivity**

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The YCISS Working Paper Series is designed to stimulate feedback from other experts in the field. The series explores topical themes that reflect work being undertaken at the Centre.

The purpose of the following paper is to critically engage Mark Neufeld's claim, "it is only by exposing the limitations of positivism that a space can be created for alternative forms of theorizing about international politics."¹ My engagement of this statement involves three related assertions.² Firstly, I contend that one can construct an effective argument that reaffirms – and indeed is inflected with – *post*-positivist assertions that exposing the 'limitations of positivism' will create the necessary space for 'alternative forms of theorizing'. However, I also argue that Neufeld's construction of theoretical reflexivity explicitly/implicitly works to (re)ontologize a dichotomous relationship between positivist and *post*-positivist approaches to International Relations. Hence, I challenge the potential to which Neufeld's conceptions can work as space clearing exercises so long as such exercises proceed through a dichotomized framing process.³

Why Does Meta-Theory Matter?

Before delving too far into critique, I believe it is first important to articulate why meta-theoretical engagement of positivist or *post*-positivist assumptions matters for International Relations theorizing. From an *essentialist* view, meta-theory matters because epistemological, ontological, semantical, logical, axiological, methodological, and ethical questions/answers underwrite all theoretical projects.⁴ Consequentially, meta-theoretical assumptions have a "decisive influence on what problems" are selected for study and how such problems are investigated and conceptualized; thereby opening up or closing down avenues for *substantive* theory.⁵ For instance, Neufeld suggests, "there is a fundamental link between epistemology – the question of what counts as 'reliable knowledge' – and politics: the problems, needs, and interests deemed important and legitimate by a given community for which

¹ Mark Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 24.

² Such engagements are derived from and informed by aspects of post-positivist, *post*-structural, *post*-colonial, aboriginal, deep ecological, and (eco) feminist knowledge(s). However, I do not wish to suggest that I am speaking for/to the people positing/formulating these projects/life-ways. If pushed, I would assert that I am speaking with these perspectives both as a voice of support and dissent.

³ Indeed, much the following discussion focuses on meta-theoretical engagement and contestation, which despite the assertions made below may not appear overly *relevant* to the theorizing let alone the practice of International Relations. As such, I will work to develop linkages between my assertions and those of Hugh Gusterson, Philip Green, and V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan. Likewise, I work to mitigate the violence(s) caused by my assertions through processes of critical reflection, which ironically owe an intellectual debt to Neufeld's notion of theoretical reflexivity. As my first reflective action, I undertake a project to italicize words/phrases so as to signify a contestability of meanings and/or the presence of underlying assumptions (meta-theoretical/politico-normative) that are *not properly* my own assumptions. This project is undertaken with recognition of the limits of discourse, which constrains my ability to employ a syntax that *accurately portrays* the contentions to be made below.

⁴ Mario Bunge, *Finding Philosophy in Social Science*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 6.

⁵ Donald W. Fiske, and Richard A. Shweder, "Introduction: Uneasy Social Science," in Donald W. Fiske, and Richard A. Shweder, eds., *Metatheory in Social Science Pluralisms and Subjectivities*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 3.

‘reliable knowledge’ is being sought.”⁶ Similarly, Steve Smith notes that defining common sense is the ultimate act of political power and thus, debates about epistemology are very significant for political practice “[Meta]theories do not simply explain or predict, they define not merely our explanatory possibilities but also our ethical and practical horizons.”⁷

Although presenting a view of meta-theoretical relevance that I find rather convincing, these articulations should not be accepted as unproblematic. For example, there is a substantive body of authors who do indeed challenge the relevance of meta-theoretical debates.⁸ However, space constraints limit my ability to properly address issues raised by these authors. Nonetheless, the challenge(s) emerging from *post*-positivists entail contestation of the positivist meta-theoretical assumptions employed by orthodox International Relations theorists. Hence, it is perhaps most appropriate to proceed remembering that my dominant frame of reference is markedly *post*-positivist inspired.

The *Post*-Positivist Challenge

Through a *post*-positivist lens, “positivism’s ... empiricist epistemology has determined what could be studied because it has determined what kinds of things existed in international relations.”⁹ What is known and how it is known in mainstream International Relations is thus, determined and obtained through processes of inquiry involving verifiably observable *facts* – truth as correspondence.¹⁰ Put another way, positivist epistemologies allow for “generalizations about the social world, including our particular interest, the international system, which are verifiable.”¹¹ Ascertaining such *verifiable facts* relies upon an assumption of a rigid separation between knower-known, subject-object, fact-value, and theory-practice. This process of positivist ontologizing allows positivist intellectual projects to

⁶ Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*, 43.

⁷ Steve Smith, “Positivism and Beyond,” in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, Marysia Zalewski, eds., *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13.

⁸ For such a challenge see, Rudolph Carnap, “The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language,” in A.J. Ayer, ed., *Logical Positivism*, (Glencoe: Free Press, 1959), 60-81.; K.J. Holsti, “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Which Are the Fairest Theories of All?,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 33 (1989), 255-61; Alexander Rosenberg, “Philosophy of Science and Potentials for Knowledge in the Social Sciences,” in Fiske, Donald W. and Shwedder, Richard A., eds., *Metatheory in Social Science Pluralisms and Subjectivities*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 339-45; and Theda Skocpol, “The Dead End of Metatheory,” *Contemporary Sociology*, 16 (1987), 10-12.

⁹ Smith, “Positivism and Beyond,” 11.

¹⁰ See Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*, 22-38; and Smith, “Positivism and Beyond,” 11-44.

¹¹ Michael Nicholson, “The Continued Significance of Positivism?” in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, Marysia Zalewski, eds., *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 128.

“distinguish what is foundational and real from what is merely ephemeral and superficial.”¹² Put to use, these dichotomous separations also allow positivist theorists to claim a position/site of objectivity. As Zalewski and Enloe note, “This understanding of the world allows the possibility of thinking that defining specific referents or identities as central issues in international relations theory is not a particularly political or epistemologically significant act.”¹³

For Neufeld, these processes and understandings involve a positivist quest for *scientific* knowledge in which all judgement on and influence by values is expatiated. Therefore, *scientific* inquiry is concerned with the *factual, objective, known*, and observable realm, which judiciously avoids “pronouncing upon or being influenced by” the *normative* and *subjective* realm.¹⁴ Moreover, the knowledge ascertained through *scientific* inquiry/positivist methodology occupies “an extra-historical natural realm” or is considered as “Nature’s Own”.¹⁵ However, *post*-positivists contend that claims to ‘an extra-historical natural realm’ of knowledge work to depoliticize the events and practices that *exist* both inside/outside a positivist international realm in that, “If something is ‘natural’ people tend to think there is little point worrying about it.”¹⁶ Hence, questions regarding *gender, race, and environment*,¹⁷ for instance, which have not occupied the purview of orthodox International Theory may not be answered let alone asked.¹⁸

In regards to a *generalized* and *essentialized* response, *post*-positivists purport a perspective, which entails a *rejection* of positivist assumptions insofar as “*all* knowledge is socially constructed and is grounded in the time, place, and social context of the investigator.”¹⁹ For Neufeld, *post*-positivist projects work to undermine “the assumption that it is ever possible to separate subject (the knower) and object (the known) in the manner postulated by positivism.”²⁰ And for Neufeld, theoretical reflexivity serves this *post*-positivist purpose through processes of:

¹² Jim George, “Realist ‘Ethics’, International Relations, and Post-Modernism: Thinking Beyond the Egoism-Anarchy Thematic,” *Millennium*, 24 (1995), 199.

¹³ Marysia Zalewski and Cynthia Enloe, “Questions about Identity in International Relations,” in Ken Booth and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 299.

¹⁴ Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*, 36.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁶ Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 28

¹⁷ I believe *gender, race, and environment* are the three theoretical/praxis areas which have been most excluded and simultaneously most impacted by positivist/western metaphysical ontologized dichotomies and notions of ‘science’.

¹⁸ Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*, 42.

¹⁹ J. Anne Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 21.

²⁰ Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*, 42.

- (i) self-consciousness about underlying premises,
- (ii) the recognition of the inherently politico-normative dimension of paradigms and the normal science tradition they sustain, and
- (iii) the affirmation that reasoned judgements about the merits of contending paradigm are possible in the absence of a neutral observation language.²¹

Accordingly and most importantly, theoretical reflexivity pushes International Relations theorists to “understand that the standards which determine what is to count as reliable knowledge are not nature’s, but rather always human standards – standards which are not given but made, not imposed by nature, but adopted by convention by the members of a specific community.”²² It is through these challenges of positivist *scientific knowledge/inquiry* and artificial separations of subject-object and value-fact, for instance, that Neufeld and *post*-positivists make their strongest and most pertinent arguments. Indeed, as will be argued further on, the continued construction and employment of binary structures by both positivists and *post*-positivists works to limit *the space* in which international theorizing can take place. However, it is important to further destabilize positivist pretensions to pursue *value-free scientific inquiry* through, albeit, a brief discussion of the perspectives of V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, Philip Green, and Hugh Gusterson. I believe that this discussion further demonstrates the potential importance that *post*-positivist contentions pose to mainstream International theorizing.

Peterson and Runyun, Green, and Gusterson

Termed as the ‘power of gender’, Peterson and Runyan note, “[G]ender thus influences not only who we are, how we live, and what we have, but also “how” we think, order reality, and claim to know what is true, and, hence, how we understand and explain the social world.”²³ Accepting Peterson and Runyun’s claims, the ‘power of gender’ is thus ideationally/materially significant to the study of international or global politics. *Gender* or *gendered* notions/practices are not simply present in the notions/practices of global politics, such as the global sex tourism industry,²⁴ but are also formed and maintained by the agents/structures who engage in such notions/practices. However, positivist attempts to pursue or claims of the capability to pursue *value-free scientific inquiry* “mask the power of gender (along with other entrenched systems of oppression) to shape the production of knowledge.”²⁵ In other words, positivistic

²¹ Ibid. 40.

²² Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*, 42-3.

²³ V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues Dilemmas in World Politics 2nd*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 12.

²⁴ See Cynthia Enloe, *Beaches, Bases and Bananas Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, (London: University of California Press, 2000).

²⁵ Peterson and Runyan, *Global Gender*, 27.

pursuits displace the role that notions/practices of masculinity and femininity play in forming, maintaining or challenging the notions/practices which constitute the international or global political realm. The resultant effect is the creation of a view that “international relations is gender neutral or that women are not part of the subject matter at all.”²⁶

It is therefore ironic that positivist International Relations portends to pursue *scientific inquiry* inasmuch as notions/practices of *science* or *scientific inquiry* are intimately imbued with *gender(ed)* notions/practices. For instance, Peterson notes ‘scientific reasoning’ was explicitly located in the male and was explicitly promoted as “superior and exclusive of that which was marked as female/nature/feminine.”²⁷ In this sense, “[M]an positioned himself in “the world” as “knower” and agent/subject, categorically separated from woman as “known” and object.”²⁸ Accordingly, this process (re)affirmed the subordination of women.²⁹ Although in this instance Peterson does not provide an explicit contestation of the capability to pursue *value-free scientific inquiry*, Peterson does provide the basis from which to claim that pretensions to *value-free scientific inquiry* can be seen as *gendered* pretensions which privilege and link perceived *masculine* traits with *science* and *reason* while subordinating and linking perceived *feminine* traits with *nature* or *natural*. Therefore, claims to the *gender* free or the neutral status of International Relations ironically denies the ‘power of gender’ by evoking and practicing an intimately *gendered* concept. Moreover, to engage or conceptualize *value-free scientific inquiry* as *gendered* allows/creates space for Peterson and Runyan’s claim that, “[B]ecause inquiry is a social practice and so is always value-laden, it is incumbent on inquirers to critically examine their social locations and values that arise from them.”³⁰ Indeed, a crucial element of *post-positivist* projects – Neufeld included.

Although the audibility of engagements with the ‘power of gender’ is somewhat recent to International Relations scholarship, challenges to the [orthodox] study of *security*, *strategy*, and *war* can be traced to time when behaviouralism dominated International Relations. Emerging in 1966 almost two decades before the ‘Third Great Debate’, I believe Phillip Green provides a significant contestation of positivist inspired deterrence theories/policies. Green asserts that deterrence theorists are “constantly assuming away” the most pertinent questions “in the field of inquiry being investigated”; whereby deterrence theorists “attempt to fit” what are “essentially political questions into the strait jacket of so-

²⁶ Sandra Whitworth, “Gender in the Inter-Paradigm Debate,” *Millennium*, 18 (1989), 266.

²⁷ V. Spike Peterson, “Security and Sovereign States: What is at Stake in Taking Feminism Seriously?” in V. Spike Peterson, ed., *Gendered States: Feminist (Re) Visions of International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1992), 40.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Peterson and Runyan, *Global Gender*, 27.

called scientific analysis.”³¹ As such, deterrence theorists and by implication deterrence theory succumbs to the vice of “depoliticalization of the political”.³² Accordingly, “theorizing of this type” is unpersuasive because “policy proposals [the ends of deterrence theory] rest on assertions about politics, and such assertions consist primarily of complex and indissoluble political *judgments*.”³³ Put another way, “the notion that we can distinguish between the factual and the evaluative parts of political judgment is useless.”³⁴

Having questioned the ontological separations effected by deterrence theorists, Green moves to a direct questioning of the possibility of *value-free scientific inquiry* in the social *sciences*. He contends that “what is more important and disturbing” is that it appears that deterrence theorists “genuinely imagine themselves to be unable to make meaningful statements unless these be cast in the form of ‘scientific’ propositions”.³⁵ What Green is describing is the deterrence theorist’s belief in the possibilities of positive knowledge. Hence, Green is challenging notions of positivist epistemology. On its own this assertion, though important, is not the most critically engaging of Green’s contentions in regard to the discussion at hand. Such a challenge does come when Green pushes the validity of notions of a social *science* by writing: think we can say without question that it is fallacious to think that scientific propositions (and what exactly they may be is still an open question) are the only epistemologically meaningful statements.³⁶

In terms of an epistemological challenge this is an important contestation for *post*-positivist projects. Green’s epistemic challenge perhaps works to open the door for *new* or more precisely marginalized knowledge(s) to enter the realm of strategic studies and deterrence theorization. More importantly, Green not only contests the epistemic boundaries of positivism and works to create space, he also resists closing that space off and leaves it open for further contestation. In doing this Green is presenting a notion that is not appropriately *post*-positivist, but at the least antithetical to positivist conceptions of epistemology.

³¹ Philip Green, *Deadly Logic: The Theory of Nuclear Deterrence*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966), 259.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Green, *Deadly Logic*, 260.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 265.

³⁶ *Ibid.* It should be noted that Green does make a statement that appears to contradict this one. In reference to Deterrence theorists, Green states that they do “exactly the opposite of what genuine scientists in any field actually do (263).” This phrase does work to detract from Green’s earlier contentions and does work to bound a space-clearing exercise. In noting this I do not wish to suggest that Green’s critique should be discarded or considered any less relevant. Rather I offer this as sympathetic critique, in hopes that those drawing upon Green can avoid making similar statements thereby making such critiques more persuasive.

The extent to which Green's contestation effected change in the study of *security, strategy, and war* is demonstrated by Hugh Gusterson's statement that, "the core inter-disciplinary dialogue in security studies in the 1980s was between political scientists and physical scientists, the epistemology of security studies was deeply positivist and its vocabulary was inflected with idioms of physics...and economics."³⁷ However, this should not be received as working to negate the significance of Green's challenges. Rather I believe that Gusterson's claim signifies the ability of positivist inspired *security/strategic* studies to develop an insular community of knowledge capable of deflecting or defending against challenges or challengers. Nonetheless, Gusterson also provides a pertinent critical (re)insertion into positivist inspired *security/strategic studies*.

In "Missing the End of the Cold War", Gusterson chastises orthodox strategic studies theorists/experts for doing exactly that – missing the end of the Cold War. As Gusterson contends, mainstream *security* studies failed to achieve its own "positivist modes of argumentation, deterministic analysis, and predictive accuracy" by not being able to see or more importantly predict the end of the Cold War.³⁸ Gusterson attributes this failure to the dominant discourse of positivistic *security studies* that "embodied a "Cold War narrative" in which drama and meaning derived from an unending, but constantly shifting, clash between two global empires, and from the repeated introduction of new technological possibilities and threats into the story line."³⁹ In other words, positivistic *security* studies did not and could not predict the end of the Cold War because the logics of the discourse(s) that were employed assumed that the Cold War had no or would not end. However, and surprisingly to Gusterson, positivistic *security* studies "refused to be chastened by the fact that their assumptions were so spectacularly contradicted by events."⁴⁰ Much like Green, Gusterson attributes such refusal to a situation in which, "the practitioners [of Cold War discourse] are trapped within the enclosed circularity of their own self-validating logic. Every conclusion is entailed with the theory's premises, although a finely wrought filigree may be spun between one and the other."⁴¹ As such, practitioners of positivistic *security* studies are able to explain away the end of the Cold War or their inability to predict the end of the Cold War without having to [critically] reflect upon their (meta)theoretical commitments.

Read ironically, Gusterson's contentions engage/expose positivistic pretensions not as *value-free* pretensions but as intimately *normative* pretensions. Assuming the pursuit of *scientific knowledge*

³⁷ Hugh Gusterson, "Missing the End of the Cold War in International Security," in Jutta Welds, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, Raymond Duvall, eds., *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 320-1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 323.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 327.

⁴⁰ Gusterson, "Missing the End of the Cold War," 341.

⁴¹ E.P. Thompson, *Beyond the Cold War: A New Approach to the Arms Race and Nuclear Annihilation*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 10-11., quoted in Gusterson, "Missing the End of the Cold War," 342.

requires the rigours of *scientific investigation*, how can/could practitioners of positivistic *security* studies, as described by Gusterson, maintain pretensions to *scientific inquiry* if they were not willing to accept that in the context of the Cold War their *explanatory* theories *failed*. It is not my purpose to engage individual justifications, although as with Gusterson this could *prove* to be a fruitful endeavour. Rather, I want to suggest that the maintenance or continued prevalence of positivistic studies of *security* signifies the *value* which practitioners of positivism place on such studies. Much like Peterson and Runyan, Gusterson and Green provide a basis from which to claim that ironically the pretension to *value-free scientific inquiry* is underwritten by normative commitments to the *value* of *value-free scientific inquiry*.

For Neufeld and other *post*-positivist contentions, this above discussion provides both *substance* and space. Indeed, the above formulations adopt somewhat of a positivistic tone in their argumentative stance.⁴² In this sense, the claims of Peterson and Runyan, Green, and Gusterson provide *substance*; these perspectives provide a normative/empirical base from which *post*-positivist contestations can be launched. Likewise, Peterson and Runyan, Green, and Gusterson, if not explicitly, implicitly (re)affirm the necessity of the *post*-positivist pronouncement to “provide new intelligibilities and alternative possibilities for the field.”⁴³ Having said this, it is now important to problematize the potential to which Neufeld and by implication *post*-positivist exercises work to create a wider ‘thinking space’ for alternative possibilities. I intend to pursue this problematizing by engaging explicit/implicit instances in which *post*-positivism/reflexivity is construed as opposing or in opposition to positivism.

(Re)Constructing a Pole/(Re) Asserting a Binary

In perhaps one of the most explicit *post*-positivist binary assertions, Wayne Cox and Claire Turenne Sjolander suggest, “[h]ow we approach theory becomes the central question, and the central dichotomy becomes one between positivist and postpositivist, or theoretically reflexive, avenues.”⁴⁴ Indeed the language and the assertion are quite strong. However, to accept this discourse as neutral and to view this as a typical *post*-positivist assertion would be to contradict the core tenets of theoretical reflexivity along with my own commitments. It is therefore imperative that I pursue a critical investigation regarding how Neufeld constructs theoretical reflexivity. As such, the process through which Neufeld develops a binary (re)construction involves three instances, an explicit oppositional (re)construction of reflexivity and

⁴² As Gusterson notes, “If at times I seem to be making a positivist argument...it is only in an occasional spirit of irony – temporarily borrowing another’s discourse in order to shake it apart from within.” Gusterson, “Missing the End of the Cold War,” 323.

⁴³ James Der Derian, “The Boundaries of Knowledge and Power in International Relations,” in James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, eds., *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, (New York: Lexington Books, 1989), 4.

⁴⁴ Wayne S. Cox, and Claire Turenne Sjolander, “Critical Reflections on International Relations,” in Wayne S. Cox, and Claire Turenne Sjolander, eds., *Beyond Positivism Critical Reflections on International Relations*, (London: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 5.

positivism, an explicit relational (re)construction of reflexivity and positivism, and an implied essentialized (re)construction of the ‘other’ – positivism. For heuristic purposes, each of these instances will be treated in turn.

There are two instances in which Neufeld most explicitly construes reflexivity as an oppositional pole to positivism. For example, Neufeld notes that the second and third tenets of theoretical reflexivity “makes reflexivity a *virtual antonym* of positivism.”⁴⁵ Similarly, according to Neufeld, “a theoretically reflexive orientation is one whose *starting point* stands in *radical opposition* to that of positivism in that it *rejects* the notion of objective standards existing independently of human thought and practice.”⁴⁶ In usage, *opposition* and *antonym* presume that something has something to be opposed to or to be an antonym of and thus, positivism and reflexivity can be seen to be located at the poles of an oppositional, dichotomous, or binary structure – relationship.

In terms of developing relational instances Neufeld is most explicit insofar as he uses a variation of the term ‘relate’ on three occasions. Regarding how he will fully define the notion of reflexivity, Neufeld writes, “I will do this by relating the core elements of reflexivity to the positivist understanding of theory and knowledge”.⁴⁷ Similarly, Neufeld proposes that his exercise to elaborate the three core tenets of reflexivity entails that each tenet “be related to the positivist conception of theory and knowledge.”⁴⁸ Lastly and in specific reference to the third tenet, the possibility of reasoned evaluation in the absence of a neutral discourse, Neufeld states, “Once again, this element of reflexivity can best be understood in relation to positivism.”⁴⁹

As mentioned above, the purpose of articulating oppositional and relational instances was heuristic, in that I intended to separate these constructions so as to explicitly expose and clearly present citations in which Neufeld constructs reflexivity and positivism as both relational and oppositional. However, moving beyond heuristic purposes, I want to suggest that a separation of oppositional and relational constructions is perhaps inappropriate insofar as the construction of an oppositional binary contains an underlying assumption of a relationship – an oppositional relationship. In this sense, Neufeld has (re)constructed notions that are mutually exclusive and simultaneously mutually constitutive. In other words, “each idea is *forever* producer and product of its polar opposite, since each is imbued with meaning as much by what it is not as by what it is.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*, 41. Emphasis added.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 42. Emphasis added.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁰ J. Marshall Beier, *Securing Against the Hoop: Postcoloniality, Cosmology, and the Study of Security*, doctoral dissertation (Toronto: York University, 2002), 27. Emphasis Added.

Neufeld provides a pertinent example of this statement in his description of what theoretical reflexivity is not:

Reflexivity is not a ‘research programme’ designed to provide cumulative knowledge about the world of empirical facts or about the world of theory. Nor can reflexivity be reduced to the idea that while agreement on facts is possible, value disagreements will continue to plague scholars in their quest for disciplinary consensus. Finally, reflexivity does not provide a priori standards or criteria for assessing the merits of contending paradigms.⁵¹

Accepting that binaries are both mutually exclusive and constitutive, this paragraph is simultaneously a description of what reflexivity is not and what positivism is. Furthermore, this articulation works to construct an essentialized definition of what is (not) positivism and what is (not) reflexivity.

(Re)Ontologizing Exclusion

Assuming for the moment the possibility of a neutral discourse, Neufeld almost undeniably construes theoretical reflexivity as opposing or more precisely in opposition to positivism. Therefore, this exercise/process appears to be (re)ontologizing separation. What I am proposing is that by constructing reflexivity and positivism as a binary, Neufeld *makes real* the possibility that knowledge realms can be dichotomously separated. Likewise, Neufeld’s exercise also works to *make real* or (re)ontologize reflexivity and positivism in that each notion becomes a pole/place/site which can be claimed for purposes of *identity*.⁵² I believe that three pertinent potentialities emerge from this process of (re)ontologizing.⁵³

Firstly, and to be only briefly discussed, are the possibilities that (re)ontologizing positivist and *post*-positivist perspectives works to (re)discipline/(re)affirm the boundaries of International Relations theorizing/practicing. By this I want to suggest that *post*-positivist challenges work for inclusion within the meta-theoretical boundaries of International Relations without a challenging of the politico-normative assumptions that maintain the boundary altogether. As such, a *post*-positivist (re)disciplining of International Relations works to reify exclusionary knowledge(s) of *professionalism* and the *academy*. Reification of such knowledge(s) does indeed work to limit *post*-positivist calls for a wider ‘thinking space’ within the study of International Relations theory/praxis.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*, 46.

⁵² Linguistically/Grammatically, the terms/words reflexivity and positivism are nouns and hence, are imbued with ontological status – person, place, or thing.

⁵³ An underlying assumption of all these potentialities is “not only do oppositional constructions distort the (con)textual complexity of social reality, they set limits on the questions we ask and the alternatives we consider.” Peterson, “Security and Sovereign States,” 54.

⁵⁴ For pertinent discussions of *disciplinarity*, *professionalism*, and the *academy* see Sankaran Krishna, “The Importance of Being Ironic: A Postcolonial View on Critical International Relations Theory,” *Alternatives*, 18 (1993), 385-417; Gayatri Chakravirty Spivack, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Cary Nelson and Lawrence

Secondly and again only to be briefly addressed, constructing knowledge realms through a dichotomized framing process works to bound/insulate/solidify/essentialize the poles of a dichotomy and thus, obscure complex relations between those entities/occurrences which are identified with a particular pole. For instance, the functioning(s) of a *masculine-feminine* binary has worked to conflate a *gendered* identity with a *sexed* identity. Furthermore, a *masculine-feminine* binary can also work to promote notions of hegemonic *masculinity* and hegemonic *femininity* in which, hegemonic *masculinity* is associated with “autonomy, sovereignty, objectivity, universalism, the capacity for reason/abstraction” while hegemonic *femininity* is associated with absence of all these qualities.⁵⁵ In this instance, hegemonic *gendered* notions can work to obscure “differences in the politics of masculinity [femininity] between countries – and between ethnic groups in the same country.”⁵⁶

Applying this scenario to Neufeld and *post*-positivists, a reflexivity-positivism binary opens the *space* for the development of hegemonic notions of what it is to be reflexive and/or positive; thereby creating practices/situations of possible exclusion within both polar realms. Moreover, construing reflexivity and positivism as a binary also seems to (re)affirm the viability if not the legitimacy of these (non)practices that have most perniciously excluded and marginalized a variety of peoples and knowledge(s). Therefore, the presence of a “dichotomized framing process” works to create “unhelpful polarities and over-simplified categorizations” that may further obscure alternative possibilities/potentialities for ‘theorizing about international politics’.⁵⁷

Thirdly, the exercise of binary construction can also work to exclude/marginalize knowledge(s) and people(s) through processes of mapping and (de)privileging. Mapping and (de)privileging processes entail the alignment and subsequent unitary identification of a desired set of polar oppositions, “so that each becomes one with a privileged self.”⁵⁸ Remembering the mutually exclusive/constitutive relationship of binaries, processes of mapping and (de)privileging also work to identify non-desired poles as a corruption of the *idealized self* – a *denigrated other*.⁵⁹ Exclusion(s) or perhaps more appropriately violence(s) occur through the engagement of the oppositional identities inasmuch as the desired/privileged.

Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313. and Green, *Deadly Logic*.

⁵⁵ Jacqui True, “Feminism,” in Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater, eds., *Theories of International Relations*, (New York: St. Martin’s, 1996), 213.

⁵⁶ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 13.

⁵⁷ Ken Booth, “75 Years On: Rewriting the Subject’s Past – Reinventing its Future,” in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, Marysia Zalewski, eds., *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 337.

⁵⁸ Beier, *Securing Against the Hoop*, 27.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

As mentioned above, Neufeld's exercise works to (re)ontologize reflexivity-positivism in that each notion becomes a place/site which can be claimed as a polarized identity. Underlying and supporting this dichotomized identity is a further set of dichotomous structures – self awareness of underlying assumptions-truth as correspondence, politico-normative inflection-objective scientific inquiry, (con)text-extra historical natural realm. Signified by Neufeld's discourse, the engagement between these identities occurs through *radical opposition* and *rejection* of positivist identity structures by reflexive identity structures. Through this framing process, Neufeld's notion can now be seen to carry an underlying assumption of exclusion – which he does not appear to be aware of.⁶⁰

Indeed each of these possibilities works to demonstrate an exclusionary and marginalizing potential that a reflexivity-positivism dichotomy possesses. Moreover, each possibility implicitly addresses/challenges the excluding processes of what has been variously identified as *modern(ed)*, *enlightenment(ed)*, and *western(ed)* philosophy/meta-physics.⁶¹ Therefore, theoretical reflexivity may/does work to expose the limitations of positivism. However, in attempting to expose the limits of positivism, Neufeld does not address *modern(ed)* excluding tactics, while simultaneously undertaking an exercise in knowledge construction that appears to be *inherently modern(ed)* – constructing dichotomized knowledge/praxis realms.

Accepting the presence of *modern(ed)* knowledge exercises subsequently requires that Neufeld must come to terms with the exclusionary, marginalizing, and pernicious knowledge(s) and practice(s) of a *modern(ed)* International Relations. Neufeld attempts to do this through an engagement of positivist meta-theory. However, positivist inflected International Relations is perhaps not the *essential modern(ed)* notion that has limited/bounded the theorizing and practicing of International Relations. Contesting positivist meta-theory does indeed work to clear/make a *space* for alternative theorizing and Neufeld and *post*-positivists present an effective contestation. Nonetheless, *post*-positivist theorizing appears to clear a *space* which has been and continues to be *modern(ed)*.⁶² That is *post*-positivists, especially Neufeld, appear to challenge knowledge(s) and practice(s) within International Relations without challenging the knowledge(s) and practice(s) that maintain International Relations as a legitimate site of knowledge production. Therefore, without an acknowledgement of the limiting and

⁶⁰ As will be briefly addressed in the concluding section, it is Neufeld's *unawareness* of the potentials for exclusion in his own notions/articulations that works as the most important detraction.

⁶¹ See George, "Realist 'Ethics', International Relations, and Post-Modernism," Peterson, "Security and Sovereign States," and R.B.J. Walker, "State Sovereignty and the Articulation of Political Space/Time," *Millennium*, 20 (1991), 445-61, for discussion of the influence of *modern* philosophy on International Relations.

⁶² *Gender, race, and environment* have been/are perhaps the most perniciously effected theorized and practiced realms of *modern(ed)* inquiry. For a pertinent discussion see J. Marshall Beier, "Beyond Hegemonic State(ment) s of Nature: Aboriginal Life Ways and The Tyranny of Orthodox International Relations Theory," in Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair, eds., *Power, Postcolonialism, and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender, and Class*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 82-114.

excluding knowledge(s) and practice(s) of a *modern(ed)* International Relations, *post-positivist space* clearing projects work to (re)ontologize International Relations and consequentially (re)affirm excluding and marginalizing knowledge(s) and practice(s) that are not *properly modern(ed)*.

Reflecting

As mentioned, the above discussion has rested on the possibility of neutral discourse, in order to demonstrate that Neufeld is (re)asserting a *modern(ed)* notion. This is indeed highly problematic because this treatment contradicts both Neufeld's and my own commitments which work to challenge the neutrality of discourse(s). So as not to be caught in a contradiction, I want to assert that this was done for both heuristic and ironic purposes in order to bolster the arguments of this paper. However, beyond my own politico-normative goals, this discussion may have inappropriately expropriated – read in/out – Neufeld's intentions. As such, I believe it is important to undertake an overtly reflecting exercise. For example, Neufeld's intentions may not be all that different from my own, in that he is providing a heuristic and ironic argument that not only creates a space to speak, but also creates a space to be heard. This gains credence when considering that, “[r]iven with various demands, insistences, and assertions that things ‘must’ be either this or that, this disposition is the most common metatheoretical discourse amongst practitioners of the discipline of international relations.”⁶³ Similarly, it is highly probable that Neufeld is also constrained by the limits of discourse in that “familiarity may have bred contempt but has not made it any easier to escape” the “tenacious grasp” of a dichotomized discourse.⁶⁴ Thus, in order to speak and to be heard, Neufeld explicitly/implicitly believes that he must employ a dichotomized discourse because it is what has dominated and continues to be the dominant discourse of International Relations.⁶⁵ If indeed this is what Neufeld intended, the arguments of this paper are perhaps a little overzealous.

It is therefore ironic that these reflective possibilities do not appear as a sentence, paragraph, or footnote in Neufeld's work.⁶⁶ Such reflecting absence works to (re)open space for my critique that Neufeld is purporting a *moderned* notion that indeed challenges a marginalizing aspect of *moderned* International Relations, but does not challenge the marginalizing aspects of International Relations as a *moderned* notion. As such, I believe that Neufeld's claim, “it is only by exposing the limitations of

⁶³ David Campbell, *Writing Security: Us Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 4.

⁶⁴ R.B.J. Walker, “State Sovereignty and the Articulation of Political Space/Time,” *Millennium*, 20 (1991), 458.

⁶⁵ See Carol Cohn, “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defence Intellectuals,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 12 (1984), 687-718, for a discussion of the limiting/transforming effects of dominant discourse(s).

⁶⁶ This must be qualified. For this paper, the number of works or chapters under review is very limited and thus, to expand this critique to the body of Neufeld's work is indeed inappropriate.

positivism that a space can be created for alternative forms of theorizing about international politics”⁶⁷ works to (re)essentialize the limiting, excluding, and marginalizing process of International Relations. The resultant effect is a (re)modernizing of the *space* in which ‘alternative forms of theorizing’ takes place; thereby (re)limiting, (re)excluding, and (re)marginalizing knowledge(s) and practice(s) which are *not properly modern(ed)*.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*, 24.

⁶⁸ These knowledge(s) and practice(s) include aboriginal/indigenous cosmologies and life-ways, (deep) ecological meta-physics, and religions such as Buddhism. However, I do recognize that I have not provided reasons for why this knowledge(s) and practice(s) should be included within the realm of International Relations. Moreover, I have also not made any pertinent suggestions regarding the formulation of notions, which are *not properly modern(ed)*. Nonetheless, these issues are *beyond the bounds*, which I have set for this paper. My goal was to explicitly engage Neufeld and *post*-positivist articulations. However, where possible I have provided resources that deal with the contentions that I have raised. As such, I guide the reader to see, David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion Ecology Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1995); Simon Dalby, *Environmental Security*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, eds., *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts Multiple Readings of Our World*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); and David Bedford, and Thom Workman, “The Great Law of Peace: Alternative Inter-Nation(al) Practices and the Iroquoian Confederacy,” *Alternatives*, 22 (1997), 87-110 for engaged discussion of the critiques raised in this paper.

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