Redeeming the universal: Postcolonialism and the inner life of Eurocentrism

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Abstract
This article investigates the limits of postcolonial International Relations' anti-Eurocentrism through an interrogation of its ambivalent relation with the category of 'the universal.' It argues that a decisive defeat of Eurocentrism, within and beyond International Relations, requires the formulation of a non-ethnocentric international social theory which postcolonial approaches, *à la* poststructuralism, reject on the grounds that it involves the idea of the universal equated with socio-cultural homogeneity. Yet, postcolonial approaches also theorize colonial modernity through deploying forms of methodological internationalism that broach the universal. Through a critical engagement with the wider field of postcolonial theory, and an anatomy of the notion of the universal in Hegel and Trotsky, this article argues that homogeneity is not an intrinsic quality of the concept of the universal, but a result of its specifically internalist mode of construction. Supplanting Eurocentrism therefore requires an explicit theoretical incorporation of the universal. But one which is fundamentally rethought away from being an immanent self-transcendence of the particular, and re-comprehended as a radical amenability to, and constitutiveness of, alterity. This is, the article argues, a defining feature of Trotsky's idea of uneven and combined development.

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Introduction

Eurocentrism is a specific mode of comprehending modernity that begins and ends with Europe. It has many facets and formulations, but its conceptual core arguably consists of four interrelated assumptions. The first assumption is *historical*. It posits the endogenous and autonomous emergence of modernity in Europe. On this rests a second, *normative* assumption: that Europe's autonomous production of modernity renders it superior to the rest. These two assumptions relate to a third *prognostic* assumption, namely, the belief that European modernity and its associated institutions and practices are destined to become universal. The actual mode of their universalization is derived from the first assumption. This derivation furnishes the fourth, *stadial*, assumption according to which internal processes of development unfold in stages, albeit with time-lags, in every society throughout the world.[1] These processes, 'progressive' both normatively and historically, will in time converge and form a homogeneous global space inhabited by a sociality which is European in essence. Eurocentrism therefore, construes modern world history as a series of discreet re-enactments of modernity's independent, and hence superiority-conferring, emergence in Europe. It universalizes Europe as the originary and privileged space of modernity (Ferguson, 2011; Fukuyama, 1992; Mill, 1865; Rostow, 1960).[2]

In reproducing these assumptions, Eurocentrism arguably involves a triple spatial abstraction. First, non-European societies are either completely excluded from, or rendered contingent in, theorizing modern transformation in Europe. Second, the violent implications of this purportedly self-generated modern Europe for non-European societies' experiences of modernity are suppressed. And finally, the possibility that contemporary 'modern(izing)' non-European societies might influence the dynamics of the modern world and shape its future is theoretically ruled out. This threefold spatial abstraction informs major social-scientific research methods such as 'comparative analysis' (McMichael, 2000) and 'case study' (Cheah, 2008). Thus, 'methodological nationalism' (Chernilo, 2006), the theoretical omission of the plural and interactive nature of the social, is at the intellectual heart of Eurocentrism. Classical social theory is a glaring example (Rosenberg, 2006).

One might expect that the discipline of International Relations (IR) would be less susceptible to the problems of methodological nationalism. For IR's disciplinary identity rests precisely on a fundamental concern with the condition and consequences of the world's division into multiple political spaces. And yet, IR is also thoroughly influenced by Eurocentrism (Buzan and Little, 2000: 21). Indeed, IR's ontological exclusion of cultural heterogeneity has led to its systematic blindness toward the non-West (Blaney and Inayatullah, 2003; Jahn, 2000). This theoretical exclusion of the non-West is reinforced by IR's institutional and ideological associations with the US (Hoffmann, 1987). Realists have certainly warned against an international praxis informed by the belief in the feasibility of a Western 'end of history,' a dangerous folly that they associate with liberalism (Huntington, 1996; Mearsheimer, 1994/95). But the foreign policy of the United States, the institutional home of IR, shows that despite its realist veneer, it has actually always been imbued with a liberal *Weltanschauung* (Bromley, 2008: 38; Layne, 2006). At any rate, the realist focus on 'great power politics' and the liberal

preoccupation with expanding the zone of 'democratic peace' in effect conspire to obfuscate the place and role of the global South in the theory and practice of IR.

A powerful challenge to Eurocentrism in IR has come from the burgeoning postcolonial literature (e.g. Barkawi and Laffey, 2006; Blaney and Inayatullah, 2002, 2003; Darby, 1997, 2004; Hobson and Hall, 2010). But although highly influential in redirecting theoretical and analytical attention to the significant absence of the non-West in IR theory, postcolonial IR has, thus far, not succeeded in supplanting Eurocentric IR. An important aspect of this failure has been its susceptibility to what Hedley Bull (1966) called the fallacy of the 'domestic analogy.' A considerable amount of postcolonial IR has sought to reveal the internal determinations of the external relations and patterns of power through elucidating the ways in which race, gender, and cultural difference constitute mainstream IR's theoretical blind-spots (e.g. Chowdhry and Nair, 2002). But this self-restrictive preoccupation with discursive closures, silences, and exclusions of the non-Western 'other' in IR has meant that the postcolonial project in IR has, curiously, not included the formulation of a positive alternative to the theoretical grammar generative of these Eurocentric discursive practices (Darby, 1997: 17). This article examines the root of this theoretical limitation through a critical interrogation of the wider field of non-IR postcolonial theory that is the intellectual mainstay of postcolonial IR. Against this background, it argues that the theoretical framework of uneven and combined development has a unique potential for underpinning a radical non-Eurocentric social theory.

My core argument is that there is a fundamental tension between theory and method in postcolonialism that prevents the translation of its critique of Eurocentrism into an alternative non-ethnocentric social theory. For on the one hand, postcolonialism declares macro-*theoretical* agnosticism toward the social in general, which is manifest in its categorical rejection of, or deep skepticism toward, the concept of *the universal* identified with Eurocentric anticipation and violent pursuit of global socio-cultural homogeneity. On the other hand, postcolonialism comprehends colonial socialities in terms of their interactive constitution through a *method* whose strategic site of operation is specifically the intersocietal or the international.[4] But the idea of the international logically requires a general conception of the social in general whose historical referent bursts the empirical bounds of any notion of the social in the singular, whether society, culture, or civilization. This is for the simple reason that the idea of the international encompasses, or rather ought to encompass, the interconnected multiplicity of the social as an ontological property. This mutually constitutive relation between the social and the international escapes any theory that is strategically anchored in only one of these two dimensions of social reality. The apparent theoretical incommensurability of classical IR and social and political theories is a testimony to this claim (Waltz, 1979; Wight, 1966). A unified theoretical comprehension of the social and the international must, I therefore contend, be central to any attempt at supplanting Eurocentrism. This requires an explicit theoretical incorporation of the universal. But a conception of the universal that is fundamentally rethought away from being an immanent self-transcendence of the particular, and re-comprehended as a radical amenability to, and constitutiveness of, alterity (Cheah, 2008; cf. Chernilo, 2006). IR with its paradigmatic focus on the condition and consequences of political multiplicity is arguably a, if not the most, fertile intellectual ground for pursuing such a

theoretical project. That this intellectual potential has not been realized has a great deal to do with the supra-social and non-historical conception of the international by mainstream IR theory; a problem that recent historical sociological scholarship in IR has thrown in to sharp relief (e.g. Lawson, 2006; Rosenberg, 1994; Teschke, 2003). But a historical sociological IR in and of itself cannot succeed in exorcizing IR's Eurocentric spirit. The historicization of international relations has to be dialectically complemented with the internationalization of the social, that is, the theoretical articulation of the constitutive impact of the interactive coexistence of multiple societies on internal processes of social change (Matin, 2007). The idea of 'uneven and combined development' (Trotsky, 1985), I argue, contains the organic integration of these two intellectual moves involving an interactive and heterogeneous notion of the universal. It is therefore imbued with a radical potential for generating a positive non-ethnocentric international social theory.

I present the argument in four main parts. First, I sketch a brief history of anti-Eurocentric thought as the wider intellectual field within which postcolonialism is located. In the second section, I provide an overview of postcolonial thought and elucidate its aforementioned aporia with respect to the precise status of the category of the universal that it equates with a false homogenizing of the global variety of human cultures. It is this equation that underpins postcolonialism's hostile attitude toward a general theory of the social. This is followed by a critical examination of the attempt by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2008) at resolving this tension through a reading of capital as the driving force of a non-homogenizing universalism in which sociocultural difference is strategically foregrounded. I suggest that Chakrabarty's attempt is ultimately unsuccessful because his modified notion of the universal as intrinsically heterogeneous is, *inter alia*, restricted to capitalist epoch, and hence precluding a decisive break from Eurocentrism's internalist methodology, a break that ought to be central to any anti-Eurocentric project. In the fourth section, I further support this argument through a critical comparison of the notion of the universal in Hegel and Trotsky. I seek to show that rather than being intrinsic to the category of the universal, the conceptual repression or homogenization of difference is the result of a specifically internalist construction of that category. I conclude by outlining the key implications of my argument for IR and the current debates on postcolonialism and uneven and combined development.

Eurocentrism and its discontents

Critiques of Eurocentrism have a pre-history reaching back to the 19th century when the intellectuals of the early 'late comer' polities, such as Germany, contested imperial Britain's axiomatic promotion of free trade as the only, and the best, route to 'progress,' and advocated protectionist projects of 'national development' (List, 1904; cf. Selwyn, 2009). But over the last 50 years or so these critiques have particularly grown in number and depth, and are launched from a variety of angles and perspectives. This intensified wave of anti-Eurocentrism began in the wake of World War II when the social sciences, sociology in particular, became entangled in the Cold War rivalry between the capitalist West and the Soviet Bloc over the 'Third World.' Consequently, sociology's original

preoccupation with the nature and the problems of the 'transition' from 'tradition' to 'modernity' within a distinct and discreet European temporality was now extended to postcolonial societies. The internationalization of sociology's originary concerns found its programmatic expression in 'modernization' and 'development' theories as crucial components of the Western policy of 'containment' (Rostow, 1960). Early academic critiques were therefore directed at classical sociology's construction of tradition and modernity as ideal-typical binary opposites and the Parsonian system as their self-contained social space (Bendix, 1967; Poggi, 1965). Later critiques, Dependency and World-Systems theories in particular, targeted the way in which sociologies of modernization and development internalized problems of 'underdevelopment,' obfuscating the fact and consequences of 'unequal exchange' between the Western 'core' and non-Western 'periphery' (Amin, 1974; Cardoso, 1979; Frank, 1966; Wallerstein, 1974). In addition, anti-colonial movements had intensified in the final decades of the European imperialism, and that also produced powerful critiques of Eurocentrism that were influenced by, and later influenced, neo-Marxist approaches (Cabral, 1973; Césaire, 1972; Fanon, 1963; Shariati, 1979).

The collapse of the Eastern bloc and the acceleration of the globalization of capitalist world economy intensified the anti-Eurocentric tide. For far from terminating history in the flat world of European sociality — the telos of Eurocentric eschatology — globalization actually deepened politico-cultural boundaries, invigorating a variety of competing claims to, and on, modernity (Archer, 1991). This is the phenomenon that influential discourses of the 'clash of civilizations' and the 'rise of the East' typify (Huntington, 1996; Weiming, 2000). But globalization certainly introduced a change in the strategic emphasis of anti-Eurocentrism. Earlier waves of anti-Eurocentrism primarily targeted the external obstacles to the internal development and modernization of the Third World and postcolonial societies; obstacles that they directly associated with Western imperialism. In other words, they challenged Eurocentric strategies for modernization, but not their expected outcome, that is, Western-style modernity. In contrast, the more recent critiques have concentrated on modernity itself. Accordingly, some have attacked Eurocentrism's historical and normative assumptions highlighting, for instance, the pivotal role of Western colonialism, and the intellectual, scientific, and technological contributions of Eastern civilizations and societies to the formation of European modernity (Blaut, 1993; Frank, 1998; Hobson, 2004). Others have focused on the prognostic dimension of Eurocentrism, stressing the multiple ways of being and becoming modern (Appadurai, 1996; Eisenstadt, 2000; Therborn, 2003).

Marxism occupies an interesting position in this context. During the 'short twentieth century,' many movements for independence and national development in the colonial and Third Worlds drew their political inspiration from Marxism. But in spite of Marx's many acute observations of the differentiated experiences of capitalist development at the margins and outside of Europe (Anderson, 2010), classical Marxist theory also expected Western capitalism to create a 'world after its own image' (Marx, 1990: 91; Marx and Engels, 1985: 84). The recurrent divergence between this forecast and the actuality of capitalist expansion has indeed been a central preoccupation of Marxism after Marx (Gramsci, 1988: ch. 2; Lenin, 1964; Zedong, 1967).

In spite of this veritable history of anti-Eurocentric thought and practice, mounting critique, obvious counter-facts, and logical tensions, Eurocentrism continues to exert influence in the academy, in national and international policy making centers, and among the elites and the intelligentsia of non-Western 'developing' countries (Friedman, 2006; Ganji, 2008; Jones, 2003: ix–xl; Landes, 2003; Sen, 1999). This influence is certainly closely related to the ideological dimension of Eurocentrism, the fact that it sustains and is sustained by the global dominance of the Western-centered configurations of economic, technological, and military power. This explains why non-Western challenges to those configurations, for example, the strategic shift in the loci of the global concentrations of economic power to non-Western countries such as China, India, or Brazil, can destabilize Eurocentrism too. However, the longevity of Eurocentrism, as an intellectual mode, has also to be understood in terms of the limitations of the critiques it has been subjected to. One key limitation of anti-Eurocentric critiques has been an indecisive challenge to Eurocentrism's *stadial* conception of development. This is particularly important because the assumption of stadial development is the culmination of Eurocentrism's historical, prognostic, and normative assumptions. It contains an ideal-typical concept of modernity (Europe), a theory of history (stagist development) sustaining the concept, and a social-scientific methodology — comparative analysis — for investigating it (Bhambra, 2007; Washbrook, 1997: 410; cf. Amin, 1989: x).

The most important case in point is postcolonialism. Postcolonialism is a polymorphous approach that draws its intellectual, political, and moral inspiration from the anti-colonial struggles that reached their successful apogee by the late 1960s. It is defined by a fundamental concern with the nature of 'colonial modernity,' that is, the experience of modernity by non-European societies under European duress (Dabashi, 2006: xi–xii; Guha, 1983). This postcolonial concern has been articulated through two composite leitmotifs: difference-resistance and hybridity-ambivalence. The first motif tends to involve an apotheosis of a pristine 'self' as the basis of resisting the 'other.' The second motif, which is currently dominant, by contrast, displays an anti-foundationalist thrust that problematizes all boundaries, epistemological and ontological, between the self and the other, the West and the non-West. The resulting tension has impelled some postcolonialists to veer between the two motifs (Said, 1993; but see Selby, 2006) or seek to reconcile them tactically (Spivak, 1993). Furthermore, the relative prominence of these motifs in postcolonial thought has varied over time. Earlier postcolonial thinkers focused on cultural difference as the ideological basis of an anti-colonial struggle that aimed at a complete repudiation of the Western 'other' and the recovery of an authentic and re-dignified 'self' (Fanon, 1967; Hoskins, 1992; cf. Memmi, 1967). Central to this early period of postcolonial critique was the exposure of Eurocentrism's complicity in colonialist and imperialist projects (Said, 1978). Influenced by poststructuralism, later postcolonialists have instead concentrated on postcolonial conditions of hybridity and ambivalence in order to illuminate the ways in which subaltern praxes subverted the Eurocentric vision of a universal, singular, and mono-temporal history for non-Western modernity (Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1994).

Although highly influential within the social sciences, postcolonialism itself has come under increasing critical scrutiny. A common criticism is that postcolonialism tends to deploy reified notions of culture and identity that gloss over the material underpinnings

of Western imperialism, and politically fragment anti-imperialist and subaltern forces in their struggle for social, political, and economic justice both in the East and the West (Dirlik, 2003; Goss, 1996; Majid, 2008; Parry, 2004). A second closely related criticism, which is the main focus of this article, is that postcolonial approaches focus almost exclusively on the critique of Eurocentrism and refrain from offering or seeking an alternative theory of modernity as part of a holistic social theory. In fact, 'the postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation' (Bhaba, 1994: 248). To be sure, recent postcolonial tendencies are highly theoretical, so much so that they have been criticized for over-abstraction in ways that blunt the political edge of postcolonial criticism (Darby, 1997: 15–17). However, the dominance of an abstract theoretical idiom in contemporary postcolonialism has essentially involved theoretical thinking about colonial socialities rather than theorizing the social. In other words, theoretically, postcolonialism has concentrated on formulating non-Eurocentric conceptualizations of the specificities of non-European societies' experience of modernity per se. It has not developed a non-ethnocentric holistic social theory. For this would involve the construction of general abstractions and generalizations that breach postcolonialism's anti-universalistic ethic, an ethic that posits, *à la* poststructuralism, the epistemological impossibility and normative undesirability of any meta-theoretical articulation of the social. This agnostic position involves the axiomatic claim that the legitimate subject and object of theory in this sense is the (cultural) 'fragment,' as there is no (knowable) totality or universal (cf. Chatterjee, 1993). Postcolonialism's concurrence with the poststructuralist rejection of general social theory, which it equates with homogenizing universalism, has led to a self-restrictive preoccupation with discursive omissions of the 'other' in the social sciences without offering a positive theoretical alternative (e.g. Gathii, 1999; Krishna, 2001). It has even generated analytical critiques that unwittingly deploy Eurocentric methods in an exercise that Wallerstein (1997: 101) describes as 'Eurocentric anti-Eurocentrism.' Certain strands of Arab nationalism and Islamic revivalism, for instance, display such a tendency (cf. Al-Azm, 1984: 368–376). In order to better understand this paradox we need to consider postcolonialism's intellectual history and its relation with poststructuralism more closely.

The lineages and antinomies of postcolonialism

Postcolonialism's theoretical concerns and discourses have undergone reformulation and reorientation apace with its 'fluid expansionism' (Darby, 1997: 13; cf. Jain and Singh, 2000: 13). However, it is possible to identify, at a general level, certain themes common to the early phase of postcolonialism. These include the analysis of the dynamics and impact of colonial oppression, the political strategies of anti-colonial movements, and the nature of the post-colonial state. These concerns were initially articulated through a critical deployment of Marxist theoretical resources (Ahmad, 1997: 365; Young, 2001: Introduction). However, the rise of poststructuralism deeply influenced postcolonialism, valorizing its cultural-discursive aspect. This sequence of influence is rather curious given that poststructuralism itself was arguably born out of postcolonial conditions (Ahluwalia, 2005). At any rate, this development amidst the defeat of the left and the rise of the neoliberal project deepened postcolonialism's theoretical distance from Marxism

and, by implication, from the basic theoretical perspectives and political tendencies of the leading anti-colonial thinkers such as Césaire and Fanon (Lazarus, 2011; Loomba, 1998: 22–23; cf. Darby, 1997: 14–15).

In order to better understand the poststructuralist inflection of postcolonialism, a brief discussion of poststructuralism is in order. Poststructuralist approaches foreground the effects of the mutually constitutive interplay of *discourse* and *power* on the *subject* (self). Through its archeological, genealogical, and deconstructive refraction, the subject is uncovered as always already discursively constructed from positions outside of itself. In other words, the subject is 'decentered' by demonstrating that it is neither self-contained nor self-generative. Thus, from a poststructuralist perspective, imputing unitary, sovereign, and universal qualities to the subject *ipso facto* involves the (violent) homogenization of the 'other,' which in fact forms the negative referent for the continual (re) construction of the modern 'self' (Foucault, 1967, 1979). Curiously, this argument, which specifically concerns the modern European subject, is then generalized into an epistemological position that rules out any claim to universality both theoretically and normatively. However, the key point to be noted is that, rather than being understood as a condition that has global impact, universality here is equated with homogeneity, a distinction that is also missed on the communitarian/cosmopolitan debates in IR debates (e.g. Beitz, 1979; Walzer, 1977). This distinction is, as I elaborate below, crucial in understanding the limitations of the postcolonial critique of Eurocentrism.

Poststructuralism is, therefore, strategically anchored in the interrogation of an essentially European pattern and tempo of development whose contemporaneity with non-European developmental processes is theoretically, analytically, and politically obscured. In other words, poststructuralism's interactive approach to the (trans)formation of modern European society and politics is methodologically insulated from extra-European developmental dynamics and vice versa (Jabri, 2007a: 71), a theoretical limitation that underlies the culturalist-essentialist undertow of poststructuralist analyses of non-European experiences of modernity (cf. Joseph, 2010). Overcoming this problem would require an expansive-active, as opposed to a fragmentary-passive, conception of spatiality which poststructuralism's tempocentrism resists, and mainstream IR reifies (Ruggie, 1993; cf. Hom, 2010). This essentially means that poststructuralism's 'modern self' and 'traditional other' are both European subjects, only occupying diachronically different positions; a feature that arguably marks the canon of modern European thought (Jahn, 2000: 96). This omission of any *extra*-European dimension of the discursive construction of the modern European self arguably forms the core concern of postcolonialism (Bhabha, 1994: 252; Jabri, 2007a: 69). In addressing this lacuna, postcolonialism mobilizes poststructuralism's hermeneutic method, but reorients its critical edge toward the cultural spaces of the (ex-/post)colonial societies. This methodological shift illuminates an arena of non-European cultural forms and socio-political structures that are centrally involved in the historical construction of the European self through simultaneous repudiative enunciation and 'civilizing' subjugation (Said, 1978). It is this self-elevating mode of cultural consciousness, constantly reproduced within discourse, that for postcolonialism defines the epistemological medium through which the West views and engages the non-West. In short, at the most fundamental level, postcolonial critique indicts the structural cohesion, agential unity, and ethical claims of the modern West's

autobiography as the unimpeachable narrative of modernity. The *loci classici* of these critiques are arguably the works of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, the 'holy trinity of postcolonialism' (Young, cited in Moore-Gilbert, 2003: 72).

In his seminal work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said identifies a normative and cultural dichotomy between the 'orient' and the 'occident' in the Western cultural imagination stretching from 'Aeschylus to Marx.' This dichotomy, Said argues, is particularly pronounced in the (post-)Enlightenment narratives of history within which the West, irrespective of the modality of the forms of its relations with the Orient, always remains superior (1978: 7, 42). Said explains this, some say paradoxically, as the consequence of the subordination of the discourse and its institutional practitioners to the political motivation of the Western patrons of learning (Binder, 1988: 91). Homi Bhabha takes his cue from Said (and early Fanon), but is critical of Said's omission of the subaltern resistance to the West, and his enunciation of a rigid West–East binary opposition (Bhabha, 1994: 2). He argues that colonial identity is inherently heterogeneous due to the subaltern practices of resistance (Bhabha, 1994: 2). He therefore challenges Eurocentrism by articulating the notion of 'postcolonial contramodernity' (Bhabha, 1994: 252 and *passim*), wherein 'subjects' are formed 'in-between,' or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (Bhabha, 1994: 2). Gayatri Spivak, by contrast, is fundamentally skeptical about such attempts at representing subaltern resistance. Drawing on Derrida, Spivak argues that the same self-subversive ambivalence that is intrinsic to the transcultural translation of colonial discourse problematizes any 're-presentation,' in the philosophical sense of non-identical depiction, of subaltern resistance (Spivak, 1994: 70). For ultimately, all language of power, and hence resistance, is inherently susceptible to translational mutations and vicissitudes, as well as to the deflective and inflective effects of ideology that are always inscribed on discourse (Spivak, 1994: 67–69 and *passim*). In this sense, the limit to the interpretive utility of modern categories is the colonial subject itself.

In spite of considerable differences in other respects, all these three main varieties of postcolonial theory share a paradoxical relation to the category of the universal. On the one hand, they invoke the ontological condition of difference as the basis of their deconstruction of modern European thought as an instance of (European) ethnocentrism writ universal. On the other hand, they also correctly ascribe a universal significance to the categories of European thought and their concrete referents because they inform, in fact underlie, all the key phenomena and debates pertaining to modernity, of which (post-)colonial politics and culture is an integral part (Skaria, 2009). To be sure, this universal significance is not an intrinsic intellectual property of these European categories *sui generis*. To assume so would be partaking in Eurocentric (self-)deception. Rather, it is the result of the historically distinct and globally hegemonic form of the material power of modern Europe in which these categories are implicated and to which, they in turn, give intellectual expression, political articulation, and, most importantly, universal validity.

But even more importantly, both moves are substantiated through a methodological strategy that is operative neither entirely within nor outside the non-Western cultural spaces but, rather, in their interface with the West. This methodological position logically requires, and sustains, a theoretical perspective that is at minimum extra-fragmental, exceeding the epistemological limits of 'geo-' and 'body-politics' that according to postcolonialism ontologically constrain the knowers (Mignolo, 2009: 162).

The resolution of this tension arguably requires an alignment of theory and method with respect to the category of the universal. Such a resolution is, however, not attempted by postcolonialism since it denounces the universal (identified with homogeneity) as the ideological sinew and the core element of Western (neo)colonialism. But this theoretical disavowal of the universal seems to be based on a prior and prima facie acceptance of Eurocentrism's reified conception of the universal as immanent and homogeneous. The unnecessary equation of the universal with homogeneity becomes more apparent if we look at the specific way in which Eurocentrism produces its category of the universal, that is, the simultaneous internalization and globalization of a qualitative socio-historical change in Europe, namely the crystallization of the capitalist mode of life (Amin, 1989). Methodologically this involves the subordination of *space* to *time* through a two-fold theoretical stratagem. Different cultural and political spaces are conceptually disconnected with respect to their internal processes of development, while they are simultaneously enclosed and homogenized within an abstract and universal temporality derived from the concrete *internal* history of one particular geo-political and cultural space, namely, Europe (e.g. Landes, 2003; Weber, 1992). Postcolonialism has powerfully challenged the first part of this intellectual maneuver without seriously tackling the second part. For this would involve the formal adoption of a holistic approach incompatible with postcolonial theory's hostility toward the category of the universal and general theory.

The provinciality of *Provincializing Europe*

Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* represents an influential postcolonialist attempt at attenuating this hostility through laying the conceptual ground for a conception of capitalist modernity as universal and heterogeneous. Chakrabarty's strategic move is the distillation from Marx's work of two different but interrelated histories of capital.[5] 'History 1' refers to capital's 'being' or 'structural logic,' which involves 'a past posited by capital itself as its precondition,' for example, free labor. 'History 2,' on the other hand, signifies capital's 'becoming' or the 'historical process in and through which the logical presuppositions of capital's "being" are realized.' History 2 therefore involves a past whose elements capital does not encounter as logically self-posited forms of its own life-process. These elements include qualities that 'enable human bearer of labor to enact ways of being in the world other than being merely the bearer of labor power.' They 'are partly embodied in the person's bodily habits, in unselfconscious collective practices, in his or her reflexes about what it means to relate to objects in the world as a human being and together with other human beings in his given environment.' In short, they pertain to the diversity of human cultural sensibilities and practices. Crucially, capital's structural logic seeks to sublate History 2 elements. But in the face of their resistance it only succeeds in subordinating them in a relation of attached exteriority. The unassimilated elements of History 2 therefore 'inhere in capital and yet interrupt and punctuate the run of capital's own logic,' continually pointing backward toward the future possibility of other forms of social reproduction. They form a living space of difference containing gestures ranging from opposition to neutrality that is intrinsic to the universality of capital and hence modernity.

Chakrabarty further illustrates this idea of universal heterogeneity of modernity through the application of the Derridean notion of trace to the concept of the commodity. The formation of the commodity involves 'translation/transition from many and possibly incommensurable temporalities [of concrete labor] to the homogenous time of abstract labor' (Chakrabarty, 2008: 92). But concrete labor is, Chakrabarty stresses with Marx, a 'social' rather than an 'essential' substance and therefore both 'living' and spatially differentiated. As a living social phenomenon, concrete labor resists being 'despotically' (Chakrabarty, 2008: 58) abstracted by capital from its pre-existing socio-cultural tissues, a process that is the sine qua non of the generalized commodity exchange and hence of the capitalist mode of production. This generates a permanent battle between concrete labor and abstract labor within the commodity. This battle is inconclusive in the sense that concrete labor is enclosed but unassimilated within the commodity as a universal category. The result according to Chakrabarty is the building into the commodity of a 'trace' or 'memory' of concrete labor which lives on as a subordinate but resisting attachment to abstract labor.[6] The 'trace' of concrete labors renders the commodity both different or particular in each spatial instantiation or expansion of capital, and universal with respect to the process of expansion itself. Thus, Chakrabarty claims to provide a reading of Marx in which 'the very category "capital" becomes a site where both the universal history of capital and the politics of human belonging are allowed to interrupt each other' (Chakrabarty, 2008: 70). This 'retention of Marx and difference' (Chakrabarty, 2008: 95) allows Chakrabarty to conceptualize political modernity and its various corollary categories such as civil society, the public–private distinction, the state, citizenship, and so on as both universal and heterogeneous.

Provincializing Europe is a significant attempt at re-theorizing capitalist modernity away from homogeneous universalism and cultural relativism. However, it remains theoretically vulnerable in at least three respects. First, Chakrabarty's conception of modernization as a one-way process of translucent translation of concrete labor reduces the complex dynamics of the universal heterogeneity of modernity to the analytic of capital. This is arguably due, at least partly, to his sole focus on the experience of a single non-European country formally colonized by a capitalist state, that is, India. This occludes important aspects of the modern social transformation in non-European societies which retained their (formal) independence, for example, Russia, China, Japan, and Iran. For in such countries the confrontation of abstract and concrete labor, to use Chakrabarty's model, is mediated, and arguably often overdetermined, by the geopolitics of (formally) independent states. Here the form, content, and consequences of heterogeneity exceed the conceptual capacity of Chakrabarty's capital-centered approach. Iran is an important case in point. Its Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and Islamic revolution of 1979 generated instances of heterogeneous modernity wherein the obverse of Chakrabarty's hierarchy of capitalist and non-capitalist forms obtained. The Constitutional Revolution established a parliament whose modern logic and concrete operation were subordinate to the premodern logic of a substantively non-capitalist social-formation on which it was politically superimposed (Matin, 2012).[7] Similarly, the 1979 Iranian revolution gave rise to a political structure wherein religious and modern popular sovereignties were combined. But it was the former that subordinated the latter into its insurgent appendage (Matin, forthcoming). Arrighi (2002) makes a similar argument regarding the

critical role of several features of premodern, 'core-wide empires in the formation, expansion, and present supersession of the modern interstate system' (Arrighi, 2002: 42).

Second, and relatedly, a curious Hegelian trace marks Chakrabarty's anti-Hegelian argument. For in effect Chakrabarty (re)constructs non-European life-worlds as resistant traces that are ultimately passive with regard to the logic and trajectory of modernity. In other words, while for Chakrabarty capital is heterogeneously universal, its universality is structurally, even functionally, insouciant to the differentiated components of its heterogeneous constitution. This means that Chakrabarty posits the frictional and non-identical formation of global capitalist institutions and practices as constitutive of non-European instances of capitalist modernity, but denies the latter any (re)constitutive potential with respect to Europe-centered modernity (Blaney and Inayatullah, 2010: 169). Thus, world-transformative agency is conceded to Europe as the unmoved prime mover. However, historically, crucial world-reordering changes in, and by, non-European societies have taken place. The phenomena of 'state-socialism' in Russia and 'market-socialism' in China are but two examples. In *Provincializing Europe*, subaltern histories therefore merely become 'a particular dwelling in modernity, almost a zone of comfort in capitalism' (Gidwanti, cited in Skaria, 2009: 57). Margins are heard and seen without ever ceasing to be margins.

Third, and most importantly, Chakrabarty derives the heterogeneous nature of capital's universality from the resistance of concrete labor to translation into 'abstract labor.' His argument therefore presupposes both the commodity and abstract labor. It does not account for, or even address, the initial crystallization of abstract labor (and hence capital) in Europe where like the rest of the world multiple and differentiated instances of concrete labor predominated. Clearly, the logic of the argument precludes the attribution of a self-universalizing property to a specific (European) instance of concrete labor. For this would permit the theoretical possibility for an immanent transformation of concrete labor into abstract labor, which would paradoxically affirm the stadial assumption of Eurocentrism that Chakrabarty evidently refutes. Moreover, such an attribution would obliterate the distinction between concrete and abstract labor whose constant friction is the basis of Chakrabarty's challenge to the 'historicism' of the old 'transition model.' Chakrabarty is, therefore, theoretically silent on the key question of power: how and why a *particular* European social form has assumed *universal* impact (Lazarus, 2011: 23). In other words, he ultimately leaves Eurocentrism's historical and normative assumptions unchallenged. In this respect, Chakrabarty's approach conforms to the general tendency of postcolonial theory that focuses on the 'specificity' of each instance of the encounter of cultural differences, glossing over the processes of cultural-developmental differentiation (Dirlik, 1994; cf. Parry, 2004: 6). But in order for Europe to be truly provincialized, a general social theory, and not just a theory of modernity, is required that goes beyond a mere phenomenology of capital's expansion and comprehends capital itself as a product of the interactive multiplicity of the social.

Nevertheless, there is a crucial insight to be drawn from *Provincializing Europe*. This concerns the idea that the category of the universal is indispensable to a decisive critique of Eurocentrism. Rather than simply being repudiated, this category should be released from its Eurocentric conception that posits it as the immanent production and property of a singular and bounded geo-social space that diffuses over the entire globe *ex post facto*. For as the logic of Chakrabarty's own argument suggests, the universal should be

understood as the emergent property of a form of sociality that is internationally constituted and interactively heterogeneous.

Uneven and combined development: The universal as interactive heterogeneity

This critical reformulation of the universal that is interactively heterogeneous, both in its constitution and effects, is fundamental to Leon Trotsky's idea of uneven and combined development. In this section I flesh out this quality of uneven and combined development through a comparison with Hegel's category of the universal in his *Introduction* to *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (henceforth *Introduction*). The choice of Hegel's *Introduction* is primarily motivated by the fact that it represents a paradigmatic Eurocentric statement on the formation and expansion of modernity. In fact, the *Introduction* contains and affirms quite explicitly all the four key assumptions of Eurocentrism enumerated at the start of this article. That is why it is the common reference of many postcolonial critics (e.g. Blaney and Inayatullah, 2010: ch. 5) and hence, in turn, an ideal interlocutor for the present argument regarding the limits of postcolonial theory. A proper representation of the *Introduction* and its place within Hegel's oeuvre and the wider European thought is far beyond the scope and intention of this article. My basic aim in what follows is simply to highlight the specifically internalist way in which Hegel construes the category of the universal, and how this in turn renders it, by necessity, homogeneous and homogenizing. In doing so, I want to suggest that the quality of (social, political, or cultural) homogeneity is not intrinsic to the category of the universal as such, but a result of its internalist mode of construction.

In the *Introduction*, the category of the universal is explicated and operationalized as both the predicate and the terminus of history. It signifies the fully developed state of the realization of human freedom as the actuality of reason's self-consciousness. This occurs when reason, or spirit, or rational consciousness — Hegel uses them interchangeably — can reflect upon and comprehend itself. This capacity for reflexive self-comprehension is achieved through *self*-transcendence (*Aufhebung*) where 'self' is the immediacy or contingency of existence, that is, its determinate particularity. For Hegel, spirit can only know itself when it can rise above itself and view itself from a position unencumbered by the limitations of its particularity. Once this self-transcendence takes place (in thought), reason affords itself a higher historical platform from which it can view and distinguish between qualities that are intrinsic and specific to its determinate existence and those that are not. The latter qualities can then be abstracted and hence rendered universal. This universalization, however, essentially consists of the actualization of an already existing, though latent, quality. This process in turn is gradual and stadial, and has a clear temporal (premodern–modern) and geographical (East–West) span. As such, it forms the content and expression of world history, which is, according to Hegel, 'the image and enactment of reason.' It is 'the record of the spirit's efforts to attain *knowledge* of what it is *in itself*' (Hegel, 1975: 54). The zenith of this self-consciousness is the culminating realization that '*All* men are free' (Hegel, 1975: 28).

Crucially, the concrete sites and the actual vehicles of this progressive self-consciousness of reason are 'nations' (Hegel, 1991: §346). Different types of national

spirit mark distinct temporal stages each of which is associated with a spatially enclosed and localized configuration (*Gestaltung*). Hegel identifies one nation in each epoch in whose principle the spirit of the age is incarnated (Hegel, 1975: 54). The universal status of a nation, strategically understood in terms of its state-form, is therefore the confirmative sign of its attainment of full self-consciousness, that is, the realization that human freedom is universal. Such a nation is necessarily superordinate to other nations that display lower degrees of self-consciousness.

What I want to highlight in Hegel's story is the immanent nature of reason's self-comprehension as universal. For the process takes place *within* and *through* a particular nation.[8] Hegel is explicit in this regard: 'the [nation] goes through various stages of development as a single unit and retains his individual identity … at least up to the point at which its spirit enters its universal phase' (1975: 62). Similarly, Hegel states that 'the determinate national spirit is but a single individual in the course of world history' (Hegel, 1975: 62). To be sure, there is a notion of interconnectivity in Hegel's grand schema of world history. But Hegel's world history as the unconditioned whole has in effect a *self*-relation to nations (parts). Thus, war, arguably the most active form of interconnection between 'nations,' is for Hegel essentially a measure of the degree of the actualization of the self-universalization of reason embodied in the state, which, in turn, represents 'the ethical health of the nation' (Hegel, 1991: §324; cf. Smith, 1983: 625). Moreover, different nations' unequal world-historical significance is generated by the differential level of activity and progress of the spirit or rational consciousness (world history) in self-realization in each of them. Thus, nations are *not* implicated in relations of reciprocity with one another, while their relation with world history is uni-lateral and unilinear. Their passive connections merely form a medium through which world history travels from one site of historical progress to another in an essentially autonomous process of self-comprehension. In other words, in a world-historical sense, the relations between the parts are ontologically subordinate to the relation of the parts to the whole. Thus, Hegel justifies colonialism, his proposed remedy for the 'internal' contradictions of (European) civil society through a simultaneous dislocation of the colonized and colonizable peoples to the exterior of History, and their construction as History's 'null-point' in order to render modern (European) civil society, the site of reason's self-consciousness, the 'capstone' of History and universality (Blaney and Inayatullah, 2010: 124–133).

This entails a crucial twofold implication with respect to Hegel's category of the universal. It is an a priori principle that exists in varying degrees of latency in different nations, which can, as a result, be conceived of as parts of a whole. Consequently, and quite logically, the actualization of this latent principle — the transition from 'being in itself' to 'becoming for itself' — which is the whole purpose and aim of world history, cannot render differentiated outcomes. In other words, differentiated multiplicity is merely posited as a *passive* condition with respect to both the re-productive activities that occur within each component of that differentiated multiplicity, and the final and universally significant outcome of these activities. Thus, Hegel propounds an absolute teleological and solipsist history. In the rest of this section I seek to show that Trotsky's idea of uneven and combined development challenges both of these conditions and offers an intellectual basis for a radical alternative to the Eurocentric conception of the

universal as teleological and passively homogeneous. My discussion of Trotsky below is informed by the recent and growing literature on uneven and combined development within IR and historical sociology.[9]

In *The History of the Russian Revolution* (1985), Trotsky provides the most systematic statement of his idea of uneven and combined development. Trotsky begins with a fundamental statement: 'Unevenness [is] the most general law of the historical process' (1985: 27). The ontology of human life consists of the interactive coexistence of multiple and differentiated societies. This inaugural statement is vitally important in two interrelated respects. First, in ascribing universality to unevenness, Trotsky does not posit unevenness as an a priori principle that has to be simply assumed.[10] Although this basic conceptual premise performs a deductive role, that is, it suffuses all the subsequent claims regarding the nature and forms of social change, it is actually inductive in its construction. It is a general abstraction that is produced historically and subject to empirical interrogation. Thus, Trotsky (1986: 97) argues that the universal quality of developmental unevenness as a concept does not possess the static coherence of formal rationalism but the dynamic historicity of a dialectical process. Unevenness is therefore a universal property that is not statically supra-historical but dynamically trans-historical and therefore utterly social.

Second, both semantically and historically, unevenness naturally incorporates difference. But crucially it involves a conception of difference that is not neutral with respect to the *power*, and hence the inequality, of its subjects of difference. This is a crucial point if we take Suzan Buck-Morss's argument to heart that 'nothing keeps history univocal except power' (2009: 150). This has additional importance in the context of our assessment of postcolonialism which has a strong normative dimension and yet its fundamental category of difference lacks an inbuilt recognition of power (Dunch, 2002: 303–304; Eagleton, 2003: 161). Moreover, power itself is of course an actively relational concept and phenomenon. Since unevenness entails both conditions of difference and power, it can logically capture various forms of configuration of multiplicity among its components, including conflictual hierarchical (empire), conflictual anarchical (modern states-system), and non-antagonistic anarchical (socialism). Its universality in all three cases, therefore, involves active heterogeneity.

The meaning and, in fact, the very existence of unevenness as a universal condition become possible and active in the second element of Trotsky's idea, namely, 'combination': 'From the universal law of unevenness thus derives another law which … we may call the law of combined development' (1985: 27). Combination is therefore the concrete expression of unevenness because it can only occur when there is a differentiated multiplicity, that is, the absence of developmental evenness. But combination is constitutive of unevenness itself. The interactive fashion in which the differentiated instances of the social, of whatever scale and complexity, are reproduced recombines the existing forms and generates new social forms within communities and societies, which are, of course, the constitutive elements of unevenness itself. In other words, unevenness *ipso facto* conditions, and is conditioned by, developmental processes within and across the interacting societies. It always involves specific combinations of 'external' and 'internal' social, economic, political, institutional, cultural, and ideational products; a

process which renders the analytical distinction between the 'internal' and 'external' itself ontologically unstable.

Unevenness is therefore universal in a decidedly non-Hegelian way. It is a whole that is ontologically subject to reconditioning by the interactive character of its intrinsically combined components. However, these components are only partially conditioned by their causal implication in the unevenness of world development as a whole. They are also co-determined by those properties that are organic, in a more immediate sense, to their own constitution and shaped by *inter alia* physical and natural circumstances such as language, geography, ecology, climate, and so on. These properties enter the process of uneven and combined development and partake in the reproduction of what Trotsky calls the 'special features' of societies without which 'there is no history, but only a sort of pseudo-materialistic geometry' (1972: 339). Thus, 'the unevenness of historical development of different countries and continents is in itself uneven' (Trotsky, 1970: 15). As a result, in the idea of uneven and combined development, the conception of the universal is not the a priori property of an immanently conceived homogeneous entity. Rather, it is a universally operational causal context whose ontic fabric is heterogeneous and radically open to, in fact constantly shaped and reshaped by, alterity, which generates emergent forms that overdetermine their own context of emergence.

Yet, there is still a further and complementary dimension to the active heterogeneity of the universal in Trotsky's idea, namely, development. Development is, of course, a highly controversial concept since for many it smacks of the unilinear stagism of modernization theory and Second International Marxism. However, in Trotsky's idea, its content is radically different. Here development is the concrete and dynamic expression of the uneven and combined nature of social change and, therefore, cannot be either unilinear, homogeneous, or homogenizing. On the contrary, it is interactively multilinear (Rosenberg, 2006: 308). Development, in Trotsky's idea, embodies and renders visible the interconnected conditions of unevenness and combination, both theoretically and historically. It is the concrete sign of the reproductive activities of living interactive social forms. It was such a decidedly multilinear conception of development that at the heyday of the Second International it allowed Trotsky to issue statements such as 'history does not repeat itself' (1969: 36), or 'we repeat: history is not made to order' (1969: 131), or 'there can be no analogy of historical development [between England and the colonies] … but there does exist a profound inner connection between the two' (1972: 67). Similar statements abound in Trotsky's writings.

In fine, for Trotsky it is not the single and bounded society, but the uneven and combined development of multiple interactive social formations, that is the subject of history. Each instance of social change, therefore, always bears the marks of both the wider process of uneven and combined development in which it is actively entangled, as well as the effects of the more organic and localized determinations and features which ultimately render it analytically distinct and amenable to concrete analysis. The crucial conclusion to be drawn is that, since every instance of social development is always uneven and combined, the fundamental and *universal* condition that generates them, namely, interactive multiplicity or unevenness, ought to be integrated into the construction of social theory at the most fundamental level. For otherwise the logic of internalist methodology, the intellectual sinew of Eurocentrism, ultimately overwhelms

the analysis. And this in turn precludes the translation of the individual registrations of inter societal interaction and heterogeneity into a non-ethnocentric general social theory.

Conclusion

Postcolonial IR has offered a trenchant critique of IR's disciplinary Eurocentrism. However, a decisive defeat of Eurocentrism requires the translation of this critique into a non-ethnocentric international social theory, a move that postcolonial IR deems impossible and/or undesirable due to its (ambivalent) appropriation of poststructuralist theory. But poststructuralist theory is not fashioned from a purportedly 'non-place' of critique (Ashley, 1989: 260). Rather, it is actually distilled from the particular historical experience of West European societies conceived as discrete entities (Foucault, 1979, 2003; cf. Jabri, 2007a).[11] This methodological internalism generates Eurocentric liabilities that become especially visible when poststructuralist theory is transposed into the international. For example, the deployment of the Foucauldian concepts of 'biopower' and 'biopolitics' in analyzing contemporary Euro-American global violence and the resistance they elicit (e.g. Hardt and Negri, 2000, 2005; Reid, 2005) has involved the universalization and naturalization of a European 'post-sovereign' form of government as part of poststructuralist IR's stipulation of a causally valorized 'global civil society' (Lipschutz, 1992). This move has entailed the paradoxical confluence of poststructuralist IR and the liberal accounts and project of international politics (cf. Bartelson, 2006: 374; Lipschutz, 2005: 748; Selby, 2007). A similar effect is entailed in poststructuralist IR's conceptual suppression of the generic spatial multiplicity of the social on the basis of a valid argument regarding the historicity of modern sovereign territorial states (e.g. Walker, 1993). Other examples of poststructuralism's strain in dealing with international phenomena include Foucault's essentialist slippage in his commentary on the Iranian revolution (Afary and Anderson, 2005), and Derrida's 'practice of orientalism' in his treatment of the Chinese language (Chow, 2001). Thus, radicalization of postcolonial IR's anti-Eurocentric project arguably demands going beyond the inscription of the imperial and/or the racial in the poststructuralist analytics of power (e.g. Barkawi and Laffey, 1999), or the retrieval of poststructuralism's anticolonial roots (e.g. Sajed, 2010), or a further retreat into poststructuralism's fragmentary and fragmentizing epistemology implicit in the 'decolonial turn' (e.g. Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2009). For such *ex post facto* measures might modify the theory's analytical practice but not its generative grammar, an argument which postcolonial IR scholars themselves have advanced with respect to recent attempts at removing IR theory's non-Western 'blind-spots' through 'add and stir' strategies (e.g. Bilgin, 2010).

In this article I have sought to show that a more potent solution to the problem of Eurocentrism, within and beyond IR, requires a strategic shift of emphasis, and the fashioning of an international social theory that has interactive heterogeneity inscribed on its fundamental categories. The universal is one such category that can be made consistent with the heterogeneity and interactivity of the social world. But postcolonial IR, *à la* poststructuralism, rejects it *tout court* while it paradoxically deploys forms of methodological internalism that involve analytical and normative claims broaching the universal (e.g.

Jabri, 2007b). What needs to be rejected is, I have argued, not the notion of the universal per se but its conception as the internal, homogeneous, and homogenizing product of any single self-contained social formation, cultural zone, or civilization. A growing number of postcolonial scholars seem to take a similar position (Bhambra, 2010; Dallmayr, 2001; Darby, 2004; Hobson, 2004; Subrahmanyam, 1997).

The idea of uneven and combined development, I have argued, possesses precisely such a quality. Through its theoretical and methodological lens we can re-view the heterogeneity of modernity and multilinearity of history as the organic products of an intrinsically international process of social change (Matin, forthcoming). Uneven and combined development can therefore engender a radical 'provincializing of Europe' through theoretical foregrounding of the international dimension of the (trans)formation of capitalist modernity and geopolitical and geo-economic fractures that were, and arguably remain, constitutive of its variegated forms. By the same token, uneven and combined development also dispels the reificatory effects of the conceptualizations of the 'non-West' as a geoculturally unified zone. Thus, there is arguably a fertile intellectual ground for a critical dialogue between postcolonial and uneven and combined development approaches (e.g. Shilliam, 2009).

My argument also has implications for current debates over the theoretical and explanatory remit of the idea of uneven and combined development. Three lines of advocacy of Trotsky's original idea are discernible in these debates: one restricts it to the capitalist period (e.g. Ashman, 2009; Davidson, 2006), a second extends it to include the pre-capitalist period, a tendency that is implicit in Trotsky's own work (Matin, 2007; Rosenberg, 2006, 2009, 2010), and a third intermediate approach holds uneven and combined development to have been operative in the pre-capitalist period but 'fully activated' only under capitalism (Allinson and Anievas, 2009). The present argument lends support to the second approach which arguably provides a deeper theoretical foundation for a non-Eurocentric international historical materialism, one that challenges the idea of the endogenous formation of capitalist social relations in England (e.g. Brenner, 1988), highlighting the constitutiveness of the international both to the emergence and the expansion of capitalism, an approach that is receiving growing empirical support (Abu-Lughod, 1989; Chaudhuri, 1990; Hodgson, 1993; Moore, 1997). This is of course not a denial of the specifically European form of capitalist modernity, but an accentuation of the need for methodological consistency and theoretical coherence in the formulation and deployment of uneven and combined development.

The idea of uneven and combined development also has crucial ramifications for the wider field of IR. The 'fourth great debate' in IR has been marked by critical and constructivist challenges to the discipline's self-definition in terms of anarchy as the unhistorical determinant of international relations and states' behavior. Yet, in their concentrated endeavors to de-reify anarchy, these approaches have neglected the vital significance of supplying a credible and coherent sociology of the international as a distinct and emergent field of social causality. Uneven and combined development is fundamentally geared toward furnishing precisely such a sociology that can release IR, and social theory, from the manacles of the inside–outside ontology without rendering the constitutive significance of either the social or the international derivative of, or reducible to, the other (cf. Rosenberg, forthcoming).

Finally, there is also a normative-political dimension to my argument. For in redeeming the universal as the contested product of a polycentric, interactive, and multilinear history, uneven and combined development rehabilitates, theoretically, analytically, and normatively, the varied experiences of 'peoples without history,' and sustains a politics of solidarity in difference.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. I use 'development' in contradistinction to 'progress,' that is, in a non-normative sense to refer to 'processes of directional change over time which can be theorized by analyzing the causal properties of particular structures of social relationships' (Rosenberg, 2006: 330). As will be shown below, the idea of 'uneven and combined development' complexifies this basic analytical meaning.
2. Modernity is broadly understood as the dominant structural and institutional expression of certain capitalism-related 'modern' phenomena such as impersonal individualism, instrumental rationality, secularism, nation-state, the rule of law, market economy, and representative government. This is inclusive of poststructuralist conception of modernity as 'a historical set of attitudes fighting attitudes of countermodernity or an economy of power' (Ashley, 1989: 260).
3. I use 'the intersocietal' and 'the international' interchangeably.
4. All the citations in this paragraph are from Chakrabarty (2008: 62–71).
5. McCarthy (2011) provides an interesting discussion of the material embedding of the cultural/ideational dimension of hegemony in physical commodities.
6. I am aware of the teleological liability of using terms such as 'premodern' or 'late comer,' and so on, but it is impossible to 'escape this in any form of periodization that is argumentative and not simply mechanical in nature' (Subrahmanyam, 2005: 4).
7. It is perhaps more accurate to use the term 'cultural zone' which is closer to Hegel's own usage elsewhere in the *Introduction* of terms such as 'Germanic nations' or 'Christian Europe.'
8. For an extensive list of the recent literature visit www.unevenandcombined.com.
9. Even in Hegel's radical empiricism, the whole philosophical enterprise begins with an a priori claim: 'Admittedly, philosophy does follow an *a priori* method in so far as it presupposes the Idea. But the Idea is undoubtedly there, and reason is fully convinced of its presence' (1975: 30).
10. Here I am primarily concerned with Foucauldian poststructuralism, which is arguably the dominant strand in IR.

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