The Contours of Analytical Eclecticism

(formerly 'Power, Security, and Recognition')

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Almost two decades ago, the journal *World Politics* published a symposium on the future(s) of Comparative Politics and International Relations. In his contribution, Peter Katzenstein swam against the disciplinary tide, refusing to fly a paradigmatic flag that others could rally under. Teaching students the intricacies of particular theoretical paradigms, and training them to deploy them in gladiatorial explanatory contests, was the easy stuff, he argued---the much harder, and infinitely more important task, was teaching to them to ask interesting and important questions. It was the problem that mattered; theory and method should come second, crafted and deployed in the service of understanding big and important questions.[1] Seventeen years later, this commitment has transmuted into a 'flag' for others to rally under, albeit a non-paradigmatic one. Together with Rudra Sil, Katzenstein has become the most prominent exponent of 'analytical eclecticism,' advocating a problem driven approach to research, in which the pursuit of understanding leads scholars to 'mix and match' methods and insights from purportedly incompatible research traditions.[2] Firmly anchored within the tradition of American pragmatism, this approach to Comparative Politics and International Relations is explicitly anti-metatheoretical. Deep philosophical debates about epistemology, ontology, and methodology are considered ultimately irresolvable, intellectual black holes into which smart scholars can easily disappear. Starting with concrete, 'real world' problems, however, allows scholars to make pragmatic choices about appropriate methods, to be flexible in their ontological assumptions, and to see knowledge as the product of situated forms of inquiry and communication.

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[1] Peter J. Katzenstein et.al., 'The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium,' *World Politics* (Vol.48, No.1, October 1995), pp.1-49.

[2] See, for example, Rudra Sil and Peter J. Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms: Analytical Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics* (London: Palgrave, 2010); Rudra Sil and Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Analytical Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics: Reconfiguring Problems and Mechanisms across Research Traditions,' *Perspectives on Politics* (Vol.8, No.2, 2010), pp.411-431; and Peter Katzenstein and Rudra Sil, 'Eclectic Theorizing in the Study and Practice of International Relations,' in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.109-130.

While supportive of the eclecticist project, this paper explores some of the difficulties of associated with its bracketing of metatheoretial inquiry. This is not because I think fundamental debates over epistemology, ontology, or methodology are resolvable in any final or absolute sense. Nor is it because I doubt that eclectic, problem driven research can yield important insights into contemporary world politics. Far from it. Rather, my concern is that the move is not made so easily; that eclecticists may shun explicit metatheoretical inquiry, but they are nonetheless saddled with particular metatheoretical baggage that frames how they see and understand the world. Bracketing metatheory is not the same as metatheoretical openness. Their baggage is complex, however, and at times internally contradictory. As we shall see, the eclecticist project rests on a distinctive set of epistemological commitments, the nature of which make it a largely empirical project, with normative questions and insights left off the eclecticist buffet. Far from insignificant, this delimiting of the project has implications for one of Katzenstein's and Sil's primary motivations----that international relations scholarship should speak more directly to practical problems of contemporary global politics. These epistemological commitments sit alongside an equally distinctive set of ontological commitments. The eclecticist project rests on a triadic ontology, mixing and matching insights as it does from the three big paradigms that structure debate within the American discipline. While there is nothing inherent to the eclecticist project demanding this, the practice is nevertheless so. This is the least interesting part of the story, however. When we look closely at how this mixing and matching is done, we find an unstated, yet recognizable, hermeneutic practice. There are questions here about how well this sits with the aforementioned epistemological commitments. I am more interested, however, in the opportunities this offers the eclecticist project, if embraced more self-consciously and systematically.

Beyond metatheory

Analytical eclecticism is presented as a scholarly stance; an attitude toward knowledge and inquiry, and a set of attendant investigative, argumentative, and communicative practices. Above all else, it is an approach distinguished by a willingness to 'set aside metatheoretical debates in favour of a pragmatist view of social inquiry'.[3] Philosophical foundations for this stance are found in the tenets of American pragmatism; in the preference of writers like Dewey for the consequential evaluation of knowledge in relation to concrete social problems; the rethinking of knowledge claims with reference to the knowledgeable experiences of real-world actors; seeing scholarly dialogue as embedded within, and transformable by, wider social and political discourses; and for an 'open-ended ontology', one

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[3] Sil and Katzenstein, 'Analytical Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics,' p.417.

that makes no prior assumptions about why actors adopt particular stances toward social and political change.[4]

This eclecticist aversion to metatheory grows out of two concerns. The first is a commitment to the practical; to the orientation of scholarship toward the solution of concrete world problems, and to the location of scholarly argument and debate within the realm of broader social practices. From such a perspective, metatheoretical inquiry is an academic parlour game; a side show drawing good minds away from the proper social purposes of the academy. The second is the aforementioned scepticism about the resolvability of fundamental epistemological and ontological debates. Metatheoretical inquiry is discounted because there is, in the end, no way to settle century old arguments about what constitutes truth, about whether ideas or material factors are more fundamental, about the relationship between agents and structures, or about the epistemological status of moral claims. Metatheoretical inquiry is thus not only too distant from the correct social purposes of the academy, but the irresolvability of the most fundamental metatheoretical debates may undermine any other rationales it may have.

In elaborating the eclecticist position, Katzenstein and Sil begin by characterizing the existing state of theoretical debate in International Relations. Debate is dominated by three or more great 'research traditions,' each of which rests of its own distinct set of 'metatheoretical principles'. These principles provide the deep foundations of each paradigm, structuring their analytical assumptions and practices over time. 'Because research traditions are typically founded on metatheoretical principles that are distinct from those informing competing traditions', Katzenstein and Sil argue, 'each intrinsically favors some types of scholarly endeavors over others, as evident in the selection and framing of research puzzles, the representation and interpretation of relevant empirical observations, the specification of evidentiary standards, and the attention to certain causal mechanisms at the expense of others'.[5] Yet even though these foundational principles perform such a deep structuring role, a key proposition in the eclecticist argument is that they can be bracketed, and that the analytical eclecticist can draw selectively from the secondary, middle ground analytical insights of these traditions to fashion new answers to concrete problems. '[F]eatures of analyses in theories initially embedded in separate research traditions can be separated from their respective foundations, translated meaningfully, and recombined as part of an original permutation of concepts, methods, analytics, and empirics', argue Katzenstein and Sil.[6] In other words, for the analytical eclecticist it is both possible

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[4] Ibid., pp.417-418.

[5] Katzenstein and Sil, 'Eclectic Theorizing,' p.110.

[6] Ibid., pp.110-111. The original was italicized.

and desirable to separate the analytical superstructures of established research traditions from their metatheoretical bases, and to redeploy the former while dispensing with the latter.

On close reading, however, it seems that Sil and Katzenstein's real beef is with endless epistemological debate; far less with ontology. While analytical eclecticism is said to be characterized by a bracketing of both epistemological and ontological metatheory, there is a particular impatience with the 'epistemological absolutism' of both positivists and subjectivists. Debates about what counts as true knowledge of the social world, and the methodological injunctions that invariably flow from these, are rejected in favour of a pragmatist 'focus on the consequences of truth claims in a given context'.[7] Differences over ontology, by contrast, are considered far less intractable. In seeking to show the scope for the eclectic combining of insights from different paradigms, Sil and Katzenstein go to some lengths to map out the ontological commonalities between realism, liberalism and constructivism. As we shall see, this mapping is distinctive in a number of ways. What matters here, though, is that ontology is not considered a bottomless mire in the same way as epistemology. This reflects, it should be noted, a broader tendency of post-'third debate' international relations, with scholars diverse theoretical persuasions advocating a focus on ontology over epistemology.

Definitions

Since much of what follows involves claims about the pre-structuring affects of metatheoretical assumptions on the eclecticist project, it is well to be clear about what I mean by a number of key terms. A metatheory is commonly defined as 'a theory the subject matter of which is another theory'. Sometimes this is taken to mean that metatheory is concerned with the analysis of other, second order theories. In international relations, however, the term is used somewhat differently. Here metatheory is understood as a set of logically prior rules and principles that establish the conditions of possibility for second order theories. Commonly, these precepts are thought to fall into two principal categories: those of an epistemological nature, and those concerning ontology. The former define the nature, scope, and validity of knowledge; the latter the nature of being---what can be said to exist, how such things might be categorized, and how they stand in relation to one another. Epistemology and ontology have evolved as separate branches of philosophy, yet they are clearly interrelated, each conditioning the other. How one defines legitimate knowledge effects what one sees in the natural and social worlds; the oft-heard refrain that 'If you can't measure it it's not relevant' being a case in point. In the reverse, what one thinks comprises these worlds can shape one's epistemological, and methodological, standpoint. This was Kratochwil and Ruggie's point when they argued that the

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[7] Sil and Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms*, p.45.

ontology of regimes was in tension with the prevailing epistemological and methodological orientation of existing regime theory.[8]

The stuff we carry with us

Differences over metatheory have fuelled much of the controversy within International Relations since the third debate, with the field's various tribes unable to agree about the most basic epistemological and ontological principles that ought to structure inquiry. Analytical eclecticists want to skirt these debates by adopting a pragmatic analytical stance, in which foundational debates are displaced by the artful blending of insights in answer to concrete, real world questions. But as anticipated in the introduction, eclecticism remains structured by a set of deep metatheoretical commitments.

The ins and outs of knowledge

What counts as legitimate knowledge, and what methods we should employ to attain such knowledge, has long divided scholars of international relations. Behavioralists and classicists locked horns during the 1960s, and rationalists and reflectivists parried during the third debate of the 1980s. Yet in recent years much of the heat seems to have gone out of these divisions. This is partly because of shifts within the American mainstream of the field, where many positivists have retreated from strong claims about truth with a capital 'T', and conventional constructivists no longer insist that study of intersubjective phenomena has any particular epistemological or methodological implications. It is also because as the field globally has become larger and more diverse, it has settled into a happy Balkanization (if we can permit this oxymoron). The poststructuralists have moved off shore, finding more conducive environments in the UK and elsewhere. And the English School continues to evolve as a community unto itself, engaging in an 'on again off again' relationship of irritated fascination with American constructivism.

It is in this context that we can best understand Katzenstein's and Sil's position on metatheoretical debates about epistemology. As we have seen, they want the field to leave behind irresolvable and unproductive debates between positivist and subjectivist conceptions of 'truth'. Yet this call is both consistent with Katzenstein's earlier claim in *The Culture of National Security* that constructivism does not involve a distinctive epistemological or methodological standpoint, and it is also made from within, and to, the softened core of the American mainstream, a core in which tacit understandings

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[8] Friedrich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie, 'International Organization: A State of the Art on the Art of the State', *International Organization* (Vol.40, No.4), pp.753-775.

have emerged across the rival paradigms to leave the battlefield of epistemology to others. In this respect, the analytical eclecticist position on epistemology is part of a broader move, one that shifts the battlelines to the realm of ontology (on which more will be said below).

Bracketing epistemology is not the same as epistemological openness, however. Within the softened core of American International Relations, a necessary condition of positivists and subjectivists putting aside their epistemological guns is a consensus that International Relations is an explanatory enterprise, a social science in a traditional, if expanded, sense of the word. This consensus rests on a set of boundary conditions----IR scholars are concerned with what 'is' not what 'ought' to be---and on expanded notions of explanation and causality. Old distinctions between explanation and understanding, and between causality and constitution, have been quietly forgotten, and everyone---constructivists and realists alike---seek robust 'explanations' and uncover complex 'causal' relations, despite the fact that individuals might mean very different things by these terms. Language has become the medium of accommodation.

In *Beyond Paradigms* Sil and Katzenstein do a nice job of setting out what analytical eclecticism is not---it is not theoretical synthesis, it is not the view that anything goes, and it is not the same thing as multi-method research or methodological triangulation.[9] They should have added as well, however, that analytical eclecticism does not challenge the boundary conditions that sustain American IR. It does not question the notion that International Relations is, and should be, an empirical, explanatory enterprise, with normative inquiry left to the philosophers. There is nothing inherent to the idea of analytical eclecticism that demands this be so, but it is clear from Katzenstein's and Sil's various elaborations that eclecticists are interested almost exclusively in empirical problems and puzzles, and that the buffet from which eclecticists mix and match is laid with empirical insights. There is, therefore, a *grund* epistemological choice undergirding analytical eclecticism, one that places moral and ethical knowledge off the table. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the range of eclecticist works that Sil and Katzenstein survey in *Beyond Paradigms*. A wide range of excellent works on security, political economy, and global governance are covered, the purpose being to show just what eclecticist work looks like and can achieve. The works not included here are noteworthy, however. Most notable of all are Robert Keohane's essays with Allen Buchanan on the preventive use of force and on the legitimacy of global governance institutions.[10] These are models of eclecticism, but an arguably more ambitious form, one that bridges empirical and normative inquiry.

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[9] Sil and Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms*, pp.16-18.

[10] Allen Buchanan and Robert O. Keohane, 'The Legitimacy of Global Governance Institutions', *Ethics and International Affairs* (Vol.20, No.4, 2006), pp. 405-437; and Allen Buchanan and Robert O. Keohane, 'The Preventive Use of Force: A Cosmopolitan Institutional Proposal', *Ethics and International Affairs* (Vol.18, No.1, 2004), pp. 1-22.

The narrow epistemological ambit of analytical eclecticism is problematic in several regards. My concern, however, is with the damage it does to the practical ambitions of the eclecticist project. As noted above, Katzenstein and Sil hold that the field's paradigm wars, and attendant epistemological squabbles, 'detracts from attention to practical real-world problems while widening the chasm between academia and the world of policy and practice'. [11] Analytical eclecticism promises to overcome this divide, delivering more user friendly knowledge by starting with concrete political puzzles and crafting robust answers from diverse analytical insights. But if the practitioner's challenge is how best to respond to a particular political problematic---the challenge of acting not merely explaining or understanding---then analytical eclecticism, as presently cast, can provide only part of what is needed. It can provide data, it can tell complex causal stories, but it has nothing to say about purposes, about the values and principles that ought to guide practice. As the English School has long argued, the most pressing issues of international practice concern how best to balance or reconcile the values of order and justice---the politics of humanitarian intervention, nuclear non-proliferation, and regulation of the global financial order, for example, all bear the mark of this vexed contest of values. Yet so long as it is understood as a purely explanatory project, analytical eclecticism's ability to speak to these fundamental issues of political practice will remain unnecessarily handicapped.

What makes the world go around

As noted above, in recent years scholars of diverse theoretical orientations have tried to nudge the field away from epistemological debate and onto the terrain of ontology. Rationalists have made this call, constructivists as well, and so too have critical realists. As noted above, Katzenstein's and Sil's move to bracket epistemological inquiry is, in one sense, a piece with this general trend. But where the others see ontology a more productive field of metatheoretical argument, pitting rival conceptions of agency and structure, the material and ideational, etc., against one another, analytical eclecticists wish to bracket this debate as well---metatheory is metatheory. Yet ontological assumptions are no easier to escape than epistemological ones, and analytical eclecticism rests on its own distinctive ontology, albeit largely unstated. Here, though, eclecticism's relationship with the mainstream is more complex and more interesting.

On the one hand, analytical eclecticism is deeply structured by its relationship to the principal paradigms, or 'research traditions', of American IR: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Sil and

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[11] Sil and Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms*, p.35.

Katzenstein reject the notion that progress in understanding world politics is best achieved through gladiatorial struggles between rival research paradigms, but are at pains to stress that they are not opposed to paradigmatic research *per se*. Indeed, such research constitutes a necessary precursor to the eclecticist scholarship they advocate. 'For any given problem, before a more expansive [eclecticist] dialogue can take place among a more heterogeneous community of scholars, it is useful to first have a more disciplined dialogue on the basis of a clearly specified set of concepts, a common theoretical language, and a common set of methods and evaluative standards predicated on a common metatheoretical perspective'.[12]

In and of itself there is much to commend this approach. In addition to the benefits enumerated by Sil and Katzenstein, at its very best working within the frame of rival research traditions encourages a certain 'discipline of mind', compelling the researcher to think systematically about contending explanations or interpretations. This having been said, however, working out from established research paradigms prestructures the ontology of analytical eclecticism, presenting the eclecticist with however many sets of pre-packaged assumptions and propositions about the nature of agents, structures, rationality, the material world, and the relative importance of ideas. The eclecticists' art is to combine these in new and interesting ways, but the colours on their palette come largely from the pre-existing research traditions. A strength of Katzenstein's and Sil's vision is seeing these traditions as complex, variegated, and at times internally contradictory entities, and it is the points of convergence and complementarity between paradigms that enables the eclecticist to combine their insights in new explanations.[13] The eclecticist is, nonetheless, working with insights provided by the established traditions, however internally pluralistic these might be.

The significance of this prestructuring effect increases as the number of paradigms within the eclecticists' gaze decreases---the smaller the number, the more confined the ontological parameters of analytical eclecticism. As presently conceived, this gaze is deliberately circumscribed. Katzenstein and Sil readily admit that their articulation of analytical eclecticism is conditioned by the intellectual environment of American IR, and one consequence of this is that the paradigms they place on the eclecticists' palette are the standard three of post-Cold War American text books---realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Research traditions that emphasize, respectively, the importance of material power, cooperation among rational egoists, and the role of social norms and identities thus constitute the starting points for the eclecticism Sil and Katzenstein sketch, and it is the points of convergence between these that are said to enable eclecticism's mixing and matching. The realist emphasis on the

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[12] Ibid., p.8.

[13] Ibid., pp.31-34.

states' material interests overlaps with the liberal conception of states as rational egoists; in more recent formulations, constructivists evince a shared interest with realists in the nature and function of power in world politics; and liberals and constructivists are both concerned with the complex social processes that facilitate cooperation. Questions can be raised about whether these are actually points of convergence, and not simply fields of common debate. But to the extent they are convergences, they coalesce around basic issues of ontology: agency, power, and the conditions of cooperation. The analytical eclecticist is thus mixing and matching not simply basic empirical insights or second order analytical propositions, but ontological assumptions derived from the triumvirate of American paradigms.

Katzenstein and Sil focus on realism, liberalism, and constructivism because this is the paradigmatic universe of American IR, and for understandable reasons, this is the community they most wish to engage. They insist, however, that this move in no way affects the underlying logic of analytical eclecticism; in theory, eclecticists could draw on a much wider spectrum of research traditions, including those popular outside the American academy: the English School, feminism, or post-modernism, for example. All that would need to change is 'what constitutes eclectic research practice'.[14] At one level, this appears straightforward---as analytical eclecticists puts more colours on their palettes, their art changes; they mix and match different things, in different ways, arriving at different kinds of explanations and understandings. Yet things are not so simple. One cannot hold the logic of analytical eclecticism constant and vary eclecticist practice. As we saw in the previous section, the logic of eclecticism is shaped by set of underlying epistemological assumptions. It is largely an explanatory, or empirical, project; its 'logic' is the conjoining of analytical insights, harvested from seemingly disparate paradigms, to generate novel answers to empirical problematics. As many scholars have shown, non-American research traditions have much to offer here. Yet there is also much that the logic of analytical eclecticism struggles to assimilate. We have already seen that normative insights and modes of argument are beyond the pale, but so too are certain kinds of ontological propositions. An interesting example here is the curious fate of the concept of international society within American scholarship. The ontological proposition that states can form a society under conditions of anarchy is the emblematic concept of the English School, yet despite the neoliberal interest in institutions and the constructivist emphasis on social norms, it has gained little traction. This is partly because rationalist conceptions of agency reduce the social to a set of intervening variables, and partly because constructivists have focused on particular social norms, the salience of which is considered more measurable.

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[14] Ibid., p.36.

The implicit hermeneutics of eclecticism

Knowing that analytical eclecticism works within an ontological framework set by the three paradigms on which it draws tells us a lot about what it is not and something about what it is. Much more can be said on the latter question, however. While the eclecticism sketched by Katzenstein and Sil works with, and within, a limited set of ontological assumptions and propositions, how these are selected and combined is said to be the preserve of individual researchers, determined largely by the analytical demands of the puzzles they confront. As the corpus of eclecticist scholarship grows, generalizations become more difficult; diversity is as much a feature of analytical eclecticism as it is of realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Nevertheless, acknowledging the exceptions, eclectivists do seem to mix and match ontological propositions in a distinctive way. There is, I suggest, an implicit hermeneutics at work in analytical eclecticism.

To explain this, let me briefly revisit some early writings by Martin Hollis, whose distinctive brand of hermeneutics is particularly apposite. Hollis was no radical. Intersubjective meanings were important, as was language. But Hollis's ontology had a firm material base---'life in a desert full of oil differs from life in a tundra full of bears'.[15] 'Social life has a natural setting, imperfectly mastered and, like other contexts, both enabling and constraining'.[16] He was also strongly committed to the notion that humans are rational actors; indeed, he went so far as to argue that 'Rational action is its own explanation'.[17] Yet beyond this rump materialism and assumed rationality, Hollis's ontology was thickly social. Humans act within webs of intersubjective meanings; ideas, norms, and values that affect how actors understand material and physical phenomena, and when institutionalised, provide 'stores of power and stocks of reasons of action'.[18] Central to Hollis's ontology was the concept of social roles, understood as 'normative expectations attached to social positions'.[19] Roles are focal points around which social rules coalesce, and these aggregations of rules both constrain actors by licensing social sanctioning for non-performance and empower them by providing socially recognized reasons for action. But while Hollis saw roles and their attendant rules as constitutive of social action, he resisted the over-determining structuralism that often accompanies such views. Humans are socially constituted, but they are also autonomous. Social roles are not monolithic; they are

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[15] Martin Hollis, *Models of Man: Philosophical Thoughts on Social Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.26.

[16] Ibid., p.187.

[17] Ibid., p.21.

[18] Ibid., 188.

[19] Ibid., pp.70-71.

aggregations of rules, but there are invariably more than one set of actions consistent with these rules.[20] Furthermore, actors almost always have multiple roles, and these change over time. Humans are not only constrained and empowered by these role complexes, they navigate them consciously as well as unconsciously; they encounter the social universe rationally and creatively. '[S]ocial action', Hollis concludes, 'can be understood only as the rational expression of intention within rules'.[21]

I make no defence of Hollis's ontology here, but its internal coherence and its moderation are noteworthy. With regard to the latter, he resists the pull of three alternate extremes. The material world has an independent reality and actors can have material interests, but this is not materialism: human action has social determinants that cannot be brushed aside as simple epiphenomena or intervening variables. The social world is different from the material world; it is structured by intersubjective meanings, mobilised by language and communication, that shape actors' identities and interests. But this is not unalloyed idealism---humans act within enmeshed material and social universes. Finally, individuals are conceived as rational actors; autonomous beings who act with reason. But this is not rationalism, which Hollis rejected for its depleted conception of agency, in which preferences are treated as exogenous and action reduced to economistic, strategic behaviour. To characterize an individual as 'a rational agent', Hollis argued, 'is to assert not that he exemplifies the causal laws of economics but that he acts for good reasons'.[22]

While analytical eclecticists eschew metatheoretical debate about ontology, and present themselves as ontologically pragmatic,[23] their practices appear structured by an underlying ontology not dissimilar to Hollis's. Three examples illustrate this, each highlighted by Sil and Katzenstein as an exemplar of eclecticism. The first is Barnett and Finnemore's study of international organizations, *Rules for the World*. This makes Sil and Katzenstein's list because the authors make two eclectic moves---taking states seriously while seeing IOs as autonomous bureaucratic entities, and 'integrating the regulatory and constitutive styles of analysis favored by neoliberal institutionalists and constructivists respectively'.[24] Important as these points are, they miss the deeper ontological logic that informs Barnett and Finnemore's argument. In highlighting the continued significance of states, they establish a set of material constraints on organizational autonomy---states hold the purse strings, after all. And when they speak of both states and IOs, they speak as though they are rational actors---fully-fledged

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[20] Ibid., p.77.

[21] Ibid., p.186.

[22] Ibid., p.37.

[23] Sil and Katzenstein, 'Analytical Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics', p.417.

[24] Sil and Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms*, pp.162-163.

agents, acting with reason. Yet the remainder of their argument is thickly social. In seeking to understand the autonomy and dysfunction of IOs, Barnett and Finnemore define them as bureaucracies, systems of administration characterized by hierarchy, continuity, impersonality, and expertise.[25] The most distinctive thing about these bureaucracies---in fact the key to both their autonomy and dysfunction---is that they are constituted by, and are generative of, social rules. Internally, rules establish the standard operating procedures that enable IOs to function, they frame how bureaucrats 'define, categorize, and classify the world', they help make the world amenable to bureaucratic intervention, and 'rules can be constitutive of identity, particularly of the identity of the organization'.[26] Externally, endowed with multi-dimensional authority, IOs exercise power by transforming information into knowledge and formulating social rules. 'Sometimes the classification of the world, the fixing of meanings, and the diffusion of norms alter the incentives for particular policies or types of behaviour, and thus serve to regulate action. At other times such mechanisms hep to define social reality itself and thus provide the constitutional foundations for subsequent action that needs to be regulated'.[27]

A second example, this time from the security field, is David Kang's *China Rising*.[28] Kang set out to understand why China's rise has not caused other East Asian states to engage in balancing behaviour. For Sil and Katzenstein, his argument is eclectic because it blends realist, liberal, and constructivist considerations, resisting the pull of any one paradigm. But again, Kang's mixing and matching takes a distinctive form. Like Hollis, he acknowledges a set of base material conditions that enable and constrain China and its East Asian neighbours. As Sil and Katzenstein observe, 'Military and political capabilities set the constraints under which states operate'.[29] In addition to this, Kang's states are portrayed as rational actors, navigating through processes of regional change on the basis of their own interests, and mindful all the time of the perceived interests of others. Yet all of this takes place within a social universe; one in which ideas, intersubjective understandings, and mutually recognized social roles play a determining role. Indeed, in reflecting on the nature of his eclecticism, Kang argues that material conditions, such the balance of power and economic interdependence, 'are relatively minor factors in the calculations of states'.[30] The interests of East Asian States, he contends, are deeply

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[25] Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in World Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp.17-18.

[26] Ibid., p.18.

[27] Ibid., p.31.

[28] David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[29] Sil and Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms*, p.94.

[30] Ibid., p.96.

conditioned by perceptions and beliefs, many of which are subjective. But this domestic constitution of interests takes place within a wider intersubjective framework, one in which states are constructing their identities and statuses through interactions with others. Indeed, the great 'take home' of Kang's argument is that East Asian states, including China, are in the process of reconfiguring and renegotiating their individual role identities within an overarching hierarchical order.

Len Seabrooke's *The Social Sources of Financial Power* provides our final example.[31] Seeking to explain why different states have different international financial capacities, Seabrooke earns his eclecticist stripes by advancing a novel thesis that seeks to move beyond existing rational institutionalist, historical institutionalist, and economic constructivist arguments. As with previous examples, Seabrooke's argument takes material conditions and interests seriously: the states, rentiers, and low income groups that populate his story are all driven by economic imperatives. Moreover, these actors are all cast as rational; as autonomous entities acting for good reasons. Yet as the title of the book indicates, Seabrooke's argument is strongly social. The key factor determining the different international financial capacities of states is whether or not governments establish domestic financial practices---access to credit, property ownership, and taxation systems---that are seen as legitimate by low income groups. But as Seabrooke stresses, legitimacy is a social phenomenon; governments may cultivate it, but subordinate groups ordain it. Legitimacy rests firmly on social recognition, which is in turn based on perceptions rooted in intersubjective beliefs and social norms. One of the distinguishing characteristics of Seabrooke's approach is his emphasis on the everyday struggles waged by average people over the legitimacy of the national financial practices that affect their basic well-being. It is here that intersubjective understandings feature most prominently in his argument. As Sil and Katzenstein note, Seabrooke's understanding 'of rationality is deeply penetrated by "thick" substantive norms': the struggles of low income groups 'are informed by their perceptions of how the world works and how they should act, adhering to instrumental and value-oriented beliefs'.[32]

Conclusion

In articulating analytical eclecticism, Katzenstein and Sil and have caught the zeitgeist of contemporary IR. Their vision resonates with the widespread preference for middle range explanations over grand theory, with the growing frustration (nay boredom) with formulaic contests between hoary old paradigms, and with the general impatience with overly baroque theory,

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[31] Leonard Seabrooke, *The Social Sources of Financial Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[32] Sil and Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms*, p.114.

particularly of a metatheoretical kind. Yet analytical eclecticism cannot be all things to all IR scholars; it is a project with distinctive contours. The preceding discussion has sought to map these by exploring the underlying metatheoretical commitments that structure the eclecticist project. While analytical eclecticists bracket metatheoretical reflection, they still construct their analyses on metatheoretical assumptions. Epistemologically, eclecticism is almost exclusively an explanatory project, an 'American social science'. Ontologically, it is more interesting, however. While their work is structured by a set menu of ontological assumptions derived from realism, liberalism, and constructivism, eclecticists mix and match these in a distinctive, hermeneutic fashion.

Understanding these metatheoretical commitments is important, I think, if we are to realize analytical eclecticism's full potential. Two openings are particularly noteworthy. First, if it is indeed true that much eclecticist scholarship works within a particular ontological framework---one that connects materiality, rationality, and intersubjectivity in a distinctive way---then this invites a more systematic set of eclecticist reflections on these fundamental interconnections. These reflections need not be purely abstract; in fact, eclecticists are well placed to hone these assumptions through the concrete research in which they engage. One profitable focus for such research would be to better understand the relationship between the microfoundations undergirding the principal theories of IR. Hollis argued persuasively that a social or political theory cannot do without a 'model of man,' a set of basic assumptions about the nature of human agents and how they drive social and political change.[33] Not surprisingly, the major theories of IR each rest on such models, seen most vividly in the assumptions they make about what drives humans to act politically, the motive forces that propel them. At present, the major paradigms privilege one such force---power, security, utility maximization, or recognition---and build their theories on these singular foundations. Yet even the most casual observation suggests that these imperatives are deeply interconnected. Bringing analytical eclecticism to bear on these interconnections would greatly benefit the field.

Second, as will be clear from the preceding discussion, there is a frontier that analytical eclecticism is yet to cross---the boundary between the explanatory and the normative. There are several reasons why IR scholarship has become ever more removed from the realm of political practice. One, as Katzenstein and Sil stress, is the widespread preference for the defence of paradigms over the fathoming of real world problematics; another is the cultivated obscurantism that enchants many in the field (game theorists as much as post-structuralists). Sil and Katzenstein are right to chastise the field for this retreat into the stratosphere. Yet even if we put paradigms back in their appropriate place, and come to see language as a medium of communication not a badge of membership, it is not clear to me that this would make IR more 'relevant'. Good data and artfully crafted explanations of

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[33] Hollis, *Models of Man*, p.3.

how things work can illuminate the conditions of political action, but say nothing about the goals animating such action. More specifically, explanatory social science alone is silent on how conditions and goals can be reconciled in effective political practice.

If analytical eclecticists are serious in their practical intent, therefore, they need to be more ambitious in their eclecticism and step onto the difficult terrain between the empirical and the normative. As we have seen, it is their underlying epistemological commitments that keep them off this terrain. But not only are these commitments largely self-imposed, they are already under pressure from the eclecticists' own hermeneutic ontology. In addition to attributing constitutive significance to intersubjective phenomena, this sees individuals as rational actors who work creatively, though language, argument, and discourse, to shape the normative conditions of their social and political lives. Even if the purpose is only to comprehend how all of this works (a not insignificant task), the umbrella terms of explanation and causality now in vogue must encompass the finer grained tasks of understanding and constitution. If the epistemological bounds of analytical eclecticism have been stretched this far, why, in the name of greater practical relevance, should it not be expanded to encompass systematic normative inquiry as well?