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The Case for a Pluriversal IR: An Inquiry into Andean Cosmovision and Akan Philosophy

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Master of Arts Research Report

University of the Witwatersrand

Department of International Relations



"The Case for a Pluriversal IR: An Inquiry into Andean Cosmovision and Akan Philosophy"

A Research Report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities by:

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Under the supervision of:

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Declaration

I declare that I have written the following research report and have not used sources or means without declaration in the text. Any thoughts from others or quotations are clearly marked. This research report is submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This research report has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.



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Rheyna Pattni

24 June 2025

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Finally, to my late uncle Dilip or as I called him, *Dilluada*, thank you for everything that you have done for me, of which I am eternally grateful. I hope I have made you proud.

Abstract

This dissertation explores the potential of two indigenous bodies of thought from the Global South to both enrich and challenge traditional International Relations (IR) theory. By examining the Akan philosophy and the Andean Cosmovision, this dissertation suggests that these worldviews offer a radical departure from the anthropocentrism which is foundational to IR. In contrast to IR's human-centred ontological foundation, these systems of knowledge promote principles of relationality between all beings both living and non-living. This inquiry is scaffolded within the call for IR to adopt a pluriversal approach to knowledge given that traditional IR remains complicit as a site of epistemicide, linked to its colonial roots. Drawing on decolonial theory and indigenous epistemologies, this dissertation provides insights for how IR could better contend with the climate crisis in ways that promote relationality and reciprocity. By calling for a paradigm shift in the discipline and transcending anthropocentrism, this dissertation opens up alternative pathways and makes visible indigenous knowledge such that it can eventually be a site from which to theorize. The main contribution of this dissertation is not just its critique of the IR discipline but rather, how it goes beyond critiques to engage directly with indigenous bodies of knowledge from a pluriversal standpoint. In doing so, it hopes to contribute to the literature on thinking alternatively as a form of epistemic disobedience.

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Introduction to research

Hountondji (1987) when writing about the systemic challenges faced by the African scientist, draws an important comparison that is a useful starting point when seeking to contend with the shortfalls and limitations of the International Relations discipline – one of the primary aims of this dissertation. During colonization and imperialism, colonies were sources of raw materials which were collected through mining or agriculture, and the exploitation of humans as much as nature. The raw materials were not used locally but rather, were exported to the colonizing state whereby it was processed in factories and made into finished products. He termed this the 'industrial vacuum' – colonized states lacked the industries necessary to process raw materials, as was made to be the case through colonial orchestration (Hountondji 1987, 395). The colonial economy was 'extraverted,' organized in a way that was external to the colonies; the finished products were largely for the consumption of the people in the colonizing state (Hountondji 1987, 395).

Just as there is an industrial vacuum, there is similarly a 'theoretical vacuum' which is also rooted in colonialism and imperialism. Colonized states were the site of data collection and information. Data and information were then exported to the colonizing state usually for example, Britain, France, Portugal and the United States where theoretical experimentalism, processing and interpretation took place (Hountondji 1987, 384). Knowledge was made into a final product, packaged and in some cases, re-exported back to the colonized states. Importantly, the most crucial part of this scientific process is according to the scholar, neither the collection of data, nor the application of theoretical findings to the practical issues but the stage in the middle: the interpretation of raw information, the theoretical processing and the production of the ideas known as 'scientific statements' (Hountondji 1987, 384).

Both, the middle stage of the colonial economic system, during which raw goods are processed into final products, and the middle stage of the scientific process during which data is processed into theories and scientific statements, occur outside of the colonized states, they are always occurring 'elsewhere' (Hountondji 1987, 382). The missing stages are the most important ones, the ones during which transformation takes place. Tangibly speaking, he emphasizes how it is elsewhere that the best universities, research centres, editorial teams, material and scientific bases of the scientific journals, scientific discourse and activity, libraries and publishing houses are (Hountondji 1987, 383). Adding to the complexity of his narrative and analogy, he posits:

“scientific activity appears to me, in the last resort, as a specific mode of economic activity in the wider sense, in the sense where economy means the process of human transformation of nature, as a whole, and not just agricultural, industrial and trade business” (Hountondji 1987, 385). In this way, Hountondji (1987) highlights how human transformation, progression and advancement, catalysed through scientific inquiry, is an activity reserved for the colonizer.

Although he does not shy away from describing how progress has since been made; that there are more sites of theorizing in the periphery, that it does more than just export data, and that scientific facilities have been developed (Hountondji 1987, 386), he is equally candid about how new forms of scientific dependence persist and how this is a result of a system of power which continues to reproduce itself.

That there exists both an ‘industrial vacuum’ and a ‘theoretical vacuum’ within previously colonized states is no mere coincidence. Nor is it coincidental that there are similarities between the idea of a ‘theoretical vacuum’ and investigations into why there are no non-Western theories in International Relations (Acharya and Buzan 2007). That is, Hountondji’s (1987) analogy signals two starting points that this dissertation investigates further. First, that theorizing from the Global South is lacking – in this context, it is lacking within International Relations. Secondly, colonialism and imperialism are crucial phenomena to engage with, if we are to understand why there is a lack of theorizing in the first place.

Investigating the lack of theories from the Global South – which refers to countries with a history of colonization and which continue to face Western domination in multiple ways (Kothari et al. 2019, xxii) – is an important endeavour. Theories are crucial mechanisms which underpin any discipline and have implications for the narratives and broadly speaking, the knowledge a discipline produces. It is an even more important endeavour for IR, within the context of climate change which has increasingly challenged the discipline’s efficacy in contending with unprecedented threats to international peace and security.

At even an increase of just 1.1°C of the earth’s temperature, extreme weather events have become more frequent, sea levels have risen and so has the loss of life (IPCC 2023). Climate change transcends borders, undermines sovereignty and questions IR’s traditional understanding of security. Unsurprisingly, IR has not yet engaged sufficiently or critically with this issue; its traditional approaches are premised on adaptation efforts and mitigation practices that are unsustainable (Pereira 2017). Given its global and unparalleled nature, it is a crisis

which cannot be adequately managed within the existing frameworks of IR. If the IR discipline is to adequately address the climate crisis, it must first contend with its own systemic issues. This dissertation then, lies at the intersection between the two.

This dissertation attempts to push forward efforts at theorizing from the Global South to expand the theoretical boundaries of the discipline. By investigating the West African Akan philosophy and the south American Andean Cosmovision it makes visible these bodies of knowledge within IR but also demonstrates how we can better contend with the climate crisis through these worldviews. In doing so, it suggests that IR must adopt pluriversalism as an approach to knowledge production such that its research agendas and dialogues can deepen and widen. Most importantly, however, this dissertation makes the case that pluriversalism is a crucial tool of decolonization because the discipline is currently complicit with what de Sousa Santos (2014) has termed "epistemicide": the silencing, marginalization, and even the annihilation of forms of knowledge.

The structure of the dissertation is as follows. The first part of chapter one engages in a literature review in which some of the most pertinent critiques of the IR discipline are outlined and discussed. In taking forward the starting point that Hountondji (1987) highlights, the link between the lack of theory from the Global South in IR and the discipline's colonial and imperial origins are made clear. Further, this section engages with the ideas of epistemicide, the Colonial Matrix of Power, and racism to adequately contend with the main issues at hand. Having established the state of the discipline, and where this dissertation is situated, the second part of chapter one outlines the research design in greater detail. It lists the main research questions of the dissertation in addition to other aspects such as the rationale and the case selection justification.

The second chapter focuses primarily on the idea of pluriversalism, what it entails and what a pluriversal IR could look like. It establishes the framework within which the Akan philosophy and Andean Cosmovision are respectively engaged. The third and fourth chapters are structured similarly; both first describe the main tenets of the respective bodies of knowledge before discussing deeper, their ethical underpinnings, principles and some of the challenges encountered when engaging with indigenous bodies of thought.

Chapter five concludes this dissertation by relating the findings of chapters three and four to the issue of climate change in IR. First, it characterizes the extent of the climate crisis and

thereafter, unpacks in greater detail, how the IR discipline currently fails to adequately engage with climate change as a result of parochial traditional theories. Finally, it suggests, in line with the Akan philosophy and Andean Cosmovision, that IR ought to de-centre the human, opting for an anti-anthropocentric approach to the climate crisis. What follows immediately is the literature review.

Chapter 1: Critique of International Relations: The Role of Racism and the Inheritance of Colonial Ideology.

(A) Literature review

Introduction and aims

Revisiting the narratives, assumptions and theories that necessarily make up a discipline is an important exercise that scholars of any discipline ought to do (Grovogui 2006, 1). The exercise is crucial because it reveals the distances between accounts of reality and reality itself (Grovogui 2006, 1). Given that academia and how the world functions are co-constitutive, neglecting to uncover gaps and fill them can have consequences for how we operate and live in the world (Grovogui 2006).

The gaps between accounts of reality in IR and reality itself, are wide and extremely visible. This dissertation focuses on the issue of theories and theorizing within IR. The IR discipline has been subject to much critique on the basis that it is parochial, that it fails to adequately theorize effectively and that it does not engage with ideas and theories from the Global South (Tickner 2003). The discipline largely functions according to a Euro-American research agenda; its theoretical contours have not changed significantly and traditional IR theories such as realism, liberalism and constructivism remain at the forefront (Tickner 2003, 298).

Moreover, generating theory is seen as an enterprise that can only occur in the West, yet is applied to the non-West (Grovogui 2006, 5). Accounts of the 'international' of 'history' and of reality are founded on incomplete and biased accounts of international events and history which reinforces the Euro-American hegemony (Grovogui 2006, 6). The West has attached limits to what can constitute theory, who is allowed to theorize and what kinds of theorizing is possible which has resulted in the restricting of the possibility of the non-West to emerge as a site of knowledge production (Tickner 2013, 638). This has been reflected in investigations into why there is no non-Western theory (Acharya and Buzan 2007).

This chapter and broadly speaking, this dissertation engages with this issue: the lack of theories from the Global South in IR. It attempts to contend with this issue and consider the Akan philosophy and Andean Cosmovision as sites for theorizing in IR. In order to do so, this chapter builds upon the starting points as outlined by Hountondji (1987); the 'extraversion' of

theorizing and the role of colonialism by analysing thoroughly, the connection between the two. The primary aim of this chapter is to engage with the most pertinent critiques of the discipline and to echo the calls for a pluriversal approach to knowledge production. The chapter (i) considers the inextricable links between the origins of IR and colonialism; thereafter it (ii) employs and links the 'Colonial Matrix of Power (CMP)', the concept of 'epistemicide' and racism as a framework for problematizing IR. Finally, (iii) the chapter discusses what epistemic disobedience, decolonizing and decolonial theory entail in the context of IR.

The Origins of International Relations

Considering the origins of the IR discipline is important because embedded within the origins of a discipline are the certain narratives, assumptions and understandings of the world. Those narratives continue to shape and determine the boundaries of the discipline, and they inform what are considered to be legitimate knowledge and legitimate areas of inquiry (Thakur and Vale 2020, 151). In this case, engaging with investigations into the origins of IR allow us to better understand why theorizing from the Global South is lacking.

Vale and Thakur (2020) claim that IR was developed during the colonial rule of South Africa. They posit that the very making of the idea of the 'international' perhaps the most fundamental concept of IR, is linked to the making of South Africa (Thakur and Vale 2020, 2). To adequately engage with their claim, discussing some of the contextual factors that led to this linking is important. Up until the Anglo-Boer War, British imperialism was considered a noble cause and received complete support, even by the left liberals at the time. However, the Anglo-Boer war became a turning point; dissatisfaction with the war and the imperial project of the British quickly devalued the rhetoric of the British empire (Thakur and Vale 2020, 4). The slow decline of the British Empire was attributed by many to the Anglo-Boer war that severely impacted the empire financially, militarily and morally. Intellectuals such as John Hobson, Leonard Courney and William Stead increasingly opposed the commonwealth idea. Britain was threatened by the increasing hegemonic power of Japan and the moral challenge that British imperialists faced from intellectual circles (Thakur and Vale 2020, 5). Not only were there concerns related to the physical and moral state of the empire there were also political and social concerns that it needed to contend with (Thakur and Vale 2020, 6).

First, the growth of capitalism had implications for the political economy of the empire because new and increasing levels of bureaucratic control were necessary. In the context of South Africa, this was especially important because of the discovery of gold and diamonds. Second, there were increasing calls for statehood and autonomy within the system of empire not only in South Africa by the white settler colony, but also in Australia, New Zealand and Newfoundland (Thakur and Vale 2020, 6). This questioned the relationship between empire and state and how those would necessarily interact. Third, the issue of resistance had become increasingly impactful on the British Empire. White people throughout the settler colonies resisted Asian immigration and in response, immigrant communities resisted the denial of civil and political rights under the empire (Thakur and Vale 2020, 7). As such, there were increasing questions about imperial citizenship and rights that the British Empire had to contend with. Finally, the issue of race became a challenge for the empire. Social Darwinism could no longer be used as a justification in an empire where more 'non-Europeans' were present (Thakur and Vale 2020, 7). Moreover, Japan's victory over Russia in 1904 was a catalyst for the claim to 'civilizational parity' with Europeans and Americans by Japan, China and India (Thakur and Vale 2020, 7). This increased the anxieties of the British Empire who believed that political power could land in the hands of non-Europeans, and with greater questioning of social Darwinism, that there would be no need and justification for colonialism (Thakur and Vale 2020, 7). Put together, the decline of the British Empire and the rise of these four socio-political issues necessitated the rethinking of how the empire was to function should it wish to survive and succeed. As Vale and Thakur argue (2020, 153): "The 'International' as a space for thinking about the globe as a singular space, was fundamentally conditional upon the colonial expansion reaching its finality."

There were two important figures who pioneered the imperial project of modern statehood, Alfred Millner and Lionel Curtis (Thakur and Vale 2020). Milner was initially tasked with reasserting British authority over the Boer republic, however, the more pertinent agenda was to construct a new state which would be a model for the entirety of the British Empire (Thakur and Vale 2020, 10). Milner put together a group that came to be known as 'Milner's Kindergarten' which consisted of British men who had studied at Oxford, one of whom was Lionel Curtis. Emerging from Milner's Kindergarten was the 'Round Table' which was similarly an intellectual space for debating the various socio-political concerns of the British Empire and the new project of statehood (Thakur and Vale 2020, 11). Of both these groups,

Curtis was a key guiding figure for the intellectual discussions and ideas produced. Importantly, he was the founder of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, also known as Chatham House (Thakur and Vale 2020, 11). Milner's Kindergarten and the Round Table effected practises such as the control of urban influx through pass laws, the creation of reserves and the idea and implementation of indirect rule. Additionally, the group worked on the organic union of the four colonies in South Africa, such that this could be replicated elsewhere (Thakur and Vale 2020, 12).

The Selbourne Memorandum – a document intended to specify how sovereign unity would take place and what it would look like in context of the colonies - was a task given to a members-only association known as the Fortnightly Club, also born out of Milner's Kindergarten (Thakur and Vale 2020, 11). The discussion of the Fortnightly Club is important in two ways. First, the ideas of statehood, race and empire, developed through the club, were practised in South Africa and exported to other British colonies constituting a new form of statehood and empire; a renewed approach to imperialism and colonialism. Secondly, and equally important, the very practise and practical organisation of the Fortnightly Club served as the basis for the development of International Relations as a discipline and the functioning of its journals (Thakur and Vale 2020, 12). That is, the model for the Institute of International Affairs, pioneered by Curtis, drew from the structure of the Fortnightly Club.

Furthermore, the ideas produced in the Fortnightly Club were propagated through the journal *'The State/De Staat'* which articulated the need for a common statehood. Two books, '*The Government of South Africa'* and *'The Framework of the Union'* were written by Curtis and the method of his writing in these books were the foundation of the 'scientific method' specific to the discipline of IR (Thakur and Vale 2020, 12). Curtis would conduct field research through interviews, draft his ideas and then circulate it privately amongst allies to constitute a kind of peer review. It would then be published and used in the creation and development of policies. Curtis travelled to the different colonies of the British Empire spreading the ideas that had been formed in South Africa (Thakur and Vale 2020, 12). Notably the book, '*The Commonwealth of Nations'* made well-known the idea of the commonwealth. Before concluding what Thakur and Vale's (2020) investigations into IR and South Africa can tell us about the discipline now, it is important to consider exactly what the beliefs and ideas of Curtis and generally the Round Table, Fortnightly Club and Milner's Kindergarten were.

Curtis believed that the Commonwealth should be a model for world government. He assisted in drafting the constitutional schemes of India and Ireland. Curtis essentially called for 'world government' which would be guided by the principles inherent to Christianity. In other words, the idea of the 'white man's burden' was reconfigured (Thakur and Vale 2020, 26). The foundational principle of the commonwealth was that individuals have a duty towards each other. Rather than a duty solely towards the state or the monarch, the idea of mutual individual obligation was posited: "Not only did this sense of obligation contribute towards a progressive polity, but through it, such a society would also morally uplift the individual. State and individual were therefore communally linked to each other on an elevated plane." (Thakur and Vale 2020, 26). However, the sense of duty differed depending on who the subject was. White people had a paternal duty towards non-whites and a fraternal duty towards each other (Thakur and Vale 2020, 31). The paternal duty towards the colonized populations was attributed to what Curtis believed was their inherent "backwardness." Curtis's ideas were rooted in theological arguments and social Darwinism (Thakur and Vale 2020, 27). The idea that white and specifically British people were responsible for the governance of colonized people was widely accepted. He suggested that the federal union of Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand would impose and collect taxes from its colonies to fund its international functions (Thakur and Vale 2020, 27). Curtis was able to think about how to incorporate non-Western people into the British imperial project in a way that would maintain their oppression and subordination. Hence, Thakur and Vale (2020, 30) posit that "social Darwinist explanations of race and colonialism were core underlying assumptions of International Relations, especially of the British idealist kind."

There are important links between the discussion of Curtis and the discipline of International Relations. First, his ideas were influential at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 during which the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations was formed (Thakur and Vale 2020, 33). One of the main issues that needed to be contended with following the end of the first World War was the organization and governance of the colonies of Germany and its allies. The idea of 'mandates', an idea developed by Curtis, Phillip Kerr and Jan Smuts, who also played key roles in the development and orchestration of the Apartheid system in South Africa, was put forward and later implemented (Thakur and Vale 2020, 33). Additionally, Curtis urged the West to adopt principles of paternalism when engaging with what he believed were 'underdeveloped' and 'uncivilized' people and regions. Furthermore, when referring to German South-West

Africa, or Namibia, he argued that it should be awarded to South Africa because of the peace that had been established by Germany. German colonization, however, had resulted in the extermination of 80% of Heroro people and 50% of the Namaqua people (Thakur and Vale 2020, 36). Vale and Thakur (2020,36) note that for Curtis, "race was not a domestic but an international issue that needed to be dealt with by agreeing on universal principles of conduct." That is, Curtis, in addition to pioneering the idea of the Commonwealth Nations of Britain, refashioning and renewing imperialism, assisted in the ideological underpinning of the League of Nations, the development of the Apartheid system and broadly speaking, influenced the trajectory of colonies and their people. Thakur and Vale (2020) make clear that Curtis is not just a figure who should be known and studied in history because of their impact, but rather, that he was a key figure in the development of the idea of the 'international' of 'statehood' and of the discipline of IR.

Specifically relating to the academy, Curtis believed that knowledge preceded reality and thus, intellectuals played a significant role in shaping public opinion and subsequently, reality. Curtis founded the Royal Institute of International Affairs on this very idea. Hence, Thakur and Vale (2020, 36) suggest: "From the very outset, then, IR was a normative project." The idea of sovereignty was a construct that could be shaped and changed. South Africa was an important site for Curtis; his aims succeeded precisely because it was an orchestrated and thought-out creation and implementation of knowledge and ideas. They also point to how these ideas were linked to institution building. Both, the founding of Chatham House and the networks he created when touring the US led to the development of several IR institutes which later became tools for scientific study within the discipline during the interwar period (Thakur and Vale 2020). Moreover, the IR institutes opened in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India and were all tied to Chatham House. The journals that these institutes established were tied to Curtis's method of study which in essence, claimed that the ideas of an individual constitute scientific inquiry even where there are explicitly subjective viewpoints (Thakur and Vale 2020, 39).

In stating that, "These ideas which were so central to IR as an intellectual practice as well as to the founding of its most prestigious institutions, were intertwined with the goal of the creation of a global racial empire," Thakur and Vale (2020, 31-31) make explicit, the connections between the foundations of IR, colonialism, imperialism and racism. Their work is important in highlighting that it is not just problematic that IR understands the world through one

ontology but specifically, that the ontology it operates from is an inherently racist and a deeply divisive one. Moreover, their work suggests that the concepts of the 'international' of 'statehood' and of 'sovereignty' ought to be questioned not on the basis of their efficacy or inefficacy in understanding and navigating global governance, but on the basis that they are inextricably linked to hierarchical, racist and colonial origins. In this way, uncovering the origins of IR allows us to see the links the discipline has to racism and colonialism and consequently, to understand how those origins necessarily inform knowledge production in the discipline. I engage with this further in the following section relating to the Colonial Matrix of Power.

Vale and Thakur (2020) do not claim that the links between IR and South Africa constitute the only site of development of IR. In fact, they suggest that there are likely many other sites for the development of IR given the vast number of colonies. Importantly, they suggest that those similar accounts ought to be uncovered and engaged with because they continue to shape the IR discipline.

Acharya (2022) draws similar links between racism, IR and the modern world order by considering the role of Locke, Hobbes and Kant in the institutionalization of racism and slavery. Acharya (2022, 26) suggests that European and American modern world orders are co-constitutive of the modern world order; both invest superiority on the West, adopt a capitalist mode of production, uphold Western constructs such as the Westphalian state system and importantly, racism functions as the foundation of both world orders. Locke, one of the founding fathers of Liberalism, encouraged and aided in the legal adoption of slavery in the US; his ideas played a key role in the drafting of the 1669 Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, which allowed the ownership, power and authority over slaves (Acharya 2022, 28-29). Acharya (2022) engages further with the ideas of Kant and posits that whilst he may have been positioned as anti-imperialist, his ideals were still steeped in racism. However, Gani (2017) engages more critically with Kant's racism.

Gani (2017) situates her work within the context of the European Union (EU) and the increasing trend of its inhospitality specifically toward non-Western refugees and asylum seekers. She points to the rise of xenophobia and white supremacist extremism, highlighting the need to reevaluate ideas of hospitality and cosmopolitanism. Interrogating Kantian hospitality, she frames her arguments around a pertinent question: whether the inhospitality of the EU can be considered a departure from Enlightenment norms, or whether it is a logical

continuity of Europe's normative roots (Gani 2017, 426). Gani (2017), in answering that it is indeed a continuation of Europe's normative roots, links the work of Kant to the European Union illustrating how modern-day institutions uphold Kant's work and racist ideologies. Moreover, Gani (2017) highlights that Kantian thinking prevails precisely because its underlying premises of racism are invisibilised.

Kant's ideas arguably underpin the European Refugee Protection Programme, the European Refugee Resettlement Programme, the EU's asylum policy and the European Convention of Human Rights (Gani 2017, 428). At its core, Kantian hospitality is a collection of legal obligations including the idea that all parties have the right to communicate and express their call for hospitality and second, that a party can reject the call for hospitality, only if this does not result in further harm upon them (Gani 2017, 431). That is, the right to reject is awarded but only on the guarantee of the guest's safety. This also means that calls for hospitality cannot be ignored (Gani 2017, 431). These rights are supposedly awarded to all citizens by Kant as they are participants in global citizenship. Kant imagined this to be practised between parties coming from different civic entities. There are several important limitations of Kantian hospitality that Gani (2017) points to, including limitations Benhabib highlights, despite her overall endorsement of it. The Kantian right to visit is allowed, however, to be a permanent visitor, one requires a special agreement. This points to how whilst there is a duty on the host to prevent the party seeking hospitality from experiencing further harm, there is no duty to necessarily go beyond this. Moreover, questions about what constitutes harm to one's life and who enforces these legal duties, if under cosmopolitan design there is no governing body, remain unanswered (Gani 2017, 432). As such, Kantian hospitality is voluntary. Further critiques point to how the idea of hospitality was not: "to necessitate refuge, but chiefly the right not to be treated as an enemy when arriving on foreign soil" (Gani 2017, 433).

Gani (2017, 433) stresses the importance of situating Kant's work within the period and context it was written because when doing so, it becomes visible how, even though the idea of hospitality was written in the context of European colonization it was still underpinned by racism. That is, at its core, Kantian hospitality refers to the regulation of European travel and imperialism. However, it was developed with only Europeans in mind (Gani 2017, 433). One of the main reasons then why this is often misinterpreted as a protection of non-Europeans, is that Kant was supposedly situated in an anti-imperialist position. However, Kant never challenges colonization or imperialism on the basis of race, but rather on the basis of greed

(Gani 2017, 434). For Kant, doing away with colonization is not related to it being an unethical and racist practice, but rather, doing away with colonization is important to Kant because it is only then that Europeans will practice true cosmopolitanism. That is, only 'civilized' communities, according to Kant, could be cosmopolitan and attain this through the end of colonization (Gani 2017, 434). Gani (2017) points out how this enabled Kant's racism to remain uninterrogated.

Kant's racism cannot go undetected, especially in his earlier works where he justified slavery and promoted racial hierarchy; that the white race is 'superior'. Moreover, according to Gani (2017, 437), at the time at which he published his work on cosmopolitanism, his earlier essays on race were republished: his essay on race in 1785 was republished in 1795 and his essays on race in 1785 and 1788 were published again in 1793. It is not just that Kant's ideas are underpinned by his racism, but importantly that both scholars and disciplines at large, erase this history of racism inherent in these very ideas. Gani (2017, 439) thus illustrates that there are two ways in which erasure takes place; first in the division of the law of hospitality from the context within which it was conceived and second, in that IR and political theorists consider Kant's work in abstraction from his other works on race and biology which are telling of his views altogether. Hence, in linking it back to the EU, she posits that Europe's inhospitality is: "A reflection of an imperialist epistemic that has shaped academic discourse, perception and practice towards non-Europeans, non-white races. This coloniality has been inherited by cosmopolitan theorists, or 'second-generation Kantians' who draw upon Kant's law of hospitality for their own ruminations on contemporary issues of asylum and refugees." (Gani 2017, 445).

Discussing Kant and Locke, the racism that underpins their work, and the erasure of that racism is important because it highlights the connection between their ideas, IR as a discipline, and institutions such as the EU, which play significant roles in the modern world order and upholding a Western hegemony. Figures like Curtis, Kant and Locke amongst others, in their founding of ideas like sovereignty, cosmopolitanism, and liberalism, have tied colonialism and racism to the foundations of IR.

In ways similar to how Gani (2017) argued that Kantian hospitality was not universally applicable, Grovogui (2001) suggests that the idea of sovereignty and generally, the Westphalian system does not function in the same way for the non-West as it does within the West. Grovogui (2001) highlights that there have been critiques within IR of the idea of

sovereignty due to the increase in global phenomena such as the flow of refugees and the spread of pandemics which have questioned its efficacy. However, those critiques are still complicit in misrepresenting the non-West, especially African states by pushing forward the narrative that African states lack credible state capacity. These misrepresentations necessarily promote the idea that Western states inherently have an organic coherence between state and nation, with the stated desire to maintain this relation and credible state capacity (Grovogui 2001, 30). Furthermore, he makes clear that the idea of sovereignty is a continuation of Western norms linked to imperialism and colonialism, rather than a deviation from it, in an effort to refute the idea that post-colonial sovereignty has necessarily refashioned itself from its origins. Put more clearly: "The concurrent regimes of sovereignty remained genealogically connected to a historical teleology that unified the base moral imaginary: Western hegemony." (Grovogui 2001, 31). Grovogui (2001) points to the case of Belgium, Switzerland and the Congo to substantiate his claims.

Switzerland and Belgium are examples of Western states that were incongruent with the Westphalian model. Grovogui (2001, 36) notes that they lacked the majority of the features of a sovereign state, emerged out of the revolt of people who did not want to be subsumed under the state of the Netherlands. European powers namely Britain, France, Russia, Austria and Prussia guaranteed their survival and independence using the threat of force and prohibiting political interference in the affairs of the state. Similarly, the Swiss Confederacy lacked internal unity and ethical unification. Additionally, it also lacked a centralized authority that other European sovereign states had. Yet, both, Switzerland and Belgium, despite being deficient in their abilities, were awarded sovereignty and integrated into the European system of states. Grovogui (2001, 37) points to how this was done in an effort to achieve political and economic ends, namely the exploitation of the Congo for European gain. This was how Belgium emerged from the scramble for Africa as a colonial power.

In contrast, the Congo, or rather the polities in Central Africa prior to its colonization, were connected by kingdoms and political entities. Before Western imperialism and the slave trade, these kingdoms and political entities were connected and in contact with Sudanese, Arab, and even European officials, traders and merchants (Grovogui 2001, 38). Colonialism constituted a: "New Western imaginary and a related moral order which transgress[ed] the spirit of centuries of diplomatic contact and mutual recognition between European and African political and religious entities." (Grovogui 2001, 38). Hence, the status of the Congo was linked to that

of Belgium and Switzerland under the new imaginary. Belgium and Switzerland have since 1885, benefitted from the infringement of the sovereignty of the Congo (Grovogui 2001). The extent to which resources and labour were exploited cannot be overemphasized. Although the Congo was formerly colonized by Belgium, Switzerland was party to the post-colonial debilitation of the Congo.

Considering the history of the Congo and its links to Belgium and Switzerland is important because in doing so, Grovogui (2001) highlights how the idea of sovereignty is not based on universally applied ethics and criteria, but rather, is inextricably tied to colonialism and the decision of Western powers to establish certain rules and norms for the subordination of the non-West. Hence, he posits: "European powers effected the colonial regime of sovereignty by establishing a hierarchy of subjectivity – based upon an ethical imaginary which organizes moral solicitude according to a number of subjective considerations: ethnic, racial, ideological, political and/or economic. This regime privileged the will, desires, and interests of colonial powers at the expense of the colonized." (Grovogui 2001, 33).

Grovogui's (2001) work is important because it makes explicit, the connection between the idea of sovereignty, that which is foundational to IR, and colonialism. The ideas put forward by Grovogui (2001) and Vale and Thakur (2020) supplement each other in suggesting that the concepts of 'the international' and of 'sovereignty' as the foundations of IR and through their inextricable links to colonialism and racism, reproduce divisive thinking in the discipline, thinking that is symptomatic of a Western ontology of the world.

Before concluding the section about the origins of IR, I briefly engage with important points put forward by Taylor (2012) on how the US's rise to hegemony is inextricable from its violent imperial projects within the context of Latin America, and Krishna (2022) on the system of meritocracy that underpins IR. I begin by engaging with the work of Taylor (2012). The colonization of Latin America was characterized by massacres, displacement, the destruction of the environment, deception of the indigenous communities and the assertion of the colonizer's military, political and intellectual supposed superiority (Taylor 2012, 392). Narratives such as that of the 'white pioneer' further displaced indigenous people from their land and origin. That is, the domination over Latin America was not merely territorial, but epistemic and ethnic too (Taylor 2012, 392). The conquistadores were painted to be enlightened, bearers of progress in contrast to the idea that the indigenous people of the Americas were violent, lacking in intelligent and anarchical (Taylor 2012, 392). Taylor (2012)

points to how the rise of the US and its attainment of the status as global hegemony has only been possible because of colonial and imperial exploitation, and the idea that Latin America was inherently racially inferior. As such, Taylor (2012, 303) suggests that to adequately contend with the US as a site of hegemonic power, IR ought to "Take seriously not only its economic imperialism and interventionist bullying, but the coloniality of power relationship, replete with epistemological and racial dimensions."

Krishna (2022) questions why the traditional narratives about the origins of IR, of the idea of statehood and sovereignty remain so central to the discipline of IR as it has evolved into the present, despite efforts to uncover the racism and colonialism tied to those narratives by scholars such as Vale and Thakur (2020) and Grovogui (2001). In answering, Krishna (2022) suggests that both the practise and discipline are based on a system of meritocracy. He applies the idea of merit and meritocracy that is usually spoken of in the context of individuals, to the context of nations. Krishna (2022, 90) rests his argument on the following characterization of merit: the attribution of accumulated capital, supposed socio-political strength, sovereignty and cohesion of a state solely to the state's supposed innate qualities and efforts. The system of meritocracy occludes inequality, theft and exploitation which are crucial in understanding why states gain hegemonic status. In the context of the West and non-West and put more clearly, meritocracy entails "Active politics of forgetting the histories that produced inequalities and their frequent mystification into ideas such as inborn ability, pedigree, genius, intelligence, tradition – or in other words, into merit." (Krisha 2022, 91).

Once again, figures central to IR are implicated; the work of Waltz and Keohane are symptomatic of meritocratic thinking. In explaining why some countries are wealthier than others, Waltz suggests that the wealth of Western states is solely attributed to its use of technology and ability to organize its economies efficiently – an ability that the non-West lacks (Krishna 2022, 97). Krishna (2022, 99 - 100) highlights how Keohane posits in *After Hegemony* that the differing levels of equality between the West and non-West is not attributed to their interactions with each other; that they necessarily developed in a manner isolated from each other. The idea that Western, developed nations have a more successful and effective approach to economic development and conduct with other states is evidence of the system of meritocracy underpinning IR because it is based on an ahistorical and incorrect account of the relations between the West and non-West and the history of colonialism and imperialism. That is, IR reproduces this meritocracy.

Pointing out the system of meritocracy is important because it serves as one explanation for why the traditional narratives about the origins of IR prevail and why those narratives will always occlude the discipline's ties to racism and colonialism. By framing the discipline's delegitimization of the non-West as a function of its supposed lack of qualities such as sovereignty, it will always hide the racism and colonial thinking that instead fuels those narratives. Hence Krishna (2022, 92) suggests that "This is the significance not of what actually happened at Westphalia in 1648, but rather the significance of why Westphalia persists as an obdurate myth in the narration of IR."

This section has sought to clarify how the foundations of the IR discipline itself, some of the key scholars that IR's theoretical foundations lie on such as Kant and Locke, and the most pertinent concepts within the discipline; the idea of the 'international' and the idea of 'sovereignty' and the 'state' are inextricably tied to its colonial and imperial roots which are inherently racist too. Having established this basis, the following section contends specifically with how these colonial roots are consequential for the kinds of thinking that occur in IR, its relationship with knowledge and knowledge production.

Colonial Matrix of Power, Epistemicide and Racism as Frameworks for Problematizing IR

Before considering the influence colonialism had on thinking in IR, it is important to clarify what exactly is meant by the terms ontology and epistemology as these are used frequently in describing knowledge and knowledge production. Ontology refers to the study of what is believed to exist, how one understands reality in reference to what exists, and the implications that has on how we understand the world (Quijano 2007, 169). Ontological viewpoints influence what is deemed important to research about the world, the kinds of questions we ask about reality and therefore, also how we research the world. Related to ontology, epistemology refers to the study of knowledge; what is deemed to be 'valid' knowledge. Epistemology considers how we have come to know the world as we presume it to be, how we can gain more knowledge about the world and the relationship between those seeking to know and research, and the knowledge itself is (Mignolo 2009, 162). Based on this understanding, and the links between IR and its colonial origins as has been established in the previous section, it can be said that IR operates from a Western ontology which has far-reaching consequences on the

knowledge produced within IR and what is considered to be acceptable knowledge to being with. In further unpacking this, it is important to turn to the ideas of modernity and rationality (Quijano 2007) as a function of colonialism.

Colonialism included both the systematic repression and expropriation of knowledge (Quijano 2007, 169). Knowledge that was deemed useful such as knowledge pertaining to mining, agriculture, and engineering was appropriated by colonial powers (Quijano 2007, 169). However, knowledge that was deemed to be useless was repressed. This repression occurred over beliefs, ideas, symbols, modes of knowing, perspectives, methods of producing knowledge, of resources and of the expression of knowledge whether it be intellectual, visual or spiritual (Quijano 2007, 169). In doing so, colonial powers imposed an image of their knowledge, their ontological understanding of the world, and their patterns of producing knowledge. One of the ideas that underpinned the repression of knowledge by colonial powers and the colonial system at large, was that non-Western people were considered to be inherently 'backward' and 'traditional' (Quijano 2007). This is best described when Quijano (2007, 171) says: "The intersubjective universe produced by the entire Eurocentered capitalist colonial power was elaborated and formalized by the Europeans and established in the world as an exclusively European product and as a universal paradigm of knowledge and of the relation between humanity and the rest of the world." That is, European ideas about the world, because they were considered inherently modern and superior were made to be a universal paradigm of knowledge, destroying other ways of understanding and being in the world.

I first engage with the idea of rationality which is visible through the Western subject-object relationship. The subject refers to an isolated individual which is constituted in itself, because of its capacity for self-reflection. The object is characterized as an entity which is both different to the subject and inherently external to it. Quijano (2007, 172) critiques this relationship on the basis of two main issues. First, as per modern Western thought, the individual is seen to be a rational being who can produce knowledge independently which undermines the presence and importance of social and collective aspects of reality. That is, knowledge is not just a personal and isolated discovery but rather inherently shared and collective. Thus, the subject-object binary denies that knowledge is intersubjective. Second and resultantly, the subject-object binary distorts our understanding of knowledge by framing knowledge as a simplistic act of understanding the nature of something external to oneself. In this way, it is unsurprising

to Quijano (2007, 173) that knowledge, through Western ontology, is viewed in the same way as property.

Situating this idea more broadly, Quijano (2007) essentially argues that Western emphasis on the subject-object binary is a characteristic of colonial thinking which was used as a justification of its superiority over other ways of thinking, knowing and being in the world. Only Western thinking is considered to be rational and other ways of thinking are not only different but considered inferior by nature (Quijano 2007, 174). Hence, colonialism negated every other way of thinking, knowing and being in the world. Importantly, the European paradigm of rational knowledge was not just a temporary occurrence but is part of a systematic structure of power and European domination over the rest of the world. The Colonial Matrix of Power speaks to the systemic nature of the repression of knowledge. However, before discussing CMP, I engage with how Sabaratnam (2011) builds onto Quijano's (2007) ideas in suggesting that the same subject-object binary is employed in discourse within IR.

Sabaratnam (2011, 7) suggests that IR sees the world through the 'subjecthoods' of colonial and imperial Euro-American thinking. First, IR reinforces hierarchical relationships between formerly colonizing and colonized people. This is evident in narratives, like the ones Grovogui (2001) refutes as discussed above, that previously colonized states are inherently dysfunctional and that states in the north are characterized by stability and peace. In this instance, the subject is the West and the object of inquiry, non-Western states. Additionally, discourse about foreign aid to countries within the Global South allows for the persistence of imperial structures (Sabaratnam 2011, 8). The idea of 'good governance' allows for international legal norms which were created to justify and permit colonialism, to continue (Sabaratnam 2011, 8). This is precisely because countries in the south become 'objectified' in discourse; they are always characterized as a 'fixed other' lacking in agency and resources (Sabaratnam 2011, 8).

Secondly, the West is the primary subject of world history (Sabaratnam 2011, 9). World history is underpinned by the belief that the historical trajectory of the US and Europe, its enlightenment, development and modernization forms the basis of political thought in the international system. IR takes this 'world history' as its starting point; that Euro-America is more technologically and economically advanced, that it is able to contend with international coexistence through the ideas of sovereignty and that it was the origin of enlightened, universal thought (Sabaratnam 2011, 9). Even when historical accounts reference another subject, there is always an underlying European subject, in relation to the context at hand (Sabaratnam 2011,

10). That the West is placed at the centre of world history allows its control over the narratives about the Global South to continue, and control over the practise of international relations too. Not only has this resulted in bias and incomplete narrations of history, but it is also equally the repression of alternative histories and understandings of histories which do not place the West at the centre.

Grovogui (2006) provides an example of how the West is always centred in history. Disciplinary narratives suggest that World War Two destroyed Europe bringing to light the weaknesses of the previous world order (Grovogui 2006, 6). Further, the war was between the Allied powers, comprised of Western liberal democracies, and the Axis powers which included Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Japan. The narrative continues that following the war, the US reconstructed Europe and attempt to reform the Axis powers into liberal democracies. Thereafter, the Soviet Union sought world domination leading to the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Grovogui 2006, 6). Importantly, this narrative of world history centres Euro-America and in doing so, does not provide a comprehensive view of international reality. First, the narrative alludes to the idea that the whole world participated in the war and occludes the truth that the majority of the world was not given power or agency in the war (Grovogui 2006, 7). Second, this narrative also excludes other important events occurring at the same time as the end of the Second World War; the retaliation of the formerly 'Free French Forces' against the anticolonial efforts of the Party of Algerian People (PPA) and of local officers of peace in Syria (Grovogui 2006, 7). Moreover, disciplinary narratives ignore the massacres of African war veterans in Senegal, French retaliation to decolonization efforts in Vietnam and Algeria and similarly, American interventions in Guatemala, Cuba and Nicaragua which occurred in 1944 (Grovogui 2006, 8). These events were important because they marked continued and increasing decolonial and anticolonial efforts, as well as increasing efforts of the West to maintain its hegemony by any means (Grovogui 2006, 8). Grovogui (2006, 8) notes that the exclusion of key events from disciplinary narratives of history, is not merely coincidental but rather, it is part of the political rationality and modernity that continues to oppress.

The third 'subjecthood' which is particularly relevant to the greater arguments of this dissertation is IR, because it adopts Western ontology as a universal ontology in its intellectual dialogues, and because at the centre of that understanding of the world is humans and human behaviour, the main subject of IR is humans (Sabaratnam 2011, 793). In other words, IR is

anthropocentric. In this way, IR avoids engaging with thoughts, ideas or knowledge that does not position human subjecthood as central and renders it outside of intellectual reflection.

Sabaratnam (2011) reminds us that the academic enterprise requires intellectual projects to constantly occur in conversation with other intellectual projects and ideas. Any discipline within the social sciences ought to allow for conversation and dialogue rather than an authoritative telling and passing down of knowledge (Sabaratnam 2011, 782). However, static 'subjecthoods' within IR only allow for one episteme and one ontology to exist and thus, where dialogue does occur, it is only allowed to happen within those bounds. In this way, IR has closed itself off to effective discourse by limiting its scope. Thus, the idea of European rationality and its links to colonialism (Quijano 2007) continue to manifest in the discipline. Having discussed the rationality aspect, I now turn to the idea of modernity.

The idea of modernity, which is the dominant framework for thinking in social and political thought rests on two ideas which Bhambra (2007,1) terms 'rupture' and 'difference.' 'Rupture' refers to the differentiation between a traditional agrarian society and a modern, technologically advanced one (Bhambra 2007, 1). The idea of 'difference' is premised on the belief that Europe is distinguished from the rest of the world on the basis that it is a modern site (Bhambra 2007, 1). Importantly, Bhambra (2007) notes that even when scholars refer to the idea of modernity in broader terms, situated within the context of the cultural, social and political changes that took place in Europe from the 16th century onwards, the idea itself is inextricable from its colonial foundations and therefore, no matter the different interpretations theorists may have of it, all are underpinned by the ideas of rupture and difference. She says: "Our identification of 'modern' society rests on a conception of what it means to be modern – whether modern is understood in terms of social structures or discourses – and it is from the Western experience that these definitions are drawn." (Bhambra 2007, 3). In doing so, Bhambra (2007) points to how the concept of modernity can be understood as a function of the Colonial Matrix of Power.

That the West, and only the West, is a site of modernity manifests in the IR discipline in many ways. First, disciplinary narratives and ideas reflect Eurocentric and 'occidentalist' understandings of the roles and actions of subjects and actors in IR (Grovogui 2006, 27). Occidentalism portrays Europe as the site of exceptional scientific and cultural capabilities, technologies and political institutions and it suggests that the supremacy of the West is necessary for an international order underpinned by rationality and morality (Grovogui 2006, 28). Both, Eurocentric and occidental ideas of the world reflect self-referentiality and self-

understanding which is premised on the idea that Euro-American thought should naturally obtain a superior status (Grovogui 2006, 27). In other words, because the West alone possesses reason in the form of rationality, science and sensibility, inherent to other regions, cultures and ontologies are violent creatures (Grovogui 2006, 27). Hence, IR takes Eurocentrism and Occidentalism as a starting point (Grovogui 2007, 29).

Having engaged with the ideas of modernity and rationality, it becomes important to consider the role of race in the context of knowledge and knowledge production. Quijano (2007) points to how it was one of the main elements of social classification employed by imperialists and colonizers.

When referring to race and whiteness, it is important to clarify exactly what is meant by these concepts. Sabaratnam (2020, 10) posits that Whiteness is not just synonymous to being Western, but rather connotes, "a superior entitlement to the wealth and property accumulated through racialized capitalism; privileged political recognition, authenticated inherited belonging; an affinity and identification with the West as a progressive, endogenously developed, meritocratic, individualist, and liberal space; and a situatedness in its own story of innovation and overcoming." In other words, the Global South is rendered illegitimate not only because it lacks Westernness and Western values but also because it, according to the West, lacks Whiteness too.

Sabaratnam (2020) puts forward three characteristics of existing IR discourse. 'Epistemologies of immanence' refers to the idea that understanding world affairs can be adequately conducted through theorizing the politics of the "Western/white states" alone (Sabaratnam 2020, 17). Key concepts within IR can only be derived from a Western ontology. For example, the most significant occurrences of international violence and the illustration of concepts such as war and sovereignty are always explained through their occurrence in the West and in terms of their impact on the West (Sabaratnam 2020). Secondly, 'epistemologies of ignorance' refer to the denial of how Western imperialism, colonialism and racism prevail and operate in generating the contemporary world order (Sabaratnam 2020). Finally, 'epistemologies of innocence' describe how structural racism is overlooked because racism is understood to be an exceptional occurrence rather than institutional. Thus, Sabaratnam (2020) argues that most engagement with Whiteness within the discipline thus far is merely subjective and limited investment which holds steady, systems of coloniality.

‘Epistemologies of innocence’ is described as arising from the need to defend the moral respectability and ‘good faith’ of the West which occurs either in outright defence of colonialism and imperialism or as a moral distancing from it – the opting out of confronting and engaging the prevalent system of hierarchy (Sabaratnam 2020, 22). The discipline portrays colonialism and imperialism merely as a mistake which is not ideal, but is an occurrence from which the world order has departed, so it does not bear much discussion anyway. Without a confrontation of racism and imperialism, coloniality is sustained and strongly upheld.

Finally, ‘epistemologies of ignorance’ deny that race and racism are lines according to which the modern world order has been constructed (Sabaratnam 2020, 19). Erasing it from the historical record allows what is described through epistemologies of innocence, to persist. That is, erasing the racial component of IR and of the modern world order contributes to painting a clear picture of Western states as rational, reasonable and glorified states in the international system; further upholding their position as hegemonic in every possible way. Sabaratnam’s (2020) typology act as a kind of magnifying glass held toward the discipline making it easier to detect how racism seeps through in more ways than one, and bringing greater awareness to the ongoing oppression.

‘Epistemologies of ignorance’ is synonymous with the idea of ‘methodological whiteness’ put forward by Bhambra (2007) which in essence, occludes how race has been a mechanism by which the world and knowledge are structured and legitimated. It treats Whiteness as a universal perspective and is ignorant of how this is both problematic and oppressive (Bhambra 2007). Therefore, racist thought remains fundamental to the production, legitimation and distribution of knowledge (Danso and Aning 2022). In contextualizing this in more empirical terms, it is important to consider the issue of security studies in IR. Danso and Aning (2022) suggest that methodological whiteness allows for people and social groups outside of Europe to be considered as ‘objects’ of security. Security studies in IR has developed along the framework of Western research of which its main objectives are to minimize war and manage the relations between hegemonic states (Danso and Aning 2022, 69). Moreover, IR and security studies has largely provided support for colonial projects in Africa and elsewhere (Danso and Aning 2022, 69). The methodological whiteness underscoring IR and security studies has rendered Africa and its people as less secure and an inherently violent place, threatening international peace and security (Danso and Aning 2022, 69). It has led to the proliferation of

damaging discourse such as the idea of 'failed states' which finds issues with states rather than the global political structure which leads to the issues they face.

Following the 9/11 attacks on the US, the discourse about 'failed' and 'weak' states as a threat to international security worsened significantly (Danso and Aning 2022, 76). African states and people were considered to be inherently threatening to international security. Additionally, the association of African states with 'underdevelopment' and therefore a threat to Western stability worsened and upon this basis, the securitization of the continent was justified (Danso and Aning 2022, 76). This racist rhetoric has informed the relationship between the West and the Sahel region, especially Mali. The region was incorporated into the War on Terror because of three assumptions that Danso and Aning (2022, 76) point out: (i) violent Islamist groups in Africa are a product of a monolithic and globalized Islamist threat, (ii) the 'Islamist threat' poses a threat to the West and (iii) Africa's weakness makes it a site for violent Islamist extremism and terrorism. In this way, due to the racist globalized threat narrative employed by both the discipline and the practise of international relations, a decontextualized approach to the issue of security in Africa prevails in which, true local experiences and complexities are ignored (Danso and Aning 2022, 77). Moreover, these narratives do not serve the interests of the people within the Sahel region but rather, serve the racially underpinned narratives associated with Africa which in turn elevate the West as inherently peaceful and rational (Danso and Aning 2022, 77).

Hence, they pioneer the idea of 'hybrid security' as an 'episteme of alternativity' which allows for better theorizing that does not take place from a Western ontological and epistemological starting point (Danso and Aning 2022, 81). Hybrid security theorizes about security from the premise that security is an inherently complex issue with multiple intersections and interplay between different actors, institutions, and ideas of justice (Danso and Aning 2022, 81). In doing away with Western epistemes, it is a non-state-centric approach. In the context of the Sahel region, this means understanding that issues of security in Mali are linked to a combination of various factors including the role of state military forces, local militias, community structures and tensions between national and local (Danso and Aning 2022).

In essence, this racism has survived in IR and the social sciences at large for three reasons. First, it constitutes reason and justification for European actions abroad (Grovogui 2006, 39). Secondly, it is a means through which the involvement of Europe in imperial and colonial

violence could be underplayed and third, it created an ethics of power and authority that justifies and underpins the present international order (Grovogui 2006, 39).

It is upon this basis, that knowledge in the IR discipline is governed by colonial patterns of thinking that produce a divide between the West and non-West on the basis of rationality, modernity and race, that we can understand the Colonial Matrix of Power and the concept of epistemicide. The Colonial Matrix of Power (CMP) conceptualized by Quijano (2000) has been described as an explicit political agenda which seeks to place knowledge, knowledge production, and epistemology at the heart of decolonisation (Taylor 2012, 386). The idea is based on the distinction between colonialism and coloniality where the former refers to the historical event and the latter to ongoing systems of power and discrimination inherent to colonization. CMP suggests that the ideas of modernity and rationality proclaimed to be unique to the West, in addition to the racism that underpins this presumption, is a function of a system of the exercise of the power of Euro-America over the rest of the world, which prevails today, despite the formal end to colonialism (Quijano 2007). Although importance is placed on race as a mechanism of this system of power, is it not limited just to race. CMP also understands that European colonialism employed capitalism to further exercise power (Quijano 2007). Essentially, CMP understands that colonial domination was not just the exertion of physical control and exploitation, but an epistemological domination too (Taylor 2012, 388). That is to say, the different ways of understanding the world, the different ways of obtaining and spreading knowledge and the assumptions different ontologies hold about what it means to be human or non-human were subject to repression and domination (Taylor 2012, 388). CMP then, is a useful framework through which to problematize IR because the latter is not just founded on racism wherein the non-West is seen to be inferior, it is founded on a system that repeatedly seeks to marginalize knowledge produced in the Global South because of that systemic racism and system of power at large. If CMP as a framework describes the system that allows for coloniality to continue, the concept of epistemicide focuses on the relationship between knowledge and coloniality and what this means for knowledge within the social sciences especially.

Simply put, epistemicide refers to the violent destruction of knowledge systems which entail ways of being in the world and ways of producing and sharing knowledge, especially those of indigenous peoples through colonization and its contemporary manifestation, globalization (de Sousa Santos 2014). The establishment of modernity as the most legitimate way of thinking

and perceiving the world is simultaneously the establishment of epistemic hierarchies that silence non-Western understandings, perceptions and knowledge about the world (de Sousa Santos 2014). There is a hierarchy of knowledge wherein 'modern linear thinking' as defined by the West is deemed to be the only truth (Viramotes 2022, 46). In other words, only knowledge that complies with Western ideas of what constitutes 'modern thinking' can hold a space at the top of the hierarchy. The division of 'true' and 'modern' thinking from 'traditional' and 'backward' is synonymous with who is considered to be human and not which is characteristic of 'Abyssal Thinking' (de Sousa Santos 2014). This is done so in an effort to maintain that a Western way of understanding, being in the world and studying the world, is a universal way and all other means of contending with oneself in the world, are illegitimate.

wa Thiong'o (2009) when speaking about 'dismemberment' provides an important framework highlighting the depth and extent to which epistemicide is destructive. He suggests that 'dismemberment' occurred in two stages: first when the African people were divided into two halves, the continent and the diaspora. In this way wa Thiong'o (2009, 5) references the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Berlin Conference which fragmented the African continent and colonialism and imperialism. The second stage of dismemberment was the subordination of knowledge, the removal of memory, ways of being ways of understanding life, language and names. He points to how during colonialism, the heads of African leaders who resisted colonialism were cut off from the body and either turned upside down and buried or later became artefacts in the British museum. This was a symbolic act; it represents the disdain colonizers had towards indigenous people, their knowledge and their memories. Hence, he says: "The colonizer's memory sees nothing but savagery and barbarism when it contemplates the land, the body, the culture and the language of the people it wants to colonize, be they Maoris, Native Americans, Africans, Asians or even other European peoples." (wa Thiong'o 2009, 21-22.)

That the idea of modernity is framed within coloniality, is a reminder of the systemic violence that is inextricably linked to Western intellectual hegemony and the IR discipline. There are many ways in which epistemicide occurs. Epistemicide prevails because knowledge and intellectual conversation are controlled in two ways: (i) the content of the conversation is regulated and (ii) the terms of the conversation are regulated (Mignolo 2018, 99). An example of how the content of the conversation is moderated, is that understanding the world through religion and spirituality is not only not within traditional IR, it is deemed to be inherently

insufficient (Shilliam 2010). Western thinking can be considered as 'philosophy' yet non-Western ways of understanding the world are connoted as 'thought' (Shilliam 2010, 13). African philosophies, cosmovisions from the Andes, and Latin American philosophies are all deemed primitive and downgraded to 'folklore' within IR (Taylor 2012). The discussion about security studies above is an example of how the terms of the conversation are moderated. While security studies considered the Sahel region, it did so with the aim of furthering narratives about the West as peaceful and inherently stable; conversations which challenge those narratives and understandings of the world are controlled. Another way in which epistemicide takes place is IR's fixation with theories as the most scientific way to articulate knowledge and assumptions about the world (Krishna 2001). Theorists that are not positivist in nature are not considered to be scientific or rational forms of knowledge (Krishna 2001, 407). IR supports an agenda of problem-solving theory that discredits the possibilities of thinking outside of the confines of the state system (Krishna 2001, 407). Importantly, the very occlusion of themes such as slavery, theft of land, racism and colonialism uphold epistemicide (Krisha 2001, 407). The use of English as the main language through which the social sciences is conducted is also a form of epistemicide (wa Thiong'o 2009). In fact, wa Thiong'o (2009) terms it 'linguicide' because it is not just that other languages have little to no space in the social sciences, it is that they are actively repressed as a means through which to also repress knowledge and the expression thereof.

The distinction between modern and rational knowledge on the basis of race, the centrality of Western history in IR, the projection of racist narratives about the global south, African states and their inherently violent nature, the centrality of humans and Eurocentric and occidentalist understandings of the world, as has been discussed in this section, constitute forms of epistemicide. Hence, there have been calls and efforts towards what Mignolo (2009, 165) terms 'epistemic disobedience.'

Epistemic Disobedience, Decolonizing and Decolonial Theory

Epistemic disobedience and decolonizing go hand in hand. In essence, they strongly reject the upholding of the Colonial Matrix of Power both in academia and in the world at large (Mignolo 2009). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, 17) suggests that: "epistemic justice is about the liberation of

reason itself from coloniality." Importantly, he emphasises that epistemic justice is different from academic freedom. Where the latter refers to having the right to express ideas, especially ideas critical about states, authorities and political leaders within an institution, the former is much deeper; it seeks to achieve cognitive justice by dismantling the systems of power which regulate ideas, and the terms upon which those ideas are expressed (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, 18). In other words, decolonizing IR and the project of epistemic disobedience is not merely an effort to centre knowledge from the Global South but rather, to do away with the system that privileges one ontology over another, regardless of what ontology that is (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, 18). Hence, simply seeking to theorize from the South and looking at the world from a different vantage point, as the Comaroffs (2012) have suggested, whilst important, is not sufficient because it does not address the systemic issue of coloniality which persists in the IR discipline. In this way, epistemological decolonization attempts to deconstruct systems of power which enable epistemicides, lingusiticides, and cultural repression (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, 19).

Epistemic freedom and justice is about shifting knowledge from a singular ontological framework to one that is pluriversal in which many ontologies and bodies of knowledge can co-exist. In the following chapter, I consider more critically, what a pluriversal approach to knowledge entails and what it looks like. However, briefly, a pluriversal approach to knowledge is one that seeks to do away with the presence of any hierarchy and system of power which governs knowledge. Crucially, it is within this understanding that this dissertation is situated. It attempts to engage with the Andean Cosmovision and the Akan philosophy from a pluriversal perspective rather than within the confines of traditional IR which privilege the Western ontology.

Epistemic disobedience can be practised in many ways. As Danso and Aning (2022, 79) have shown, it can entail the development of 'epistemes of alternativity' such as Hybrid Security, which are intellectual devices that push forward critical discourses, identifying and challenging current problematic modes of inquiring. Similarly, Sabaratnam (2011, 7-12) suggests different decolonizing strategies some of which include exposing the ways in which IR produces coloniality and hierarchical structures of inquiry, critiquing and deconstructing Western history from its status as world history and analysing subjects from an alternative perspective like that of pluriversality. Furthermore, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, 40- 41) suggests engaging with

knowledge that has previously been marginalized in an effort to shift the "geography and biology" of knowledge.

Decolonial theory serves as the premise and foundation of epistemic disobedience. Although decolonial, postcolonial and critical theory speak to similar issues, they differ in important ways. First, postcolonial approaches to IR are critical of the fact that the discipline lacks theories from the Global South and argues that it functions through a Western ontology. However, it calls for the integration of non-Western theories, ideas and knowledge without seeking to fundamentally dismantle the existing systems inherited from colonialism. Knowledge and knowledge production continue to be based on Western criteria of what constitutes 'good' and 'valuable' knowledge (Anderl and Witt 2020). Additionally, postcolonial theory refers mainly to the 19th and 20th centuries, whilst decolonial theory goes as far back as the 15th century (Bhambra 2014, 115). Thus, while postcolonial IR is synonymous with the de-westernisation of IR, which Mignolo (2018) argues is not inherently a bad thing; ultimately, de-westernisation of the discipline's content must occur in tandem with decolonization. De-westernisation, or postcolonial approaches to IR dispute the content of the conversations had within IR but they do not dispute Western control of the conversation altogether. On the other hand, decolonial theory seeks to dismantle epistemic standards of what constitutes knowledge worthy of engaging with, thus delinking knowledge from the colonial matrix of power.

Critical theory has been critiqued on the basis that it draws largely from Western philosophical traditions particularly the Frankfurt School of thought (Anderl and Witt 2020). The issue with this is that it does not interrogate issues of racism, imperialism and the practise of coloniality within the social sciences (Allen 2016). Resultantly, without challenging the issues of Western thought being framed as universalist, it allows for issues of coloniality to prevail (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, 40). Moreover, it is supportive of Western ideas of modernity and progress (Allen 2016, 3). In this way, it can be blinded to how it is an accomplice in the upholding of Western intellectual hegemony. The limitations of critical theory and postcolonial theory are not highlighted in an effort to negate them, but rather, to point out that decolonial theory is most suited to understanding and explaining how knowledge production specifically is defined by coloniality.

That is to say, this dissertation is situated within a decolonial theoretical framework. It is upon the premise that IR perpetuates coloniality and that the only way to reconfigure the discipline

is to dismantle systems of power and domination, which is central to decolonial theory, that this dissertation situates its investigation into the Andean Cosmovision and Akan philosophy.

Conclusion

One of the primary aims of this chapter was to illustrate how IR's continuing intellectual inheritance from colonialism has impacted how it understands and governs knowledge, thereby perpetuating a hierarchical system and epistemicide. Having discussed the making of the idea of the 'international' and the discipline of IR through British colonial and imperial expansion in South Africa, the connections between thinkers like Locke and Kant to the modern world order, how American hegemony was consolidated through the domination over Latin America and how colonialism employed the idea of 'state' and 'sovereignty' differently on the African continent, this chapter argued that colonialism and imperialism entailed the domination over the rest of the world and simultaneously the consolidation of the West's hegemonic power culturally and intellectually.

Thereafter, the chapter considered the impact of colonialism and imperialism in relation to knowledge. It discussed how the idea of modernity and rationality, as a product of colonialism, continues to function within IR. Additionally, it discussed how the differentiation of modern and rational knowledge from traditional knowledge that cannot be considered scientific, occurs on the basis of race. Hence, the Colonial Matrix of Power is a useful framework to understand how Western adjudication of knowledge is not isolated from colonialism and that they function together within a system of power.

Finally, this chapter briefly engaged with what decolonizing the discipline entails. Importantly, it stressed that in order for the discipline to detach from its claim that a Western ontology is necessarily the only and universally applicable one, we ought to deconstruct coloniality and systems of power.

It is within this context and understanding of IR that this dissertation is situated. Subsequent chapters, which further the case for a different philosophical approach to knowledge and knowledge production altogether, namely a pluriversal one, rest on the foundation that the present nature of the discipline cannot simply incorporate knowledge from the global south, but rather, must be deconstructed first. The main contribution of this dissertation is not just its

critique of the IR discipline but rather, how it goes beyond critiques to engage directly with indigenous bodies of knowledge from a pluriversal standpoint. In doing so, it hopes to contribute to the literature on thinking alternatively as a form of epistemic disobedience. Following the set-up of the research design, chapter two engages with the ideas of plurivesality, what it means, and what a pluriversal IR could look like.

(B) Research design

Statement of Problem

That IR theory does not engage with thinking from the Global South is a function of the coloniality that prevails within the discipline, as established in the previous section. Put more clearly, the specific problem that this dissertation confronts is the refusal of multiple ontologies within IR. That Western ontological thought has been proclaimed as universal has necessarily prevented engagement with other bodies of knowledge, worldviews and perspectives as sites from which to theorize in IR. The result is that in contending with any issue, and in this case with the issue of climate change, IR is not only at present, inherently limited, its disengagement with climate change from a non-Western perspective continues the trend of epistemicide. It is within this understanding, that this dissertation presents its arguments.

Research Questions

This dissertation attempts to answer the following questions that guide the overall arguments:

1. How is a pluriversal approach to knowledge production a better alternative to the present state of the discipline?

    1.1 How does a pluriversal approach necessarily prevent or address epistemicide as it is present in IR?
    1.2 How does a pluriversal approach allow IR to better engage with the idea of climate change?

2. How does the Akan philosophy offer an alternative paradigm of the world?

    2.1 How can we approach the issue of climate change through this paradigm?

3. How does the Andean Cosmovsion offer an alternative paradigm of the world?

3.1 How can we approach the issue of climate change through this paradigm?

Research Aims and Objectives

The research aims of the dissertation can be understood as follows:

1. To advance the case for a pluriversal IR by considering how pluriversality as a framework for knowledge production is useful as an alternative to traditional IR.
2. To engage with the Akan philosophy and Andean Cosmovsion, understanding their framings of the world and how this may offer ways in which to conceptualise issues such as climate change in IR.

As such, the objectives of the research can be understood as follows:

1. To delineate a critique of the existing framework of IR as a discipline with a focus on decolonial perspectives to better understand the exclusion of thought from the Global South in IR.
2. To examine what pluriversalism as a framework for knowledge production entails, and whether it may serve as an alternative approach in IR.
3. On the basis of the framework of pluriversalism and critique of IR, engage two case studies from Latin America and Africa to suggest alternative ways of understanding contemporary issues within IR

Rationale

This dissertation is valuable and important in multiple ways. First, it contributes to the available body of non-Western knowledge visible in IR, from which we can begin to theorize. Although critique of the IR discipline has been extensive, research about indigenous knowledge is still lacking. In this way, this dissertation bridges the gap between the two and contributes to the decolonization of the discipline.

Secondly, this dissertation is especially valuable in the context of climate change and IR's disengagement with it. The climate crisis is one of the most global challenges of our time yet

mainstream IR and even the practise of international relations has been shaped by Western, anthropocentric perspectives which not only overlook but also delegitimize indigenous knowledge. Despite the importance of importance and necessity of environmental justice, there is a noticeable gap in IR literature regarding the application of indigenous epistemology to the issue of climate change and more broadly, global governance in general.

Furthermore, systemic racism, colonial thinking and epistemicide prevail in the discipline. That is, the Western hegemony of knowledge and knowledge production continues to subordinate ideas, concepts and theories from the Global South. If we continue to not engage with indigenous bodies of knowledge, we continue to uphold this very system of oppression.

Finally, and perhaps most important, even if there were no gaps in literature in IR, and even if the discipline did contend adequately with the climate crisis, engaging with indigenous bodies of knowledge and challenging the discipline to adopt a pluriversal framework is valuable and important because it is an attempt toward a more ethical discipline and more ethical world. An ethical discipline and world is one which holds deeper and expansive frameworks. Simply put: "There is no genuinely higher education without the decolonization of knowledge and education." (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021, 78).

Methodology

Given the qualitative nature of this research, and that it does not seek to compare the two bodies of indigenous knowledge to each other, but rather to existing theories and ideas within IR, the following variables are formed. The independent variables are: (i) traditional IR and (ii) a pluriversal IR. The dependent variable is therefore, the relations between people and states in IR.

Additionally, this dissertation employs decolonial theory as a methodology. This is because the premises of decolonial IR theory such as (i) the links it makes between race, colonialism and the discipline and (ii) its characterisation of how those links necessarily affect knowledge production, foundation this dissertation and the arguments it puts forward.

Case selection

There are three main reasons why the Akan philosophy and the Andean Cosmovision have been chosen as the two case studies for this research.

First, both bodies of knowledge have their roots in regions which have previously been colonized. The Akan philosophy originates from West Africa which has a history of British, French, German, Belgian and Portuguese colonization. The Andean Cosmovision, originating from the Andes, has a history of Spanish colonization. To be clear, it is not that having a colonial history is a pre-requisite for case selection. Rather, that colonization contributed significantly to the erasure of indigenous knowledge and the IR continues to be complicit in committing epistemicide. Thus, to advance the visibility of non-Western knowledge within the discipline, it is necessary to engage with indigenous ideas which would otherwise be marginalised. Additionally, as has been discussed in the previous section, epistemicide entails the delegitimization of non-Western knowledge especially knowledge that engages with spirituality and the non-human. By engaging with these bodies of knowledge, I challenge some of the basic premises of IR.

Secondly, both bodies of thought reject anthropocentrism; humans are considered one of many important entities on the Earth and in the cosmos. There is no system of hierarchy that places humans at the top. In this way, because humans are not central to their understanding of their respective understandings of the world, neither is race – this is contrasted to Western ontology. Thus, the choice to investigate these bodies of knowledge as opposed to others is with the intention of providing an alternative paradigm through which to perceive the world, and IR that is not just different by means of it being non-Western, but ontologically and epistemologically different.

Limitations

The first limitation of this dissertation is that this study is preliminary in nature; it engages with themes, ideas, ethical guidelines and the principles which underpin the respective bodies of knowledge and in doing so, makes them visible as sites from which to theorize. To develop an

IR theory altogether is neither a small task nor is it one that can simply be taken as fact. In other words, this dissertation is a first step in theorizing from indigenous bodies of knowledge.

The second limitation is something that Spivak (2010) draws our attention to; in the process of theorising indigenous knowledge from the global South, the very act of translating knowledge into English can erase key components of the philosophy. In addressing this limitation, it is important to note that the understanding of the two indigenous bodies of thought will be limited to the extent that they have been translated. Whilst this is a significant limitation, to avoid engaging with non-Western thought altogether would perhaps maintain the lack of theories from the Global South.

Finally, whilst this dissertation engages with the theme of anthropocentrism in IR to a large extent, it does not engage with how IR is andocentric too (Tickner 1997), and how this is equally a function of coloniality and epistemicide. Engaging with andocentrism in IR would necessarily lead to a deeper and more comprehensive account of the discipline and of coloniality, and a further understanding of patriarchy and race in the making of the discipline.

While these limitations make clear the confines of this study, they do not diminish the contributions this research hopes to make. Future studies could address these limitations by exploring the dimension of gender in coloniality, epistemicide and knowledge production in IR, and can explore in more depth, the indigenous bodies of knowledge itself by engaging with the Akan and language directly. Despite these limitations, this dissertation offers valuable insights into both worldviews and lays the groundwork for further enquiry of indigenous bodies of thought in IR. What follows immediately is the second chapter.

Chapter 2: The Case for a Pluriversal IR.

Introduction and aims

It has been discussed and established in the previous chapter that the need for a new way of going about framing, organising and engaging with knowledge in the discipline is urgent. In order to move beyond colonial thinking, epistemicide, and parochial paradigms of the world, IR must approach knowledge differently altogether.

This chapter makes a case for a pluriversal approach to knowledge and knowledge production. It begins by defining what pluriversality is and discusses the environment of transitional discourses from which it is conceived. Thereafter, the chapter discusses what pluriversality in the context of academia, and specifically, IR entails, pointing to three key moves that underpin pluriversality: the decentring of Western ontology; greater connections between bodies of knowledge, theories, and ontologies; and finally, a discipline that is open to knowledge as it is ever-changing. This chapter contends with the politics of adopting a pluriversal approach and engages with ways that IR can adopt a pluriversal approach. It points to questions that arise when doing so, followed by a comparative analysis suggesting other alternatives.

What is Pluriversalism?

Before discussing the tenets of pluriversalism, it is necessary to discuss the context within which it developed. Escobar describes the concept of "transitional discourses" which refers broadly to conversations, ideas and concepts informed by various socio-political relations, within various spaces especially academia which seek to depart from a mode of living that has been dominant (Escobar 2018, 139). Transitional discourses generate a discontinuity between what was once believed to be the most suitable way to perceive and understand relationships between all actors on earth, and a new, perhaps better way of accounting for and explaining phenomena in the world (Escobar 2018). These transitions can be in the form of a paradigm shift, a new civilizational or cultural model or even a new economic or political model.

For example, the concept of sustainable development in relation to the Global South is according to Escobar (2018) an example of a Transitional Discourse. It sought to break away from traditional, parochial ideas of development characterised by a strong focus on economic development as a principle measure of development; development policies that are not holistic or long-term; and policies which allow for resource extraction and environmental degradation. In departing from those initial ideas of development, sustainable development emerged to ensure that development policies undertaken, especially within the global south, prioritised equally, social and political development in addition to economic development, the extraction of resources through less harmful environmental practises and long-term policies that are focused on human development too. Similarly, globalisation discourse has emerged as an account of the ways in which human society has evolved from initial ideas of modernity. One of its main assumptions is that the world is a global space that should and eventually will, be a site of total capitalist modernity (Escobar 2018).

Escobar (2018) also points to how transitional discourses differ geopolitically. As a result, there are diverse trends in the kinds of discourses occurring in the Global North and South. Globalisation, green transition and de-growth discourses are some examples of transitional discourses occurring in the global north. In the Global South, concepts like post-development, post-extractivism, communalization, eco-centrism, and alternatives to development are more prevalent discussions. Despite differing geopolitical factors which impact the kind of transitional discourses that occur, “Shared by most Transitional Discourses is the contention that we need to step outside existing institutional and epistemic boundaries if we truly want to strive for worlds and practises capable of bringing about the significant transformations seen as needed” (Escobar 2018, 139).

In essence, contemporary transitional discourses present themselves as “a transition to an altogether different world” (Escobar 2011, 2). The discourse about pluriversality is an example of a transitional discourse and it emerges because there is great dissatisfaction with universal understandings and perceptions of the world within many contexts and disciplines including sociology and anthropology and in this context, International Relations. Thus, at its core, pluriversality is the idea that there are multiple ways in which to understand the world and multiple knowledge systems about the world. In other words, pluriversality rejects the idea that there exists one empirical world that all humans and other living beings reside within (Harding

2018). That there are multiple ontological and epistemological dimensions of the world, is one of the most important principles of pluriversality (Escobar 2018).

Mignolo (2018) contextualises the emergence of pluriversality within the context of the present world order which is strongly tied to Western universalism. The dominant way of understanding the world, through the Westphalian state system, is simply one ontological route to make sense of the world. It is not the only way. However, it has been enforced as the only way to perceive the world and its moving entities and actors. Mignolo (2018) argues that prior to colonialism, and before the 1500s, the world was pluricentric and non-capitalist; there were multiple and differing political systems, economic systems, ways of being and ways of organising. However, at the turn of the new world order, brought about by colonialism as well as the European Renaissance, not only was a divide between the 'old world' and 'new world' forged, but the 'new world' – a site for colonial and imperial domination – was rendered illegitimate because the means of socio-political organisation, and ways of being, was not congruent to that of Euro-America. Moreover, the Westernisation of the world from the 1500s onwards did not just occur politically and economically but was extended to cultural ideas, beliefs philosophies, and knowledge in all its forms. The previous chapter's discussion about epistemicide and the way in which Western cultural and intellectual hegemony was asserted on the world, is evidence of this. The Cold War, despite its democratic rhetoric, was in essence a dispute for the control of a monopolar world and did not in any significant way pave the way toward a multipolar world order (Mignolo 2018).

Mignolo (2018, 91) posits that to understand the meaning and consequences of a pluriversal imaginary, is to understand how the pluricentric world order before 1500s was overruled. In this way, pluriversal imaginings are not only an alternative approach to understanding the world, they are inherently political acts of thinking and constitute a kind of cognitive justice.

Based on the premise that there are many ontologies within the world, pluriversality is a project aimed at relinking to memories, and praxes of living and thinking that were disallowed by Western universalism (Mignolo 2018, 105). Pluriversality embraces that there are limitless ways of accounting for the world and because it actively seeks to welcome multiple truths rather than a singular, universally claimed truth, it does not attempt to impose one knowledge system over another or disempower assess knowledge systems according to criterion of what is believed to be 'true' and 'modern' (Querejazu 2016) In other words, pluriversality is not

biased against any knowledge systems or ontologies, even Western ones, but rather is against the centralisation of one ontology. In this way, pluriversality is a philosophical approach to knowledge and knowledge production that creates an environment ripe for theorising, especially from the Global South because it is a radical discontinuation of colonial systems of governing knowledge according to Western universalism.

As a result of its first tenet, pluriversality thus also seeks deeper cross-cultural relations and lends itself to more meaningful connections between cultures. “Different cultures can draw on different cultural narratives and their distinctive metaphors, analogies and models to understand nature and their relation to it – conceptualising the earth as a living body, as God’s gift to his people, as a mechanism, or in environmental sciences, as a lifeboat or spaceship” (Harding 2018, 44). This is not only the case because pluriversality holds that each knowledge system is inherently valuable, but also because one of the benefits of pluriversality’s strong embrace of diverse ontologies and epistemologies is that it allows us to rethink global problems or issues through a plethora of lenses and paradigms which subsequently lead to more effective ways of tackling those issues. Put differently, solving problems using the same mental frame from which they arose, limits the efficacy of problem-solving. In using a more tangible example to illustrate this idea, one can consider that critiquing the IR discipline through a decolonial lens would result in far different conclusions about the discipline than a critique of it through the lens of constructivism. Similarly, the fewer frames there are through which to understand a global issue such as climate change, the fewer solutions there are to the issue. Pluriversality encourages discontinuity from dominant ways of understanding phenomena and calls for constant radical rethinking.

To summarize, pluriversality emphasises that there is no one universal truth (Querejazu 2016). Rather, there is a world wherein many different ontologies and epistemologies, all of equal value, exist. Multiple truths about the world result in multiple understandings of the world. The following section discusses what that entails in the context of academia and what that may look like for the IR discipline.

What does a Pluriversal Approach to Knowledge Production Entail?

There are similar and related concepts to pluriversality such as that of Mosaic Thinking (Abrahamsen 2016) Ecologies of Knowledge (de Sousa Santos 2007) and Assemblage Thinking (Acuto and Curtis, 2014). In attempting to illustrate what a pluriversal approach to knowledge entails, especially in academia and within IR, this section will draw from these concepts.

The concept of Ecologies of Knowledge emerges from the concept of Abyssal thinking. Abyssal Thinking refers to how we think about the world which is constricted by our biases. A line divides knowledge where on the one side modern, Western science is said to hold universal truth and on the other side of this line is the lack of scientific knowledge and instead mere beliefs, opinions and intuitive ideas. "The other side of the line harbours only incomprehensible magical or idolatrous practises" (de Sousa Santos 2007, 51). Similarly, humans belong on the side of the line which holds Western, modern science, and the other side is occupied by sub-humans (de Sousa Santos 2007).

The concept of Ecologies of Knowledge emerges as an attempt to move beyond Abyssal Thinking. One of the principles ecological thinking entails is that of thinking from the other side of the line because the other side has been historically marginalised and deemed 'unthinkable.' Ecological thinking calls for more than just recognising the need to think from the other side of the line, whilst it is a crucial step, is not enough because abyssal lines will continue to produce themselves (as is demonstrated in the previous chapter which discusses how epistemicide is systemic) no matter how anti-abyssal thinking, it claims to be (de Sousa Santos 2007, 65). Hence, ecological thinking and similarly, pluriversality first and foremost, entails learning about the Global South through epistemes from the south (de Sousa Santos 2007). More specifically, in relation to IR, this refers to direct engagement with bodies of knowledge from the Global South so as to pluriversalise the discipline by expanding its ontologies. That is, the more knowledge there is, that originates from outside the bounds of Western ontologies, the more decentred is the dominant ontology, in this case the Western one.

Ecological thinking also entails constantly comparing which knowledges are being learned and therefore which ones are simultaneously being forgotten or unlearned (de Sousa Santos 2007, 60). In this way, ecological thinking inherently seeks to address its ignorance. Although it

cannot be said that ecological thinking and pluriversality are faultless approaches to knowledge and knowledge production, they are significantly better alternatives to the status quo, because they actively attempt to do away with intentional ignorance and abyssal thinking.

Ecological thinking and pluriversality also entail radical interdependence between different bodies of knowledge and ontologies. Pluriversality is based on the premise that we understand the world best through multiple interpretations of the world. Ecological thinking holds that bodies of knowledge have internal and external limits and therefore, cannot adequately explain the world alone. Although they may hold different reasoning, pluriversality and ecological thinking lead to the same conclusion: radical interdependence between ontologies, bodies of knowledge and ideas ultimately lead to a richer and more expansive account of the world that allows not only for more effective theorising but also more effective problem solving of contemporary challenges. Thus, tangibly speaking, a pluriversal IR entails greater interdisciplinary research and the intersection of different knowledges to account for and explain phenomena in the world.

Radical interdependence is also a core principle of Mosaic Thinking. According to Connell (2018, 30) Mosaic Thinking is a way of engaging knowledge which, as its name alludes to, is a kind of tapestry of different knowledges sitting beside each other and interlocking with each other. Each body of knowledge is naturally based upon its own history, assumptions about the world and cultural underpinnings. Notably, it is not just that different bodies of knowledge sit statically beside each other, but that they interact and enter into "educational relations with each other" (Connell 2018, 31). Educational relations include critique and comparison so as to learn from and about each other. In other words, there is always active engagement occurring between bodies of thought and knowledge which leads to meaningful engagement. Connell (2018, 31) suggests that Mosaic Thinking would entail important changes; adjustments to curricula in northern institutions, departing from detachments to the 'core', from the periphery, intentionally building south-south links and finally, changing the implications of what is means to be an effective scholar.

The same ideas are echoed within the concept of Assemblage Thinking. One of the primary tenets of Assemblage Thinking is that it is strongly against the reification of abstract concepts and systems of thinking that render themselves monolithic and absolute (Acuto and Curtis 2014, 3). For example, traditional approaches to IR (and even contemporary ones to a large

extent) are built on the concepts of states, statehood and sovereignty. IR is often complicit in allowing the reification of the state as an entity and takes for granted, that the solidification of an abstract concept such as statehood leads to a simple, closed system of thinking which forgets that there are heterogeneous elements which comprise the concept of statehood (Acuto and Curtis 2014, 7). Assemblage Thinking forces us to pull apart concepts such as statehood, globalisation, capitalism and hold up a magnifying glass toward the different elements which those concepts are comprised of. By its very nature of questioning the composition of key concepts, this mode of thinking accommodates for various "hybrids of material, biological, social and technological components that populate our world" (Acuto and Curtis 2014, 2). In other words, it is pluriversal in its thinking; its aim is to understand, explain and account for a plurality of elements of a phenomenon. It is thus a way of thinking that occurs from the ground up and in doing so, resists implicitly subscribing to Western-centric assumptions and ways of thinking (Abrahamsen 2016).

Following from pluriversal thinking is that it understands phenomena in the natural and social world as being comprised of elements that are always evolving, changing and even context-dependent. As such, it avoids solidifying and making static concepts and ideas that build theories. An important benefit of this is that it avoids essentializing narratives and conclusions about actors because it abandons strict and static dichotomies that the discipline is currently guilty of creating and sustaining (Abrahmsen 2016). Furthermore, this means that constantly changing elements are welcomed and are analysed because they are dynamic in nature resulting in more open and fluid approaches to knowledge. Similar to Mosaic Thinking, assemblages cannot be understood as occurring in isolation and therefore, a consequence of breaking down elements is that it actively seeks to understand how elements are connected, not only what they are. Both embrace radical co-dependence and inter-relations between differing bodies of knowledge and ontologies. This explicitly avoids universalism and the centralising of a particular ontology or theory (Abrahamsen 2016). Furthermore, it goes beyond current limiting understandings of difference; IR is currently problematic because it assumes that difference can be present in a singular, multiplex world when in reality, non-Western ontologies do not necessarily share the same world order or worldview (Querejazu 2022, 875). Therefore, a pluriversal approach entails a deeply genuine appreciation of difference because no body of knowledge is framed by proximity to a shared worldview or world order (Querejazu 2022). Put differently: "assemblages become the component parts of other assemblages, and the

previously reified version of society may be viewed as a historically specific assemblage of assemblages, open to transformation" (Acuto and Curtis 2014, 8).

Assemblage Thinking holds two, simultaneously occurring benefits. First, it encourages us to deeply question the present concepts, theories, and assumptions we hold in IR. The questioning of present concepts and assumptions about the world is a political endeavour because in IR for example, it could lend to the reframing of concepts such as the 'political' and 'international' (Acuto and Curtis 2014, 11). By uncovering the origins of concepts and even bodies of knowledge, it opens up space for more profound and intense critique thereof. In other words, similar to Mosaic and ecological thinking, Assemblage Thinking is a political act of imagining knowledge differently from what we have understood it to be, and therefore the political act of bringing to the forefront what has been pushed to the periphery.

The second benefit it holds is that it directly contributes to the establishment of an environment wherein knowledge is understood thoroughly. This is important because when theorising in general and in this context, seeking to theorise from the South, to engage with knowledge on a surface level would be to risk theorising ineffectively. Given that the discipline has a habit of discounting non-Western thought, ensuring that when it is present in the discipline, it is engaged with meaningfully is a crucial consideration. The discussion of Assemblage Thinking is important because, unlike the concept of Ecologies of Knowledge and Mosaic Thinking, it goes beyond describing the general paradigm of pluriversality, and illustrates more specifically how knowledge would be handled by providing a kind of methodology for how to analyse concepts and ideas *within* a pluriversal discipline. That is, Assemblage Thinking is a means by which to ensure that IR is not just pluriversal in theory but in praxis too; it illustrates that pluriversality entails deeper investigation into a plurality of concepts (Acuto and Curtis 2014).

Abrahamsen (2016) employs Assemblage Thinking in her research about issues pertaining to private security on the African continent. In her analysis she points to how discourse about security occurs from the starting point of the Weberian state definition; the state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Because the African state is viewed in IR as a failed derivative of the Weberian state, most studies arrive at the idea that the African state had no monopoly over violence to begin with (Abrahamsen 2016, 134). Abrahamsen (2016) critiques the traditional approach because of its top-down, essentialising and static nature; not only does it enforce Western ideas of the state it locks Africa within that definition and does not account

for how there are contemporary changes at the local and global level which affect our understanding of security. In contrast, through an Assemblage paradigm, analysis of security privatisation instead occurs first from investigation into how social order, authority, and security are connected through a range of actors and norms (Abrahamsen 2016, 135). Therefore, this approach is better at mapping out, analysing and accounting for the differing factors and processes that necessarily lead to changes such as the increased privatisation of security.

Assemblage Thinking, Ecologies of Knowledge, Mosaic Thinking all share great similarity and that similarity is their pluriversal underpinnings. As demonstrated above, these methods of thinking hold amongst others, four main benefits. Firstly, because they seek to prioritise a plurality of knowledges without measuring the validity of those knowledges against each other or against a standard, they create an environment wherein no singular ontology occupies central position or status. This is an important point because a plurality of knowledges assists in moving beyond the dichotomy of difference between the North and South but also recognises differences *within* those regions. Abyssal thinking is truly departed from because difference in all its varied ways, is welcomed and celebrated (James and Steger 2023). Furthermore, it leads to the decentring of Western ontological thinking. Secondly, the three approaches to knowledge and knowledge production practise radical interdependence and relations between different knowledges, theories, worldviews and paradigms. As a result, investigations into the relationship between actors, and the nature of actors are more expansive and occur on a deeper level. In this way, pluriversality leads to a more profound way of understanding and conceptualising phenomenon. Thirdly, they allow for fluid and ever-changing understandings and interpretations of the world because they understand that knowledge is not fixed and immune to evolvement.

There are two especially important implications of the abovementioned characteristics and benefits of pluriversal thinking which are particularly relevant to this dissertation; pluralistic thinking provincialises anthropocentrism (which will be dealt with in greater detail in the following chapters) and secondly, allows for connections to be forged between scientific and non-scientific knowledge. This is largely a by-product of the de-westernisation of knowledge which occurs through pluriversal thinking.

Pluriversality, because of its emphasis on the connections and relationships between different beings or actors, questions the idea of separation, a fundamental part of Western thinking (Querejazu 2022). This has been illustrated in the discussion about Assemblage Thinking wherein the concept of the state as its own, factual concept, is questioned both in terms of the elements that make up the idea of statehood and in terms of its presumed separation from other ideas and phenomena such as capitalism. What is prevalent in Western thinking is the tendency to separate man and the natural world. Anthropocentrism is not just the act of placing humans at the centre of relationships, but equally the act of denying that there are legitimate connections between the human and the non-human world (Querejazu 2016). One of the dangers of anthropocentric thinking is that it becomes another way through which epistemicide is inflicted; any body of knowledge whether it be a worldview, ontology or theory that speaks to the connectedness and relationship between the human and non-human world, is deemed unscientific and illegitimate because it does not comply with Western intellectual, anthropocentric thinking Pluriversality emphasises connections and relations between the natural, religious, spiritual, and political world (Querejazu 2016, 4). Pluriversalism opens up the possibility of thinking and theorising from bodies of knowledge that are not anthropocentric and in this way, allows for different approaches to global issues. The chapters that follow illustrate this in a discussion about the Akan Philosophy of Life, the Andean Cosmovision and how they offer different understandings of global phenomena such as climate change.

That anthropocentrism would no longer be central to IR allows for the connection between scientific and non-scientific knowledge in a way that does not delegitimise scientific knowledge (de Sousa Santos 2007). To discuss what constitutes scientific and non-scientific knowledge, and how those very labels could be limiting in themselves, is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, there is an increasing need for the merging of the two, to make IR more effective and ethical at what it does. Through pluriversalism, knowledge is not made congruent with anthropocentrism or Western science, nor it is rendered incommensurable. Precisely put, multiple forms of knowledge are not pushed to the periphery.

This section sought to illustrate what a pluriversal approach to knowledge and knowledge production effectively entails. Pluriversality entails the decentralisation of singular ontologies within IR, radical interdependence between different ontologies, an understanding of knowledge that appreciates and accounts for the fluidity of concepts and finally, it entails a deeper analysis of concepts and ideas in a way that engages meaningfully with their plural

connections, from the ground up. Having forged a clearer picture of what pluriversality is, the following section contends with the politics thereof.

The Politics of Pluriversality

Pluriversality, as a pathway to decolonization is a political act because it attempts to redefine subjects and deconstruct boundaries symptomatic of Western colonial and imperial thinking. That is, any attempt to radically depart from a conception of the world, from a particular practise or way of thinking is inherently political because first, it critiques, questions and reframes the status quo. Pluriversality is inextricable from its political nature. In speaking about the transition from *uni*-versities to *pluri*-versities, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (202, 78) posits that "decolonisation confronts epistemicides, cognitive injustices and hierarchies in knowledge and education."

It is political because it confronts Eurocentrism and epistemicide from a subject positioning that has far-reaching implications on what comes thereafter the critique of the discipline. In other words, the concept of 'locus of enunciation' is particularly important here. Locus of enunciation is according to Grosfoguel (2017, 213) "the geo-political and body-political locations of the subject that speaks." In the case of Western philosophy and science, there is no 'locus of enunciation' because the subject does not acknowledge the subjectivity and episteme from which it speaks and is assumed to always be speaking impartial universal truths. And, where it does exist, it is hidden and carefully concealed (Grosfoguel 2017, 213). This links back to Sabaratnam's (2011) concept of epistemologies of immanence, ignorance and innocence which map out how the locus of enunciation from which Western thinking occurs is altogether ignored. The result of this is the perpetration of epistemicide; colonial expansion was able to construct abyssal lines of superiority and inferiority of knowledge and of people globally.

One of the important questions posed toward pluriversality that Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) brings our attention to, is how it will address varying subjectivities or loci from which knowledge occurs. One of the most important strengths of pluriversality is that by holding a more expansive discipline of knowledge, and forging deeper connections between those knowledges, an environment is created whereby education is especially effective because it occurs from a

space of learning from other epistemes. This avoids making opaque one's locus of enunciation and rather, seeks to radically embrace and bring attention to it. Furthermore, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021, 89), decolonialism is strongly opposed to 'fundamentalisms.' Pluriversality in and of itself prevents any body of knowledge from claiming universal truth. In this way, pluriversal thinking, by its very nature, creates an environment where knowledge is valued because of its subjectivity and the place from which it is born.

Alternatives to Pluriversality

Global IR emerges as an alternative way of reforming the IR discipline that is quite different to pluriversality and similarly Ecological, Mosaic and Assemblage Thinking. The following section attempts to draw a comparative analysis between Global IR and pluriversality in an attempt to further illustrate pluriversality's unique benefits.

Global IR is an approach to knowledge within the discipline which attempts to move beyond the divide between the core and periphery fostering a more diverse and inclusive discipline. One of its principle tenets is that of pluralistic universalism; the idea that there are multiple ways to make sense of the world within the confines of universal truths (Acharya 2014). Secondly, it calls for the abandoning of essentialising and reductive narratives about actors and regions within IR. Additionally, it posits that IR's ability to account for the world would be improved if it used world history as a starting point as opposed to Western history which is often assumed to be an universalist account of history (Acharya 2014). Fourthly, rather than replacing dominant and traditional IR theories, it seeks to hold and make use of all existing theories but also attempts to add more theories to those. It extends beyond traditional forms of agency to include resistance, norm development and contemporary constructions of the world order. In essence, the idea of global IR is seen to be an overarching structure under which there are many different concepts, theories and ideas. Moreover, it is open to different interpretations and developments (Acharya 2014).

One of the first areas of comparison is that of the principle of pluralistic universalism and pluriversality. A significant drawback of Global IR is that still holds that there are universal truths, whilst, in comparison, pluriversality posits that there are multiple truths about the world and multiple paradigms one may look through, to reach one of those truths. As discussed above,

there are many benefits that come with a discipline that does not hold singular truths; most importantly, the development of a hierarchy according to which knowledge is governed is less likely. However, the same is not necessarily true for Global IR and if anything, is more likely to instil and sustain hierarchies of knowledge measured according to the 'universal truths.' In this way, Global IR does not deconstruct colonial systems of thinking. Instead, it allows it to remain and at best, changes its frame of reference allowing only a superficial level of diversity within the discipline.

In fact, the reframing of IR to 'Global IR' implies that knowledge must in some unique way pertain to the Global in a way that has not been done before, in a way that is different to IR (Anderl and Witt 2020). In other words, knowledge is considered valuable within Global IR, only when it is applicable to the 'global' (it is not clear what global necessarily means). This is itself, the creation of a system whereby knowledge – especially that of the Global South – is only valuable or useful when it meets a criteria (Anderl and Witt 2020). Moreover, it is implied that concepts and theories from the Global South should be able to apply to contexts outside the ones in which they were born. This is directly contrasted with pluriversality which acknowledges that there are many ways to explain and understand something, and that one way may not be applicable to universal contexts, but is useful and valuable nonetheless. Global IR thus views the inclusion of non-Western knowledges as the most important aim and purpose for restructuring the discipline rather than both the inclusion and ethical and effective inclusion that pluriversality seeks to achieve. Global IR makes a small but insignificant shift: rather than measuring non-Western knowledge according to its proximity to Western ontological thinking, it now measures non-Western knowledge according to its ability to account for the global. Thus, it completely avoids engaging key ideas such as how benchmarking knowledge is harmful and is symptomatic of colonial thinking (Anderl and Witt 2020). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021, 85) warns against this: "the key point is that internationalisation of higher education cannot be a simplistic process of integration of 'the rest of us' into the European game. Without the dehomogenisation of the stranglehold of European epistemological orders, internationalisation remains problematic because it will always entail an asymmetry."

It becomes risky for Global IR to posit itself as a reformed way of going about IR because it does not necessarily reform at the systemic level. Especially because it does not challenge the presence of intellectual hierarchies in whichever form they may appear, it disregards that scholars may not be keen on belonging to a global imaginary when that 'globalism' is not

deeply and meaningfully inclusive (Anderl and Witt 2020). Moreover, what constitutes 'the global' is not clearly defined and it is thus contradictory that Global IR begins from a starting point which is vague.

A second point of comparison occurs with regard to its use of world history as opposed to European history or Euro-American historical accounts of the world. Global IR implies that Eurocentric accounts of the world within the discipline are a function of its inability to look at world history. Pluriversality holds a similar view, that global accounts of the world are necessary and not just singular ones. However, the omission of history is only one way in which epistemicide prevails. Epistemicide, as demonstrated above and in the previous chapter, also entails the erasure of culture, ways of thinking and being within the world.

Pluriversality and Global IR are fundamentally different. While the latter attempts to expand IR to encompass more theories and ontologies beyond the Western one, it places heavy emphasis on the necessity of the 'Global.' On the other hand, although pluriversality also envisages a more expansive, holistic and global discipline, it understands that knowledge is inherently valuable and that knowledge put together, accounts more globally than bodies of knowledge that individually speak to a global context. In this way, whilst Global IR is a better alternative to the discipline than its current form, it does not achieve the aims of deconstructing systemic hierarchies and epistemicides which is the imagined goal, at least within this dissertation.

How Can IR Adopt a Pluriversal Approach?

The previous sections attempted to outline what pluriversality within IR entails. It arrived at the conclusion that a changed IR discipline would no longer place at the centre, singular bodies of knowledge, it would appreciate interdependence and collaboration between knowledges and ontologies and finally, allow for ever-changing understandings of the world, and ever-changing theories. This section illustrates that in order to do so, one of the first steps is questioning traditional concepts, theories and ideas within IR.

Parasram (2023, 359) critiques the idea of the state and state sovereignty, confronting a crucial question, "whether it is possible to have a decolonised discipline that does not directly confront,

dismantle, and pluralise what sovereignty is." He posits that the concept of the state and sovereignty is derived from a single set of Eurocentric ontological assumptions about what the world is (Parasram 2023). The traditional conception of statehood and sovereignty is assumed to be applicable to a global context because it was forced upon the global through imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. He discusses the experiences of the Mi'kma'ki – a geographical region in Canada (Parasram 2023). In 2020, fisheries from Sipekne'katik, a district within Mi'kma'ki opened a lobster fishery in alignment with their own sovereign laws and with their affirmed treaty rights. This was met with violence and racism; Mi'kma'ki fishers were terrorised, their property, land and infrastructures were destroyed in the supposed name of conservation of lobster in the region (Parasram 2023, 363). Indigenous scholars researching this issue have argued that whilst the laws that indigenous peoples signed with the Canadian state are important, so too are the laws and principles that existed prior to the formation of the idea of Canada (Parasram 2023, 363). In essence, indigenous worldviews held by indigenous people across Canada, are fundamentally in conflict with Eurocentric ideas of land, property, statehood and sovereignty.

This example illustrates that in order to pluralise IR, continued efforts to question and provincialise dominant theories, ideas and concepts are imperative to create space and make visible alternative and pluriversal conceptions of the world. It also means that we must confront how ontologies differ in their understandings of the world and use that as an opportunity to forge new conceptions and theories. In other words, IR must become familiar with being uncomfortable in challenging and rethinking dominant ideas and theories. Furthermore, pluriversalising IR entails embracing and learning from indigenous worldviews in addition to deepening relationships with and between different communities of people.

By nature of thinking with more bodies of knowledge, and differing bodies of knowledge, Querejazu (2022) reminds us that IR must be open to thinking and framing knowledge differently. The expectation placed on scholars to produce research that always provides clear, defined concepts with certainty will end up constricting scholars in their investigations (Querejazu 2022). IR needs to be open to engaging knowledge in a more discursive fashion which caters to the ever-evolving nature of knowledge. This leads to several questions that IR must contend with such as: what types of relationships are possible between different knowledges? Who will translate knowledge? How do we ensure translating knowledge does

not disempower those knowledges and recreate divisions? What is the impact of pluriversal thinking on how universities and research centres operate?

Conclusion

This chapter sought to illustrate a clearer picture of what pluriversality as an approach to knowledge and knowledge production entails, and why it is necessarily a useful and beneficial way of going about knowledge differently. At its core pluriversality holds that there cannot be a singular truth about the world through which all humans are expected to perceive and understand the world. Rather, there are multiple truths, worldviews, ontologies and knowledges that we can use to make sense of all that is around us.

Pluriversality, because it is a radical shift from the ways in which we currently understand and engage with knowledge, and because that shift is one which moves away from Western intellectual hegemony, is a political endeavour to undertake. Adopting a pluriversal approach to IR would entail the decentralisation of any ontology and instead instil a structuring of knowledge that is based on the idea of coexistence. Furthermore, it leads to a discipline that does not shy away from the interdependence and collaboration of knowledges to explain and account for the world resulting in deeper analysis of phenomena in IR and a more vivid picture of the world. Shifting toward pluriversality is no easy task, however, and entails confronting dominant, traditional concepts of IR such as statehood and sovereignty through new paradigms. The following chapters attempt to do just that in their discussions about how the Akan Philosophy and Andean Cosmovision understand the world.

Chapter 3: The Akan Philosophy of Life; Rethinking Knowledge, Sovereignty and the Environment.

Introduction and aims

This dissertation is divided into two thematic parts. The earlier chapters attempted to describe and critically engage with some of the critiques that have been directed against IR as a discipline. Arguing from a decolonial perspective, it considered the inattention of the discipline toward non-Western theories. Additionally, it discussed the implications and dangers of the discipline's lack of engagement with bodies of knowledge from the Global South stressing the continuation of epistemicide as a function of colonial ways of thinking about knowledge and organising knowledge. Further, I made the case for a pluriversal approach to knowledge and knowledge production describing what a pluriversal approach to knowledge within IR might entail. I argue pluriversalism acts as a kind of framework that guides how we engage, dissect and understand the moving parts of a concept, body of knowledge or theory.

This chapter constitutes the start of the second thematic part of the dissertation wherein the foundation established in the first is linked and applied to two case studies, beginning with the first, the Akan philosophy of life originating in West Africa. I attempt to move beyond the critique of IR so as to engage directly with indigenous thought and bodies of knowledge showing how they understand the world and therefore what they can teach us in IR.

What follows investigates the Akan philosophy of life, exploring its core tenets, beliefs and ethical underpinnings. The aim of this chapter is to make visible the Akan philosophy within the IR discipline. Additionally, I argue that the Akan philosophy offers an alternative understanding of the world, one that is positioned against anthropocentrism contrasting traditional IR, of which anthropocentrism is foundational. This is elucidated on three levels, each overlapping with respective sections of the chapter: (i) the Akan philosophy questions the idea that humans are the only beings who possess knowledge, wisdom and political autonomy. Building on this, it (ii) challenges traditional conceptions of sovereignty; that we should structure and understand the world through a state system wherein individuals are placed at the centre, (iii) it discusses how universal claims about human rights can be derived from an

ontological framework that is not individualistic. Finally, (iv) it questions the systemic separation between man and nature, intrinsic to IR. In chapter five, after having discussed what alternatives to current understandings of the world could look like based on the Akan philosophy and Andean Cosmovision, the respective findings will be connected and linked to the issue of climate change addressing how IR falls short of engaging the issue thoroughly and effectively, and therefore how alternative understandings of the world are particularly useful.

This chapter is structured as follows: the first section outlines the main tenets of the philosophy, followed by sections which explore three major themes within the Akan philosophy: personhood and communitarianism, rights and ethics and lastly, environmental ethics. Finally, the last section of this chapter discusses some of the main challenges and ethical considerations that arise when working with an indigenous body of thought.

Main Tenets of the Akan Philosophy

The Akan philosophy has its roots in West Africa (Boaheng 2024). Although Ghana has the largest population of Akan people, because the origins of Akan culture and philosophy predate the colonial division of the African continent into colonies and states – its origins are considered to date around 13th century – people practising the Akan culture do not only reside within Ghana but other states in West Africa including the Ivory Coast and Togo too. Notably, Ghanian scholars – some of whom will be discussed below – have pioneered academic enquiries into the Akan philosophy.

This chapter refers to the philosophy - the ideas, beliefs and values that make up the philosophy - and not necessarily the Akan people directly. This clarification is important because the case study analysis does not necessarily attempt to study how Akan people practise their beliefs but rather, what those beliefs are to begin with. There are important questions which arise when speaking about a group or community of people such as: 'Who are the Akan people?' and 'What is their history and origin?' These questions are still being contended with. Some scholars have used the term 'Akan' in reference to people who speak the Akan language whilst others have implied its reference to an ethnic group of people (Kiyaga-Mulindwa 1980). Those questions require significant further study and evaluation which are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Thus, this chapter does not claim to define who necessarily practises the Akan philosophy of life but rather, it engages with what the core principles are. This is done with the view to engage with the question of whether the main concepts can be made to travel and be of use in engaging with other systems of thinking.

The Akan philosophy involves an intersection between religious and spiritual beliefs which inform ethical approaches to life, the conduct of humans and the interactions of humans with human and non-human entities (Akesson 1965). Three main elements form part of humans and in some cases, non-human entities too. The extent to which these elements exist within non-human entities depends on the entity itself and the extent of its inherent spirituality (Minkus 1980). These three elements are: *honam* (which in Western and English terms means body), *okra* (soul) and *sunsum* (spirit or personality soul) (Akesson 1965, 286). All three elements are important. However, their importance varies depending on the interpretations thereof; Wiredu (2010), Gyeke (1992) and Menkiti (1984) differ in interpretations. Before discussing these elements and the significance they hold within the Akan philosophy, it is important to consider the rationale for doing so.

There are two key reasons why discussing the elements of the Akan philosophy is important. Drawing ideas, ethical principles or any kind of learning from a source, cannot be done effectively if not within the greater understanding and context of that source. The links that I intend to make between the Akan philosophy and International Relations (as discussed in the following sections of this chapter) concern (i) its anti-anthropocentric stance and (ii) the importance it places on the connections between humans, best explained through communitarianism. Those links do not refer explicitly to the three elements of okra, honam and sunsum but cannot be understood in the context of the Akan philosophy without it either. The three elements form the spiritual and contextual basis upon which all other aspects of the Akan philosophy depend; synthesising all the beliefs, ethical and philosophical claims within the Akan concept. Omitting a discussion about these elements would be disingenuous to the philosophy and to the attempts this dissertation makes at engaging indigenous bodies of knowledge meaningfully and respectfully. Thus, a holistic discussion about the philosophy, even when all aspects of that discussion are not explicitly referenced and used in forging the connections between the philosophy and IR, is both necessary and important.

The second reason is closely linked to the first. Shilliam (2011) argues that part of what makes traditional IR and its approach to knowledge production problematic is its dependence on the concept of modernity as a criteria by which it evaluates knowledge. Modernity as understood in traditional IR, is a "condition of social existence that is radically different to all past forms of human experience that are categorised as traditional or primitive" (Shilliam 2011, 12). He adds the problem with this kind of thinking is that it "creates the idea that context-free knowledge is universally valid and thus thoroughly modern knowledge, as opposed to context-sensitive systems of thought that remain traditional" (Shilliam 2011, 13). In this way, IR theories are removed from contextual knowledge and deemed 'universal'. The discussion about the three elements and foundations of the Akan philosophy is important because the ideas I suggest can travel to IR, are derived from a spiritual and religious context. In essence, the holistic discussion of the Akan philosophy illustrates that it is both possible and better to theorise from context-specific knowledge and that the lessons gained can nonetheless be universally valid, thus breaking away from the approach that traditional IR takes.

There is a notable difference between the okra and the sunsum. The first point of difference is that the sunsum can only exist, take place or develop once the okra has entered the body (Akesson 1965, 286). In other words, the sunsum comes into existence only when an Akan person has a living soul. The sunsum is referred to as a kind of consciousness, or the consciousness that the Akan person embodies which is a partial expression of the okra (Akesson 1965). An Akan person's sumsum is their personality, character or spirit about and for life. It is said that sunsum can be passed down to children specifically through their father (Akesson 1965). Sunsum is extended to non-human entities as well, especially nature. For example, in Akan philosophy, some trees have an especially strong sunsum such as the onyaa tree (in Latin this tree is known as 'ceiba pentandra' and in English as the 'Kapok' tree) which is considered a deity (Minkus 1980, 183). The concept of sunsum is, however, more complex than the consciousness one has. The concept is divided into two: those that are sunsum: ye sunsum, and those that have sunsum: wo sunsum (Minkus 1980, 183). Gods, deities and ancestral spirits are sunsum because their whole being consists of sunsum. Whereas on the other hand, people, plants, animals, bodies of water and nature have sunsum which is an essential part of their physical and visible existence but does not altogether constitute them (Minkus 1980).

This links to a second, similar concept. In the Akan philosophy, there is a difference between the elements that one can and cannot see. '*Nea wonhu'* refers to that which one does not see whilst '*nea wohu'* refers to that which one can see or perceive with the human eye (Minkus 1980, 183). Certain individuals who are gifted or trained are able to perceive what is generally not perceived by most people – except for the supreme being, *Nyame* (Minkus 1980, 183). There are some beings, like Nyame which are altogether, exclusively spiritual such that even those with heightened spiritual abilities are unable to perceive or see them. Those skilled people are nonetheless able to access a more heightened state of spiritual being than the ordinary person (Minkus 1980).

The second difference between the okra and sunsum is that the okra is an element which resided with God, Nyame, before its manifestation within a human body. The okra could have belonged to another person before, but it remains amongst Akan people (Akesson 1965, 284). However, whatever life the okra may have had before, the day an Akan person is born, is the day the okra takes manifestation in the physical world of a man. The okra is immortal. In this way, the death of a person is seen as temporal because eventually, the okra would reside in a new body (Akesson 1965). All okra are equal to one another because they originate from Nyame. However, when the okra resides in a human body, the living person takes on the social role for them, that they are born into, within the hierarchy of a clan. The following saying, "*odomankoma boo adee no, aboo no krkronkron kronkron*" means, when loosely translated, that the creator God, created something that is perfect – that which is the soul (Akesson 1965, 285).

Another difference is that the okra is in some ways and to some extent, worshipped unlike the sunsum (Akesson 1965, 286). Despite the differences between the two, the okra and the sunsum work hand in hand to maintain balance within the Akan (Akesson 1965, 287). The sunsum attempts to fight off the evil wards which can bring the quality of the okra down. It works to protect the honam and the okra from any kind of weakness which could impact an Akan person's quality of being. Unlike the okra, the sunsum can leave the body at any time and can have independent experiences. Furthermore, in most cases, the sunsum stops being active when the person deceases (Akesson 1965). There is a kind of balance that the sunsum and okra hold together; the lack of balance and symbiotic relationship of the two leads to the deterioration of the Akan or even the okra leaving resulting in death. This makes the Akan person committed to maintaining purity of the soul and overall well-being by avoiding degrading actions and

emotions such as resentment and bitterness because these ultimately cause illness and contribute to imbalance (Akesson 1965).

As mentioned earlier, there are differing interpretations about the importance of the elements. For instance, Wiredu (2010) and Gyeke (1992) differ about the nature of the sunsum and the okra and whether it can necessarily be seen or not. Wiredu suggests that the okra and the sunsum are both quasi-physical (Antwi 2017, 95). His reasoning is that highly skilled men, referred to as medicine men, can in fact see the okra and thus he interprets the okra to be quasi-spiritual and not entirely spiritual. On the other hand, Gyeke posits that both the sunsum and the okra are entirely spiritual and cannot be seen at all, even by medicine men (Antwi 2017, 95). Furthermore, Gyeke (1992) holds a dualistic perception of the Akan person and what constitutes their being. He believes that the okra and the sunsum are the spiritual and immaterial parts of a person whereas the honam is the material and physical part of a person (Antwi 2017, 95). Whilst these differences are important because they impact the perceived understanding of the divinity of and accessibility to the okra and the sunsum, the core natures of these elements and how humans are constituted by all elements, is not disputed.

In addition to the three elements, ancestors and the worshipping thereof is important in the Akan philosophy. Ancestors or *nananom*, have souls which live on forever, especially because they reside in a shrine which prevents them from perishing (Akesson 1965, 284). Keeping the memory of the nananom alive is particularly important because without honouring the memory, the nananom fades. This is done through worship and the offering of food and drink (Akesson 1965, 284). Moreover, ancestors who have died do not reside in a shrine alone but rather, the ancestors reside together. In this way, Akan people believe that the whole community is guaranteed 'survival' even in death and so are the individuals (Akesson 1965, 284). This ignites a passion and commitment toward the community; it places importance on community life. It is important to worship ancestors who were once the cornerstone of the community because it serves as a reminder that ancestors are forever present and interested in the community. Resultantly, this practise and belief instils in the Akan people feelings of importance, responsibility and compassion (Akesson 1965).

The Akan philosophy challenges the concept of anthropocentrism on multiple levels. This section is important because it highlights how the Akan philosophy specifically confronts the assumption that humans are the only beings or entities which have political autonomy and

capability and knowledge, reason and wisdom. Before elucidating this further, it is necessary to define and discuss the concept of 'anthropocentrism', how it constitutes the foundation of IR and finally then, how this is challenged.

Youatt (2017, 40) explains that the concept of anthropocentrism refers to the "exclusive centrality of the human to our concepts and analyses of political life and calls into question that category of the human itself, prompting us to ask about multiple versions of the human articulated in and with different assemblages of the non-human including animal, natural, material and technological." He mentions that defining and explaining the concept can be met with some uncertainty because it is difficult to understand what exactly it means for humans to be 'centered' (Youatt 2017, 40). However, in essence, anthropocentrism refers to the privileging of humans as a starting and continuous point of reference in the social sciences (Youatt 2014).

Importantly, anthropocentrism is supported by the assumption that politics is *a* practice conducted solely by humans (Youatt 2014). This is because of the assumption that humans are the only beings capable of reason. Cudworth and Hobden (2015, 174) posit that reason is elevated as a master category; that it is constitutive of the political subject and of political agency in rationalist and human-referential terms. Posthumanism claims that the category, 'human' is a social construct which is linked to formulations of power that consciously seek to set apart humans from other living and non-living entities, and set apart different groups of humans from each other on the basis of race, gender, class etc. Cudworth and Hobden (2013). As a result, other living entities such as nature and animals are understood in terms of what they can provide to sustain and enhance human life and not as autonomous and political actors themselves (Youatt 2014). Thus, intrinsic to anthropocentrism is a divide between man and nature. Anthropocentrism is not just a theoretical concept but an approach to social and political life that has come to be understood as a driver of ecological degradation and largely speaking, the present climate crisis. The consequences of an anthropocentric political practice on the climate, and how IR contends with this will be engaged in the fifth chapter. Ultimately, anthropocentrism is a worldview and in relation to the IR discipline and the social sciences, is symptomatic of a Western ontology.

IR takes states and individuals at its key starting point (Youatt 2014). The Westphalian state system, despite that it has come under increasing critique within the discipline, is still the principle organisational form of international political life (Youatt 2014). Parasram (2023, 356)

points to how there are several critiques of Westphalian system because it is a product of ontological assumptions derived from a Judeo-Christian understanding of the world and because it is inextricable from colonialism and imperialism. There is great contention with the state system on the basis that it is derived from ontological point linked to colonialism and imperialism, that it imposes itself as universally applicable, and also that the state system as a means to organise international politics, entrenches anthropocentrism. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to thoroughly engage all the critiques of the Westphalian state system. However, what this dissertation does contend with is the latter; that intrinsic to the Westphalian state system is the separation between man and nature.

Importantly, IR adopts a Newtonian understanding of the world wherein the state system is closed and fixed (Cudworth and Hobden 2015, 173) The environment, nature and all other entities or actors are considered beyond and outside the state system and are only engaged with in so far as they present as a threat to individuals and the state. For example, the concepts of human rights, human security and even state security are primarily concerned with the individual and/or the state, or individuals as means to the security of the state (Youatt 2014).

In the Akan philosophy, the honam, okra and sunsum although operating together to constitute the human, are each understood to have some level of autonomy and knowledge or wisdom that is crucial. Whilst humans are important and often a focal point of the Akan philosophy, it is because humans are constituted by and intertwined with other entities which have their own specific knowledge and abilities, that humans are differentiated from other living beings. As demonstrated, the okra and sunsum are especially indicative of this; the okra holds knowledge about life that transcends lifetimes and is different based on the okra's experiences. Additionally, that non-human entities such as trees, rocks and water hold sunsum that is knowledge and personality of their own. In other words, the Akan philosophy confronts the assumption that only humans hold knowledge and political autonomy because through this worldview, all entities do, albeit to different extents. Hence, discussing the spiritual elements is of particular importance.

Personhood and Community

One of the strongest and most prevalent beliefs or principles in the Akan way of life is that of communitarianism. When a person is born, they are said to be born directly into a community (Gyeke 1992). The idea is that one person or a few people, cannot constitute a community, nor can they stand alone and exist well, without belonging to one. A community comes into being through the congregation of many individual people and is the social, cultural and political space wherein individuals self-actualise. Communities provide safe and adequate spaces for individuals to become and express who they are (Gyeke 1992). Importantly however, the community is not just a space of individuals who are associated with each other, but a place wherein people are linked by interpersonal bonds, shared ideologies, goals and beliefs (Gyeke 1992). The notion of shared values is particularly important; it is what differentiates a community from another social structure. Additionally, human welfare constitutes a significant portion of the Akan philosophy toward life; in this way, all beings in the universe are related such that the wellbeing of one is inherently the wellbeing of another.

One of the main debates within African philosophy at large is the extent to which communitarianism encroaches on individuality, personhood and self-expression. This debate is an important one because it lends to deeper understandings of the moral underpinnings of Akan philosophy and African philosophies in general. Before continuing to engage with this discussion, it is important to point out why it is permissible to make generalisations about African ethics, principles and philosophies without necessarily homogenising different African philosophies. Molefe (2023) reminds us that there are concepts and ideas which are common and important among African cultures; especially the belief in ancestors and the idea of communitarianism. For example, the concept of Ubuntu, which speaks to communitarianism, is also prevalent in the Akan philosophy and in fact, is the cornerstone of its ethical principles. That is not to say that communitarianism and the importance of ancestors is unique to African cultures only, or that everyone who belongs to a culture on the African continent necessarily believes and practises it, but that it is a generalizable characteristic. This is a useful reminder because African philosophers, in knowing that there are common and generalizable characteristics, are able to form deeper understandings of African ethics at large (Molefe 2023, 123).

Gyeke (1992, 104) asks an important question when speaking about African ethics and the Akan philosophy specifically, 'to what extent is individuality awarded, and considered important, within the boundaries of communitarianism?' Communal aspects of African cultures are more often than not, the defining characteristics of those cultures. Gyeke (1992) posits that interpretations of communitarianism within African ethics and philosophy have been radical, excessive and inaccurate in accounting for the extent to which the individual is important in and of themselves. Gyeke (1992, 104) points to some of the important implications that come with the idea of persons being born directly into a community. Firstly, participation within community life is not an optional experience. Secondly, humans are assumed to be inherent cultural beings that, thirdly, are unable to exist and thrive in isolation. Finally, human beings are naturally social species who actively seek relationships with others.

Gyeke (1992) posits that the above three implications hold true to some extent, but that even so, a person is by nature, more than a constitution of their communitarian actions and presence. This view is in contrast to Menkiti (1984) who argues that there is less space for individuality and personhood within a community-centred ethics. Gyeke's (1992, 105) first reason is that whilst one may achieve personhood and self-actualise within a community setting, it is not necessarily entirely acquired within that communal setting and is equally developed outside it too. Moreover, there is a saying in the Akan philosophy, "he is not a human," which is usually said to people who have been cruel, selfish and acted in a problematic manner (Gyeke 1992, 109). Gyeke (1992) believes that this saying in addition to other similar ones, indicates that there are certain norms and ideals associated with personhood that are unrelated to being within a community. Because humans are expected to comply with those norms and ideals – in this case, those norms include practising kindness and the ability to conduct oneself with dignity and respect – fulfilling those norms constitutes personhood in and of itself. Especially in Akan culture, human nature is assumed to be inherently good, holding the capacity for virtue and acting morally right. In fact, there is a strong concept of morality inextricably tied to personhood. This idea is that a person is defined by their virtuous actions and their ability to uphold morals. Gyeke (1992) posits, the idea that one's virtuous nature (or sinful nature) implies that one's personhood is not only and entirely defined by their belonging within a community.

The concept of morality and personhood also links to the idea of autonomy. Gyeke (1992, 109) defines autonomy not in reference to self-completeness but rather, the will and inherent drive towards one goals and pursuits of life. His argument is that even within a community-centred environment, individuals are still awarded autonomy such that they can pursue goals and make choices which can define his or her own identity. It is for these reasons that Gyeke (1992) believes personhood within both the Akan philosophy and African ethics at large, is only in part defined by one's presence and belonging within a community. He regards this as a moderate interpretation of communitarianism.

In slight contrast to Gyeke, Wiredu believes that personhood is not necessarily inherited but is a gained trait over the course of one's life and dependent on the respect a person earns socially (Majeed 2014, 45). The idea is that a person must attain social status first and resultantly, personhood is often only said to be achieved by those who are much older. The normative concept of a person is then understood in terms of his/ her relationships with the other members of the community. This idea is further illustrated with reference to children; children must go through rites of incorporation such that they become integrated into society. Growth, puberty, marriage and death are important markers in one's journey towards personhood (Antwi 2017, 95). Moreover, it is the community's responsibility to ensure that a child is nurtured and guided towards the attainment of personhood. One can obtain personhood and respect through actions such as marrying with honour, raising children, settling family disputes, issues or conflicts and bringing peace to one's family or community. (Antwi 2017, 95). Personhood through this interpretation is then encroached on much more, because of the value of communitarianism.

There are also differing interpretations and understandings of other concepts within the Akan philosophy such as that of destiny. According to Gyeke, and based upon his understanding of personhood, he believes that God imposes destiny and that it is unalterable (Majeed 2014). One's destiny does not necessarily speak to all the occurrences in one's life but rather, significant events such as death. There are also contrasting opinions on the extent to which one can know about their destiny. Gyeke believes that destiny is only known by God, whereas there is also the possibility that people with exceptional spiritual capabilities can come to lead one to knowledge of their destiny (Majeed 2014, 50). One may seek help and guidance from the spiritually knowing person to overcome challenges and identify talents and suitable pursuits.

Unlike Gyeke, Wiredu believes that the idea of a soul and what is meant by the term okra, are significantly different. The okra is according to his interpretation, quasi-physical. Wiredu also regards the okra as the bearer of one's destiny (Majeed 2014, 56). Additionally, he distinguishes between cosmological and pragmatic destiny. The idea of cosmological destiny refers to the belief that everything in and about the world is already predetermined. Pragmatic destiny, on the other hand, refers to the belief that a person still has the ability to, despite a largely predetermined destiny, seek a different life or seek their own aspirations which may or may not necessarily coincide with perceived ideas of what is destined for them (Majeed 2014, 56). In other words, cosmological destiny does not prohibit people from holding ambitions, visions, goals and plans for their life. Wiredu makes clear that there is a balance between ambition and will and predetermined events. Moreover, even if a person has a good destiny, it is up to them to undertake actions that ultimately lead to one's good life (Majeed 2014, 56).

This discussion about communitarianism as a principle means of organising is important because it challenges the traditional idea of sovereignty held by IR. The Akan philosophy and traditional IR hold in common the importance of individuals. As discussed, although there is great emphasis placed on the community structure, the attainment of 'personhood' by an individual is in large part their own undertaking. IR and the Akan worldview understand individuals to be central actors in social and political life. However, the Akan philosophy elucidates the possibility that communities can constitute sovereign entities, however, in traditional IR, sovereignty is only awarded to states.

In traditional IR, sovereignty is awarded when states fulfil a criteria; a defined and permanent territory, the ability to govern its people, the ability to enter into relations with other states, and a permanent population (Parasram 2023, 358). This idea of sovereignty is rooted in Western legal, philosophical and theological principles (Parasram 2023, 359). One particular issue with this idea of sovereignty is that it is considered to be universally applicable, and the only understanding of sovereignty possible (Parasram 2023). The Akan philosophy, in stressing the importance of the community as a principle means of social and political organisation, responsible for the governance of its individuals, makes visible the possibility of other forms of sovereignty that can be adopted within IR. The community is responsible for helping individuals achieve their personhood, and it is a space wherein there are shared ideologies, goals and values. Moreover, individuals are expected to comply with the norms and values of the community, their membership within the community is given. The community is also a

space for political discourse and choices, which in turn, is reflected in its inter and intra-community relations. In this way, within the Akan philosophy, the community is understood to be a kind of sovereign entity because it is autonomous, guides individuals and makes choices for the well-being of individuals. Although this is a claim in its preliminary stages, what IR can learn from the Akan philosophy is that there are alternative ways of conceptualising and practising sovereignty. Parasram (2023) posits that in the study of IR, we often forget there is much more that constitutes the 'relations' part of the discipline than just the 'international'; the discipline ought to be more than just diplomacy, war and bureaucracy but rather seek to include and engage with other complex systems and political formations too. Further, he makes the case that because there are ontological differences in what sovereignty means and how it is practised, IR ought to depart from a universal understanding of sovereignty and instead adopt a pluriversal understanding of sovereignty, allowing for more extensive, vast and robust understandings of the world (Parasram 2023). In this way, the Akan philosophy presents as one site to begin to do so.

The Concept of Human Rights

Osei's (2023) work brings to light the ways in which African conceptions of human rights and ethics and Western conceptions of human rights share similarities despite being derived from different premises of the individual. As such, it makes visible how attempts to theorise from a different ontological perspective can render both similar and different ideas to traditional IR. This comparison helps further our understanding of human rights by elucidating what the Akan philosophy contributes.

The concept of liberty, often associated with Hobbes, is conceptualised differently within the Akan philosophy. Having liberty, according to the Hobbesian explanation, is the ability to undertake an action without that action infringing on the safety of others, or their ability to do the same (Osei 2023). This means that people have the responsibility to refrain from inhibiting others from accessing their liberties. Similarly, within the Akan philosophy, people are awarded okwan, which loosely translates to 'permission' (Osei 2023, 333). For example, people have permission to speak freely which in Akan is, 'me wo ho kwan se meka bi.' (Osei 2023, 334). The justification for the permission to speak freely is at its core, that one is human and therefore

this okwan is naturally awarded. ‘Me nso me ye nipa, tekyrema da manum, eti momma menka bi’ which means: ‘I am also a human being therefore I have a tongue in my mouth and so I must also be allowed to talk’ (Osei 2023, 337). Emphasis is placed on the fact that one is human; this forms the fundamental justification for the access to permissions, it is a God-given right to all people. Rights are not awarded based on one’s achievement, wealth or education. Whilst some people may be awarded additional rights on the basis of age and gender, those rights are only awarded over and above one’s access to the basic rights first.

Importantly, and as mentioned above, in the Akan philosophy the primary unit of organisation is family and community units, both immediate and extended. Family units and communities are the spaces within which rights are exercised and despite the strong principle of communitarianism, individual rights are upheld too (Osei 2023). For example, the youth within a family unit are strongly encouraged to respect others’ rights to private property. Additionally, they are taught to respect and treat everyone fairly. Importantly, whilst some room is given to the youth because they are still coming of age and understanding the depths of values, morality and ethics, they are not raised without autonomy. It is common practise for parents and elders who raise children to claim immunity from responsibility for a child’s bad behaviour. The saying ‘nsemone nti na yekye din,’ means that names are given to individuals as a means to ensure responsibility is placed on an individual for their moral wrongdoings, even within a community setting (Osei 2023, 336). The implication is that when children stray far from the ethics and principles they were raised with, they are implicated as individuals instead of the community or family.

Another value which guides behaviour within social settings is that of limiting the resources one acquires as an individual, so as not to deprive others. Concerning common property such as food, there is a common saying, ‘kyadee ntu bi’ which means that the person who distributes the goods cannot claim more than others (Osei 2023, 336). The right to fairness is a strong right within the Akan philosophy and it is expected that this right must be present in all aspects of life. For example, if someone owes another person money as per an agreement, it is not permissible to deprive that person of their private property or livelihood. The principle is ‘kafoo didi’ meaning that even a debtor deserves the right to eat because the right to life is most superior (Osei 2023, 341).

The right to fairness is also extended to the pursuit of justice. Although it was more prevalent prior to its destruction because of colonisation, Akan people had established and independent legal systems wherein each individual was awarded the right to a fair trial and the right to appeal if there were feelings of dissatisfaction or injustice (Osei 2023, 342). Additionally, accountability was not only a principle by which regular citizens lived by, but it also applied to political heads. Any leader could be dethroned for problematic acts such as theft and adultery (Osei 2023, 342). The right to freedom and expression within Akan philosophy also extended to the political realm. Akan people were permitted to dispose of a leader who impeded on their right to religious freedom and expression.

The Akan philosophy and Western conceptions of human rights both place importance on the right to liberty, private property, and the right to fairness and justice. However, crucially, this importance is derived from different ontological starting points. In the case of Western conceptions of human rights, rights are awarded on the basis that individuals, by virtue of being humans are worthy of those rights. Through the worldview of the Akan philosophy, those rights are awarded both on the basis that humans are inherently worthy, but also because the community is an equally relevant entity. Further, rights are awarded to individuals because they constitute communities and when those rights and ethics are upheld the sanctity of the community is maintained. Put simply, the Akan philosophy's premise is that of the individual and the community, whereas in Western thinking, and traditional IR by extension, human rights rest on a foundation constituted only by individuals. In this way, Osei (2023) shows how the concept of rights in the Akan philosophy works with different premises than Western conceptions of rights while guaranteeing certain rights for all humans. Therefore, this discussion challenges the individualistic nature of IR; showing that ideas derived from alternative ontological perspectives which do not centre individuals only, can still be universally applicable.

Of course, there is still debate and contention about the extent to which the strong communitarian principle of the Akan philosophy impedes the expression of one's personhood. Onyebuchi (2018) posits that questions about the extent to which one's personhood is inherent or not, depends on one's subjectivity and understanding. However, the implications of this are marginal because at its core, the Akan philosophy is inherently a communitarian one and therefore its ethics and the rights that it awards, are derived from that communitarian worldview.

The idea of spiritual causation is prevalent within Akan ontology. This refers to the belief that all beings and the actions of beings are interconnected and related (Golo, Majeed and Myles 2023). The actions of one being, typically a higher one, affects 'lower' beings. In other words, the beings within the earth affect and cause changes to and amongst each other. This is applicable in both in a spiritual sense and in a physical sense. In this way, humans and the environment are dependent on each other (Golo, Majeed and Myles 2023, 94). Despite that humans are considered to hold higher consciousness, the Akan philosophy calls for care and harmony toward the natural world and environment around. That is not to say that the Akan philosophy is necessarily not anthropocentric. In fact, Molefe (2023, 135) considers the Akan philosophy to have a "weak" form of anthropocentrism. However, at the same time, the Akan philosophy has been described as naturalistic; this implies that the religious and spiritual components of the belief system are underpinned by considerations about natural phenomena and the natural world (Golo, Majeed and Myles 2023).

One of the main beliefs is that the natural world is created by God and holds divine purpose. The earth, asaase, is considered a deity named Yaa (Golo, Majeed and Myles 2023, 97). More specifically, the earth is a goddess called Asaase Yaa (Golo, Majeed and Myles 2023, 97). Given that it is a divine creation, it is inherently valuable. The natural world is both a physical and tangible world but one that holds spirituality too. It is believed that Asaase Yaa is almost a spirit-like entity which cares for humans and is a helpful being. Furthermore, the natural world is believed to have been created by God for the benefit of humans (Golo, Majeed and Myles 2023). The natural world is important and symbolic in three ways. Firstly, it is a reminder of the religion and spirituality that informs its creation. Secondly, it is a reminder of the social and spiritual relationship which exists between human and non-human entities. Lastly, it is a reminder of the intrinsic ethical value in the creation of the natural world (Golo, Majeed and Myles 2023). These beliefs and understandings about the natural world significantly determine the relationships between humans and non-human entities.

Due to the strong relationship between humans and the natural world, responsibility is placed on humans to maintain a healthy relationship with the natural world. One of the main ideas underpinning this moral responsibility is that humans and non-human entities cannot coexist

in an environment that is not underpinned by peace and harmony (Golo, Majeed and Myles 2023). As such, the Akan adopt a principle of sustainable use of the resources provided by the natural world. Although it serves benefits to humans, the natural world's sole purpose is more than that, and it is divine. Hence, it is respected as a being of its own kind.

Additionally, the earth has feelings of its own and can communicate this with humans through natural occurrences in response to human behaviour. Should humans be willing to listen, Akan people believe that they are able to understand the earth's messages (Golo, Majeed and Myles 2023, 105). The earth is also considered, despite its non-human nature, to have feelings which must be respected. Notions about the intrinsic value and divinity of the natural world are believed to have been passed down by ancestors, their lived experiences and deities. This knowledge is heard and shared by priests (Golo, Majeed and Myles 202, 105). It is arguable to what extent the Akan philosophy is necessarily anthropocentric; whilst humans are placed at the centre of the philosophy, they are not necessarily placed at the centre of the world or spirituality. Rather, they are alluded to as one aspect thereof. Whether or not it is necessarily anthropocentric, the Akan philosophy provides an interesting and nuanced approach to the natural world that will be further explored in chapter five.

This section is particularly important because it directly challenges the anthropocentric nature of the IR discipline on a second level; it questions the divide between man and nature and the ill-treatment of the environment for the purpose of human gain and advancement. Although much emphasis is placed on humans in the Akan philosophy, they are understood as one being within a system of multiple beings with equal importance. The human cannot be separated from nature because it is through nature that spirituality is practised, wisdom and knowledge are gained and livelihoods are constituted. Furthermore, the environment is regarded as a sacrosanct entity which should be respected not because it provides for humans but because of its inherent spirituality and divinity. However, through the Western worldview IR holds, humans are separated from the environment and concerns about the environment exist in so much as it poses a threat to human security, through natural disasters for example, and as a place from which humans derive resources (Pereira 2017). Anthropocentrism is deeply consequential for IR. Most glaringly, IR's failure to adequately deal with the climate crisis is symptomatic of the dangers of its anthropocentric worldview (Pereira 2017). That its focus is limited to humans alone means that the systemic destruction of the earth for human gain is sustained despite the serious consequences. An anthropocentric discipline is one that is

inherently dangerous and destructive. Hence, engaging with the Akan philosophy is important because it encourages IR to reconsider its interaction and relationship with the environment; respecting it as an entity holding equal importance to humans holds the possibility of a different climate trajectory. Jackson (2008) reminds us that debates about the perspectives through which the social sciences approach the world has tangible consequences in shaping our futures and as such, they are both important and necessary.

Engaging with the Indigenous

Spivak (2010) posits that there is much danger when seeking to represent or theorise from the South. When engaging with indigenous knowledge, scholars act as 'informants' of that body of thought and even if they belong to the indigenous community that they research and speak of, they become complicit in a kind of 're-representation' of that group through their own positioning. Re-representation can be detrimental because, despite good intentions, it is nonetheless still tied to the informant's perception of the subject. Spivak's (2010) argument is important to bear in mind. In doing so, the following points become important to take note of. There are a few challenges that arise when studying the Akan philosophy which are important to take note of because they impact the 'representation' thereof, within this chapter and research dissertation.

Firstly, the history and origins of the Akan people and the history of their movement throughout the forests of Ghana are still relatively undefined (Klein 1996). There are still emerging hypotheses about the origins of the Akan people and interactions between the Akan and other ethnic groups in Ghana. There is broad consensus that the cultures of the West African forest developed over millennia of cultural and ecological adaptation (Klein 1996). One of the hypotheses about the origins of the Akan is that the people inhabiting the forests of Ghana before and after the 15th century are necessarily different groups (Klein 1996, 253). However, later investigations into ceramic patterns and the radiocarbon dates of ceramics suggest that there is a continuity of Akan culture and history before and after the 15th century. One of the reasons why there is not yet much certainty is because there is much difficulty in historicising an oral tradition (Klein 1996, 254). These difficulties often result in gaps in the understanding

of groups of people in this case, the Akan. It is necessary to be aware of what those gaps are and where they might exist when engaging with indigenous bodies of knowledge because ideologies, beliefs and values of a tradition may change over time, as does the history and movement of a particular group. That is, philosophies, worldviews or even just parts of those can change or be impacted over time because of changes in location or interactions with other communities. Being able to or unable to map out movement, interactions and broadly speaking, historical events related to a group of people and their philosophy, impacts our understanding of their traditions of knowledge, and therefore its subsequent representation. This is one of the challenges that is necessary to contend with; our knowledge about a philosophy or worldview of an indigenous group may not necessarily be holistic and complete and will grow and evolve over time as ethnographic research occurs too.

A second challenge is the very classification of people as "Akan People" (Kiyaga-Mulindwa 1980). Kiyaga-Mulindwa (1980) posits that people have spoken about the Akan as if they necessarily knew exactly who they were referring to. However, the implied meaning of the term varies. In some cases it has been used to refer to race, in others, to refer to a group of people speaking the Akan language and in a third set of cases, it has been used to refer to an ethnic group of people (Kiyaga-Mulindwa 1980, 504). There are issues with all three uses of the term. One of which, pertaining to its use in reference to language obscures that there are a number of Wassa and Assin people who also speak the Akan language (Kiyaga-Mulindwa 1980, 504). The term, as it is used today, with its relatively undefined or unspecified meaning, refers to a group of people who whilst may be part of a large grouping of Akan people, does not take into consideration the forebears of those people whose origins prior to the 15th century may be of diverse origins and diverse cultures (Kiyaga-Mulindwa 1980, 504). This links to the previous paragraph which indicated that the origins of the Akan and the connections between before and after the 15th century are still under scrutiny and investigation.

A third challenge that has been alluded to throughout this chapter is that there are varying understandings of the Akan philosophy. As has been made clear, Gyeke, Menkiti and Wiredu, all of whom are well-known scholars and who have investigated deeply into the philosophy, differ on the interpretations, meanings and implications of concepts within it. Rather than considering the variety of interpretations detrimental, they indicate that there is much complexity in Akan philosophy. A pluriversal framework would appreciate this complexity and

fluidity inherent to knowledge. This chapter has also attempted to demonstrate that differing interpretations of a concept should lead neither to generalisations nor the homogenisation thereof.

A final challenge is that which Wiredu brings to our attention when warning against the English translation of concepts explained in the Akan language. He makes reference to the okra in explaining this; he believes that Western explanations and articulations about the concept of the soul generally refer to it as a purely immaterial object that inhabits the body (Antwi 2017, 95). On the other hand, as per his interpretation, the okra is a quasi-physical substance which holds para-physical properties (Antwi 2017). This example is a reminder that when translating concepts, we often associate the translated version with associated ideas and implications from within our own cultures unconsciously. In doing so, this obscures the authentic and original concept and can have significant dangers.

The intention of this section then, is to reveal the tentative approach that this research adopts, by engaging with challenges, to be more conscious in discussing the Akan philosophy so as to not be complicit in problematic and dangerous representations. Bringing attention to these challenges is important because it emphasises how looking into indigenous knowledge is characterised naturally by much change and fluidity. By noting that there are still developments to be made in the understanding of the Akan philosophy and its origins, this chapter avoids homogenising and making static the Akan philosophy. This section serves as a reminder that it is possible to both learn from a body of knowledge whilst still appreciating that our understanding of it is still developing. It cannot be said that scholars whether historians, anthropologists, sociologists or International Relations scholars will ever reach a point of knowing everything about the Akan philosophy and people who ascribe to it. In fact, this is something that a pluriversal reinforces; knowledge is inherently changing and therefore, our interactions with knowledge must change too.

Conclusion

It is not just important that the Akan philosophy and traditional IR's Western thinking hold different worldviews. Rather, it is in that difference, the Akan philosophy makes visible and possible more expansive and more engaged understandings of the world that allow us to theorise and problem-solve better. The chapter first discussed that knowledge in the Akan philosophy is not only governed by reason but wisdom, consciousness, and spirituality too. Moreover, knowledge about the world, including political agency is not limited to humans but a quality that other beings both living and non-living can hold. There are greater possibilities for how we may understand our place in the world and the international political system if there are more political actors than what IR has thus far imagined. The second section discussed how by engaging with the idea of communitarianism as practised in the Akan philosophy, we can rethink the concept of sovereignty expanding beyond the Westphalian state system. Building on this idea, the third section made clear that universal claims about human rights can be made from an ontological framework that is not individualistic. Concerning the environment, the Akan philosophy places in question the separation between man and nature and the exploitative use of natural resources for humanity's gain. Thus, the case for an IR that departs from anthropocentrism was strengthened. The following chapter discusses how the Andean Cosmovision also challenges and confronts key assumptions made in the IR discipline, especially pertaining to the concept of anthropocentrism.

Chapter 4: Decentring the Human: Andean Cosmovision and moving away from Anthropocentrism in IR.

Introduction and aims

The previous chapter discussed the Akan philosophy, its main spiritual and philosophical underpinnings, the tensions between the concept of 'personhood' and community, the idea of rights, and crucially, its worldview specifically related to the environment and nature at large. I illustrated how the Akan philosophy is in strong contrast to anthropocentrism an idea deeply embedded within IR. This was made evident in four ways. First, the Akan philosophy holds that humans, animals and non-human entities such as spirits and the soul all hold spiritual consciousness, wisdom and knowledge. Thus, it lacks the divide between man and nature which is prevalent within IR. Second, communitarianism is a key means of organisation in the Akan system and is crucial for the realisation of individual rights and broader ethical claims. The traditional idea of sovereignty in IR, upheld by the state system is challenged. This presents IR with an opportunity to rethink what the international political system could look like and how it may function if it were not derived from an individualistic ontological foundation. Similarly, that human rights derived from a communitarian setting can be applied universally, is evidence that the IR discipline can benefit from various ontologies. Finally, and perhaps most crucially, the chapter made clear the contrasts between how the Akan philosophy and traditional IR engage with the environment and nature; the former understanding it to be a spiritual entity holding knowledge and therefore an entity which ought to be respected and preserved, and the latter understanding it as a resource and means for capital accumulation. In these ways, the chapter made visible where IR can be extended and challenged discipline and provided an alternative understanding of the world; one that is naturalistic and relational.

The arguments in this chapter follow on from the previous one in challenging the anthropocentric grounds of IR through an analysis of the Andean Cosmovision. This chapter, however, seeks to ground these arguments more explicitly within the context of the climate crisis and how it is contended with in IR, laying the foundations for the following chapter.

Despite its importance, the issue of climate change does not receive adequate attention or engagement within IR (Simangan 2020). Much of the discourse about the environment and efforts to reduce carbon emissions have been within the context of enhancing diplomacy, strengthening multi-lateral cooperation and creating solutions to adapt to climate change none of which fundamentally reduce excessive human consumption of natural resources (Khan 2016). The reasons for its inadequacy in addressing the climate crisis are a result of its traditional, Western and anthropocentric paradigm which reproduces the divide between man and nature allowing the systematic destruction of the earth to remain unchallenged, fuelling the crisis itself (Simangan 2020; Harrington 2016; Satgar 2021; Chakrabarty 2023; Pereira 2017). In other words, IR has not and does not adequately contend with the crisis because it sees the earth, animals, nature and the environment as collateral damage in a capitalistic system that serves to benefit humans, and even then, only some (Satgar 2021). IR's shortfalls have become even more consequential given that we have entered the era of the Anthropocene – an era where human impact is so large that it is shaping the planet's climate and trajectory (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). Decentering the human is of utmost importance because it forces IR to consider the environment, earth and nature not as collateral damage but as an entity that ought to be preserved and respected. An IR discipline that eschews anthropocentrism is one that can better address contemporary problems, one that is more peaceful and one that holds a deeper understanding of the earth and all its entities including people, nature and the relationship between the two. The following chapter then, explores in more detail, what an IR discipline that engages with the non-human might look like.

I argue along the same thematic lines as the previous chapter. That is, the Andean Cosmovision in (i) its inherent environmental ethics and (ii) its principle of relationality and philosophy of *buen vivir*, is strongly opposed to anthropocentrism. More specifically, the spiritual underpinnings of the Andean Cosmovision, and the concept of *Pachamama*, confront assumptions about the idea of time in IR as much as the idea of context-free knowledge. The discussion about relationality and *buen vivir*, confronts the anthropocentric assumptions of IR. Together, chapters three and four illustrate how theorising from indigenous bodies of knowledge offers us alternative understandings of the world that can advance the discipline.

This chapter is structured in a way that attempts to highlight thematic similarities between the two bodies of thought. The first section discusses the concept of Pachamama, the cornerstone

of Andean Cosmovision. Thereafter, the chapter links the concept of Pachamama to the principle of Relationality followed by Buen Vivir explained as a form of cosmopraxis.

The Concept of Cosmovision, Pacha Mama and Non-human Beings

The Andean Cosmovision, as its name refers, is indigenous to the Andes region – a mountain range in the West of South America. It extends through the following countries: Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador in the northern Andes; Peru, Bolivia in the central Andes; and Chile and Argentina in the southern Andes (Suran 2020). Its origins and geographical span predate colonialism and state boundaries, as is the case with the Akan philosophy. Moreover, the Andean Cosmovision is the result of a philosophic syncretism with elements of the indigenous cultures of Wari, Pucasa, Aymara, Inka, Tiawanaku (Estermann 2009, 137). Escobar (2020, 121) provides a clear definition for the term 'cosmovision': "Every vision of what life is constructs a world. In fact, that is what the cosmovision concept means." This is applicable to ethnic groups as it is to dominant concepts within contemporary political discourse such as the idea of European modernity for example (Escobar 2020). In essence, a cosmovision is based on certain premises, is derived from certain histories and contexts and because it is a way of understanding the world, has implications for the type of world it creates (Escobar 2020, 122). Escobar (2020) thus stresses that we must make more cosmovisions visible such that we can have dialogues between different cosmovisions allowing for a more vivid and expansive understandings of the world. It is difficult to distinguish between a philosophy and a cosmovision as these terms can be interchangeable; philosophies can speak to broad understandings of the world as do cosmovisions. However, in the case of the Andean Cosmovision because it explicitly refers to the cosmos as an important entity beyond earth and humans, and its understanding of the cosmos deeply informs its principles about the world, the term 'cosmovision' is often used.

Pacha Mama or, *Pachamama*, is a concept that is particularly important and central to the Andean Cosmovision. Much like the elements of okra, sunsum and honam of the Akan philosophy, Pachamama constitutes the foundation upon which Andean cosmovision rests. Due to its complexity, it is best to consider the connotations of the concept's two conjoined

meanings separately, first. ‘Mama’ refers to the concept of ‘mother’ and ‘pacha’ is a complex term which can imply, once loosely translated, ‘all that there is’ (Titizano 2017, 2).

Explaining Pachamama is difficult because the concept is a complex anthropological, philosophical and theological one. (Titizano 2017, 138). However, the concept of Pacha is less complex than that of mother. In exploring ‘Pacha’ first, Titizano (2017) points to how there are differing interpretations of it.

According to Titizano (2017, 138) one scholar, Estermann, defines Pacha philosophically as the “universe organised in time-space categories but not as simple as something physical and astronomical.” Estermann stresses the importance of understanding Pacha through the lens of relationality (a principle that will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter) wherein time, space and order are essential elements. Because the principle of relationality is extended to that of Pachamama, the concept is understood as an interrelated cosmos or cosmic relationality.

On the other hand, two additional scholars, Bernabe and Huana, explain that the concept of Pacha can be understood as infinity, outside of space and time (Titizano 2017, 140). It points towards an endless possibility, one that is a cosmic force projecting hope about humanity and its future. A third interpretation posits that ‘pacha’ can be considered as an embodied reality outside of all-encompassing divinity, one in which all spirits dwell (Titizano 2017, 141).

According to Solón (2018, 2), Pacha is the “whole in constant movement; it is the cosmos in a permanent state of becoming.” In the general understanding of the cosmos, the past, present and future coexist. In other words, time is not understood to be linear. This interpretation highlights the dynamic and fluid nature of the concept of being, time and space within the Andean Cosmovision. Chakrabarty (2023) makes a crucial distinction between the planet and the global. Among many, some key differences include that the globe is human made involving the work of empires, capitalism and technology with a short timespan of only the past 500 years (Chakrabarty 2023, 3). The planet, however, is a much larger and more vast entity with its own geological history and a timespan wherein humans occupy only a fraction of time. Secondly, the globe is focused entirely on human experiences of the earth whereas the planet encompasses all entities, living and non-living and is not anthropocentric. Humans and the globe share a mutually reinforcing relationship whereas the planet does not hold this same relationship with humans – the planet does not exist to serve humans (Chakrabarty 2023, 3). In the same way that the globe and the planet are differentiated, the idea of the cosmos is also differentiated.

There are two key areas of difference. First, the cosmos unlike the global and the planetary, does not follow a linear understanding of time. The idea of the planet, even though it expands beyond the globe in terms of time, still holds a linear conception of time. As mentioned, in the cosmos the past, present and future coexist. Secondly, the cosmos extends beyond the planet and the earth including all entities within the universe itself, and importantly, the divinity that enables all entities to exist in harmony with each other.

Based on the various interpretations and explanations, two important ideas can be inferred. Firstly, 'Pacha' is inherently divine and it is a force of unique nature that holds a special significance within the Andean Cosmovision. Further, it is particularly unique such that its properties are considered to potentially extend beyond divinity and almost encompass divinity itself. Secondly, the concept of 'Pacha' is incompatible with linear and finite understanding of time and space. Traditional IR is based on the idea that the global, as characterised by Chakrabarty (2023) is the most accurate understanding of the world and claims that it is a universal understanding. However, as is evidenced through the differences between the global, the planetary and the idea of the cosmos, traditional IR and the Andean Cosmovision strongly contrast each other. Specifically, the Andean Cosmovision challenges the linear and finite conception of time, and the anthropological nature of the discipline forcing it grow its understanding beyond the centrality of humans. In doing so, it adds to the discipline by introducing a new way to understand the systems in the world through the principle of relationality rather than understanding systems to be closed and fixed.

Put together then, Pachamama is considered to both have and be a divine female spirit or force which is protective, caring and ever-present. Pachamama's presence is loved and considered to be all-encompassing. Pachamama is synonymous with the idea of 'Mother Earth,' and is also referred to as 'Holy Earth' and 'Spirit of Life'. This is because, despite her vast nature that spans across time and space, she pertains specifically to the earth, all its creatures, beings, spirits and forces (Titizano 2017, 138). She is an entity that is the intersection and connection between the earth and cosmic divinity.

Despite that she is a non-human entity, Pachamama has needs which must be met, and she ought to be respected and honoured. Pachamama can be generous, providing humans and other non-human entities (such as natural forces, supernatural beings and souls of the dead) water, food and resources. Or, on the other hand, she can be unkind and vengeful if she is not treated

well (Querejazu 2016). This is because, in the Andean Cosmovision, sacred supernatural entities have agency which affects their interests and roles; there is much fluidity in how they operate (Querejazu 2016). Importantly, this also includes the ability to be a force of both good and evil. In this way, Pachamama is also understood in terms of the relationship she has especially with humans, which is linked to the principle of relationality. In other words, according to the principle of relationality which states that everything in the cosmos is inextricably connected, treatment of Pachamama is directly relational to the experiences that humans have on earth, and the earth itself, its forces and activity. Consequently, the Andean Cosmovision strongly encourages a constant attitude of good listening and interpretation of both human and non-human signals of communication and feelings of the supernatural entities, in this case, Pachamama (Querejazu 2021, 10).

In further understanding the relationship between humans and Pachamama, it must be stressed that the non-human world is integrally important, just as much as humans and other non-human entities (Solón 2018). Whilst different beings have different capabilities, for example, humans are considered to be caretakers of the earth, their importance does not vary accordingly. All beings are equal because they hold knowledge, capabilities and wisdom in various ways. In fact, within the Andean Cosmovision, knowledge is not only understood as being 'rational' in the way that we conventionally understand knowledge as resulting from intellectual capacity, but knowledge is also spiritual and emotional too. Reality can be understood through both rational processes and emotional and spiritual processes such as the performance of rituals. Furthermore, knowledge and wisdom are understood to be derived from experiences including one's suffering and therefore, one's memory. Moreover, spirituality is considered to be the highest level of conscience. Thus, reality is understood through a range of rational, emotional and spiritual processes, events, communication and phenomena (Querejazu 2021, 10). Reinforcing the principle of relationality, all beings, not only humans, ought to be respected and treated with care because all beings hold knowledge, wisdom, conscience, emotion and spirituality within them.

This discussion about Pachamama and the spiritual beliefs that underpin the Andean Cosmovision is important for three main reasons. First, Pachamama, because it constitutes the belief that the earth, humans, animals and other beings such as spirits coexist within an intertwined system, challenges the anthropocentric assumptions of IR. This will be discussed further in the following section because it relates strongly to the principle of ontological

relationality, which is yet to be explored. The second way in which this discussion is valuable is because, as suggested in the previous chapter, it challenges the idea that universal principles and ethical guidelines cannot be derived from context-specific knowledge. Finally, the discussion about Pachamama is especially important because it challenges the idea that time is linear, a Western conception which is strongly held within the discipline.

The previous chapter referred to Shilliam's (2011) argument that IR governs the production of knowledge according to a classification of modernity wherein traditional knowledge is characterised as knowledge pertaining to specific contexts, knowledge that engages connections between the social and natural world and knowledge that is linked to religion, culture or spirituality. The opposite, modern and scientific knowledge, is constituted by ideas about the world that are not derived from spiritual, religious and cultural contexts but rather, are derived from history and 'science'. (Shilliam 2011). In linking this back to the Andean Cosmovision, I argue that the cosmovision challenges this notion about knowledge within IR. The ideas that can travel from the Andean Cosmovision to IR, namely the idea of relationality and the environmental ethics that are derived from an anti-anthropocentric perspective, derive their power precisely because they arise from a specific context, that being the cosmovision's spiritual foundation. There is, and will always be, tension between subjective and objective understandings of the world because both have benefits and significant drawbacks too (Nagel 1996). However, understandings of the world that are too objective are far removed from lived experiences and therefore constitute very basic knowledge about the world (Nagel 1996). Moreover, they often project themselves as objective and universal because they eschew engagement with subjective understandings of the world (Nagel 1996). Traditional IR theories, in their projection of Western understandings of the world as universal, apart from being complicit in sustaining epistemicide, are views from nowhere because they seek to disguise their very particular location in the desire to universalize. Thus, engaging with the Andean Cosmovision acts to supplement traditional IR theories helping the discipline move from simplistic knowledge about the world toward deeper understandings of the world.

Thus, the discussion of spirituality that is inherent to the concept of Pachamama, and broadly, the Andean Cosmovision, leads us to the idea that universal knowledge should be derived from multiple and so-called 'traditional' contexts.

More directly, however, the discussion about Pachamama challenges the linear conception of time inherent in the IR discipline. In proving the claim that the IR discipline holds a linear conception of time characteristic of a Western ontology, the following becomes important. A linear understanding of time has its roots in colonisation. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Western temporal regimes were imposed on indigenous and non-European people; time was used as a mechanism to effectively conduct colonial domination, capitalist exploitation and to spread Christianity through European missionaries (Hunfeld 2022, 103). Alternative understandings of time that are not necessarily Western and linear include but are not limited to, for example, calendars that structure the year differently to a twelve-month period such as the Hindu and Chinese calendars. Non-linear ways of temporal understanding were considered as a threat by colonisers, towards imposed work, order and productivity (Hunfeld 2022, 103). This was especially important because colonial labour and industrial output relied on synchronised labour times and industrial timetables constructed by colonial authorities. Moreover, the implementation of Greenwich Meridian Time in 1884 is one of the most vivid examples of connecting time with colonial centres because time was centralised and standardised according to colonial empires, especially Britain (Hunfeld 2022, 103).

This marginalisation of non-Western conceptions of time created the idea that indigenous people and the Global South were 'primitive' - being outside of time, behind time, or being time-less (Hunfeld 2022). Hunfeld (2022) refers to this as the 'temporal othering' which implies a further segregation between the colonised and colonisers, those who were primitive and those who were modern. This othering further exacerbated the idea that non-Western ways of understanding the world and being were not sources from which to make generalisable knowledge (Hunfeld 2022). In other words, Western ontological ideas about the world and in this case, time, became a universal standard and is an ontology prevalent within the academy.

Further, the universalisation of time and its institutionalisation is exacerbated and evident in the discourse about development, especially within IR. The premise of development, as Hunfeld (2022, 105) points out, is on the framework of 'progression' tied to Western conceptions of time. The fundamental idea of development is that society ought to move from an underdeveloped past toward a modern and improved future based on Western models of development. The past is always understood to be a primitive and uncivilised era in human history and is especially believed to be the case for non-Western people. The concept of

development has long been contested and critiqued. However, there is one specific area of critique which is relevant to this point.

Hunfeld (2022, 106) makes a particularly important point: “By implicitly conceptualising the past and present as a hierarchical binary, the linear progressivist conception of time epistemically devalues the past as the realm of the primitive other.” In essence, a linear conception of time is not necessarily inherently detrimental because it is a way of perceiving the world in its own right. However, when taken as an epistemological and ontological starting point wherein other ontologies are marginalised, its employment becomes deeply problematic. In this case, it specifically renders the past devoid of value, and human intelligence is delegitimised as a site for experience altogether. Subsequently, the present is rendered by the Western temporal framework as the only site of ‘real’ or ‘reality’ (Hunfeld 2022, 106). This is particularly dangerous; Hunfeld (2022, 106) posits that indigenous people have developed an “alienated relationship to their own temporal reality and image the real present as occurring somewhere else than where they live.” Linking this more tangibly back to IR, speaking in the context of the idea of global justice, Hunfeld (2022) posits that it is because the discipline holds a Western temporal framework, injustices of the past whether it be apartheids, genocides or colonialism, are rarely adequately addressed because present injustices are always assumed to hold more importance than past injustices. Fricker (2007) investigates two ways in which epistemicide manifests. Testimonial injustice refers to how prejudice results in the lack of credibility given to a subject and hermeneutical injustice occurs because of a systemic marginalisation of the way someone or a group of people make sense of their lived experiences and the ways in which they contend with their place and being in the world (Fricker 2007, 1) Traditional IR, is complicit in producing epistemicide in both ways; first by discriminating against people in the Global South by virtue of that being a part of their identity, and second, by invalidating their understanding of the world and resultantly, depriving them of an aspect of their humanity. Therefore, Western temporality is not a universal way of understanding time, and the assumption that it is within the IR discipline and perhaps social sciences at large, is an epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007).

I would argue, therefore, that IR holds a linear conception of time and in doing so, has pushed to the periphery alternate ways of understanding time. In essence, this section highlights how the cosmovision challenges the linear understanding of time in IR. One of the distinct features of Pachamama as discussed above, is that the idea transcends time existing in the past, present

and future. In this way, by being connected to Pachamama, those who follow the Andean Cosmovision are connected to time in its entirety because meaning, knowledge and wisdom can be derived not only from the present but also from the past and visions of the future. Additionally, because knowledge and wisdom can be derived from memory, the Andean Cosmovision does not hold the same perception of time as does the IR discipline, wherein the idea of the plurality of pasts is devalued. In fact, the Andean Cosmovision works with the persistence of memories of the past to derive wisdom and knowledge, rather than seeing knowledge as involving a radical break with the past.

Although this appears largely abstract and philosophical, it has tangible implications. Using the issue of the climate crisis to tie these links together the deep care and respect for the environment and earth which is intrinsic to the Andean Cosmovision as discussed above, is because of the divine entity, Pachamama. Destruction of the earth, through exploitation of the earth's resources, impedes the connection between humans and Pachamama and therefore, leads to spiritual destruction and that of memory too. In this way, environmental preservation is not only important to ensure a future, but also to preserve the past and the connection to it since that connection is facilitated through the earth and through Pachamama. On the other hand, the urgency created within climate discourse, especially within the IR discipline, is based only on the idea that the future – and subsequently, the future of states and state systems – are at risk. This idea will be further engaged in the following chapter.

Thus, the Andean Cosmovision places in question, the linear idea of time prevalent within the discipline. And as such, the discussion about the spiritual elements which underpin the Cosmovision is important.

The Principle of Ontological Relationality

The principle of relationality is a premise of the Andean Cosmovision, and it is from this principle, that one can gain a clear image and understanding of ethical claims, values and approaches to living that it holds. At its core, the principle of relationality is the idea that all entities in the cosmos exist in entanglements and connections with one another. The cosmos is understood to be a complex plurality of interconnections between the human, natural, spiritual

and physical world. Therefore, the human, natural, spiritual and physical world can be understood as sub-systems within a greater system, the cosmos, in which all four elements are inextricably connected.

A relational understanding of the world is consequential in the following ways. Firstly, it means that there are inherently multiple connections or systems at play at any given time which constitute a reality or realities. Further, although entities can be understood to have individual properties, they cannot be fully understood or described as separate. For example, one can understand that the spiritual realm of the cosmos holds unique properties, but it cannot be explained effectively as an entity separate from the physical and human world. Humans are not just explained as having unique properties that other animals do not hold, but humans are also explained through their relationship with the spiritual realm and especially Pachamama. In other words, humans are explained and understood both in terms of what they are, but also how they relate to Pachamama and vice versa.

Secondly, relationality is not just a principle by which one can understand how the cosmos functions, it is a vital force in itself which is the reason for existence altogether. In other words, the value of life itself lies in that it can only come about because of the connections between multiple elements and systems (Estermann 2009, 140). Relationships between all entities are what results in life, therefore it is relationships that must be celebrated and appreciated (Sobreria 2022, 7). Linked to the principle of relationality is that of complementarity, correspondence and reciprocity (Estermann 2009, 139). That is, because all parts of the cosmos are intertwined, interactions between these parts must be balanced and complementary. This links back to the idea discussed above, that Pachamama, when ill-treated will reciprocate by creating harsh conditions on earth and similarly, when treated well and respected, will reciprocate in the same fashion.

A third and especially important consequence of the principle of relationality is that there exists no dualism between elements or realms and as such, no hierarchy either (Sobreria 2022, 5). Humans are not perceived to be more important than other beings, their needs are seen as equally important to all other living beings. To some extent, even Pachamama is considered an extension of human in that it is inseparable from and complementary to humanity and all other beings (Sobreria 2022, 5). This idea thus lies in direct contrast to anthropocentrism wherein

humans are at the centre of all systems and their well-being triumphs over that of other living beings.

The principle of relationality is not just an abstract concept, it is a guideline for how to live a good quality life. Querejazu (2021) describes the concept, cosmopraxis as an extension of the principle of relationality. Cosmopraxis is the idea that how we think, act and behave in the world is inextricably linked to our visions and understanding of the cosmos and how we may understand ourselves to hold a place within it (Querejazu 2021). Given that every entity within the cosmos is related and connected, cosmopraxis is therefore about being and about living in a way that embraces those connections. Further, "Cosmopraxis is a way of worlding, it refers to the experience of moving about multiple worlds as practised by people and entails relational practises of co-participation in the cosmos" (Querejazu 2021, 882). For example, the process of attaining knowledge is a collective process involving both humans and non-human entities and, in this way, cosmopraxis is something that can be experienced. How one goes about their everyday life must be informed by the concept of relationality. Additionally, a simple example of sharing food as a ritual serves as a reminder to live in a way that embraces the connection between everything in the cosmos. Eating together with community members whilst engaging in traditional music is a reminder of the connections between humans and the earth that result in having food available and the connections between people within a community that is a reminder of reciprocity (Querejazu 2021, 885). In this way, cosmopraxis refers to living in a state of constant awareness of the relationality of everything in the cosmos.

The discussion about the principle of relationality is important because it fundamentally challenges anthropocentrism which is deeply rooted in IR. In the previous chapter, the claim that IR is anthropocentric was supported in three main ways. First, the core assumption of anthropocentrism is that humans are the only living beings that can hold the reason necessary for political practise. Because they are considered necessarily more intelligent and able to express reason through communication, humans are differentiated from other beings and awarded preferential status (Youatt 2014). Secondly, that the Westphalian system holds that very assumption, and by taking individuals as its starting point, produces a dualism between humans and nature (Parasram 2023). Thirdly, traditional IR approaches the world through a Newtonian lens wherein phenomena are understood to occur in fixed systems of which the most important system is the state system (Cudworth and Hobden 2015). In this way, nature exists outside of the fixed state system and is not an area of interest.

It is important to point out how the Andean Cosmovision challenges anthropocentrism and departs from it. One of the key premises of the principle of relationality as discussed above, is that because everything is connected, has meaning and serves purpose, one being cannot be prioritised over another. Before it even challenges the notion that humans should be at the centre of any system, it challenges the premise that humans are the most knowledgeable beings. The idea that truth and knowledge are only attainable through human reason excludes other forms of knowledge such as faith and spirituality and this is directly challenged by the Andean Cosmovision (Estermann 2009, 145). Like the Akan philosophy wherein all beings such as animals, spirits, the three elements of honam, sunsum and okra, ancestors and the earth hold knowledge, wisdom and spirituality, the same holds true in the Andean Cosmovision. The earth, Pachamama, humans, animals and even inanimate objects are believed to hold knowledge, wisdom and spirituality or spiritual properties. Additionally, as previously mentioned, knowledge is not only rational but emotional and spiritual too and rooted within the past and memory (Querejazu 2016). Humans are merely able to hold these qualities too and little attention is paid to how humans are different. Hence, in challenging the notion that humans are not the only sentient beings – an idea central to IR – the Andean Cosmovision challenges the very justification for anthropocentrism.

Furthermore, the Andean Cosmovision offers an alternative way of understanding the world to IR's vision of a closed system. In other words, the Andean Cosmovision questions the strong dichotomies created between the human and non-human world and systems such as the international system which further entrench this divide (Estermann 2009, 145). It argues that through a cosmovision that embraces the connections between all aspects and elements of the cosmos, one is able to achieve a deeper and more vivid understanding of experiences within the cosmos (Estermann 2009). The belief in dualism and the divide between man and nature has consequences that have only strengthened the divide (Querejazu 2021). The exacerbation of the climate crisis is evident of this. Querejazu (2021) posits that relational thinking opens up other ways of understanding political agency that transcend that humans are the only political actors. Generally speaking, being open to a relational view of the world prevents the reification of relations as finite and complete (Querejazu 2021, 888). This in turn, would result in a more expansive way of thinking in IR.

Buen Vivier, Kawsay, Vivier Bien

Buen Vivir is a Spanish term referring to an ethos that guides how one must live their life based on the cosmovisions, beliefs and practises within the Andean region. In Bolivia it is referred to as '*vivir bien*' and in Ecuador, 'buen vivir' (Zimmerer 2012, 602). The Aymaa, an indigenous group in the Andean region refer to it as "sumaq qamaña." The Quechua, another indigenous group in the region, refer to it as "sumak kawsay" (Solón 2018). In essence, despite different terms, the meaning remains the same. When directly translated to English, it is understood to mean "good life" and "harmonious life" (Solón 2018, 1). Its deeper meanings and interpretations, however, are different to the general, Western characteristics one would assume when using the phrase 'good life' which is rooted in an idea of individual codes of behaviour. The Andean Cosmovision and its understanding of the world works with the idea that every being is related to other beings and to nature. The idea of cosmopraxis discussed above describes a kind of life that one can aspire to live, in harmony with others and nature (Solón 2018).

Hence, interpretations of Buen Vivir have been used by many communities within the Andean region not only as a way of life but also in resistance to colonialism and contemporary ways of living that thrive off capitalism and the separation of humans and nature (Solón 2018). It is a way of living together, based on the principle of relationality and the premise of community as a crucial form of social organisation. It emerges as an alternative way of living that is different to the livelihoods prescribed by Western values and forcibly imposed through an increasingly globalised world.

Understandings and uses of Kawsay have evolved and grown over time. In the mid-1990s, Kawsay became common in studies about the Andean region and it was associated with movements about agroecology, social justice and food security (Zimmerer 2012). Kawsay became particularly popular because it was used to undermine international trends towards development policies that threatened sustainability and food security and which had prioritised technological expansion at the cost of the environment (Zimmerer 2012, 601). Kawsay was used to reinstate the inherent value of connection among families and communities and between living and non-living entities that led to intertwined livelihoods and healthy living. Moreover, Kawsay highlights the need for indigenous communities' inherent rights to

customary eating which includes peoples access to and ownership of their land such that they can control their eating and producing practises (Zimmerer 2012). Kawsay is an ethos about life that is invoked in everyday circumstances and use. It is used in reference to human lives and experiences, guiding what can be possible and what can enhance livelihoods.

The ethos of Kawsay has a history of being used within a political context. Further extending on its usage in the 90s, in the 2000s, it was often used by indigenous groups in movements across Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, against neoliberal governments which prioritised globalisation and the expansion of technology at the expense of environmental consideration which itself, threatens the existence of an ethos wherein human connection with the environment as inextricable to having a fulfilling life is stressed (Zimmerer 2012, 601). Kawsay has been enshrined within the constitutions of both Ecuador and Bolivia. During the incumbency of Eva Morales from 2009, Bolivia adopted vivir bien within the constitution representing the indigenous populations and their land (Chakravorty 2016, 440).

Defining Kawsay is particularly tricky because its meaning and interpretations are not static; it is an ethos which may change based on spiritual codes of conduct and other forms of knowledge. At its core, it is an ethical call to preserve a quality of life that is congruent with principles such as that of relationality and reciprocity (Solón 2018, 4). Collective coexistence and sharing of resources constitute a good life. There are two key related tenets of Kawsay. The first is the call to organise life, lifestyles and livelihoods in a way that is completely harmonious with nature and Pachamama (Solón 2018, 2). The act of respecting and protecting Pachamama is a significant part of a life that is well lived. Caring for Pachamama is not fleeting. Rather, Kawsay is a way of living in which one's lifestyle must be continuously and inextricably harmonised with Pachamama. One way in which to do so is through reciprocation which entails giving back to the earth in expressions of gratitude (Solón 2018).

Secondly, Kawsay is an ethical way to live which promotes social justice, equality and collective well-being (Chakravorty 2016, 442). Dignity, justice and liberty are all also important enablers of a good life. This links to the importance of community; sharing resources together and making collective decisions are ways to ensure that each person holds the same rights, has the same opportunities and that all individuals are heard. The ethos holds that stealing, not working toward the general good and upliftment of others and lying are detrimental (Chakravorty 2016, 442). Additionally, similar to the ethical guidelines within the

Akan Philosophy, families are expected to take care of all their members. Finally, all members of a community must have access to land.

An important facet of Buen Vivir specifically is its decolonial sentiment. Buen Vivir situates itself as a kind of resistance and opposition specifically to the concept of development (Chakravorty 2016). It is incompatible with the Western concept of 'development' and subsequently, 'underdevelopment' for several reasons which have been discussed in the previous sections. In summary, that Buen Vivir is incompatible with a linear conception of time symptomatic of Western ontology, in addition to the inherent anthropocentrism of Western development renders it incompatible with the idea of development. Furthermore, development is tied to colonialism because states deemed to be 'developed' are previously colonial or imperial states. Development initiatives are also generally underpinned by neo-liberal economic and political policies which seek to sustain amongst other systems, capitalism (Chakravorty 2016, 443). As such, it is a decolonial ethos which seeks to do away with systemic hierarchies and anthropocentrism.

Buen Vivir is also premised on the principle of plurality, especially cultural pluralism (Chakravorty 2016, 441). Part of maintaining an ethical approach to life, based on ideals of social justice, is not just the tolerance of difference but the acceptance of it and the harmonious coexistence of multiple ways of being in the world. Although it holds a strongly utopian view of the world, it is nonetheless an important example of the merging of the human, social world with the natural world in a progressive way premised on indigenous beliefs of the Andean Cosmovision (Zimmerer 2012).

Buen Vivir, because of its inherently decolonial and anti-anthropocentric nature can be understood as a praxis of the values and principles of the Andean Cosmovision. Its premises challenge various ideas within IR which have already been explored, but as a concept, Buen Vivir places into question the idea that alternative framings of the world that are different to the Western ones currently held are impossible and unlikely. That Buen Vivir is central to the Bolivian constitution is indicative of the fact that alternative ways of theorising the world are not just abstractions but can be translated into law and policy too. Whilst the immediate efficacy thereof is difficult to evaluate, it can be said that the institutionalisation of Buen Vivir is a significant step toward constructing alternative imaginations of the world into tangible reality. The development of Buen Vivir is indicative that it is possible to theorise, derive policies, laws

and constitutions from an alternative starting point; one that is not man, nor humanity's superiority over other beings (Sobreria 2022, 4). Furthermore, Buen Vivir highlights how the development of different ontological perspectives of the world could open ways specifically for Latin American people to relate and engage with the West that can increase dialogue and subsequently increase respect for differences, negotiations and peace (da Costa Marques 2014, 86). In this way, Buen Vivir continues to challenge the anthropocentric nature of IR, demonstrating that it is possible to theorise differently.

Engaging with the Indigenous

As with the Akan philosophy, there are difficulties that arise when engaging with an indigenous body of thought. Estermann (2009) posits that the very naming of the Andean Cosmovision as a 'Cosmovision' rather than as a 'philosophy' can have discriminatory connotations. The premise behind this argument is that considering a body of thought to be a philosophy, requires that body of thought to be accepted under the Western academy according to what it constitutes a philosophy. In this way, the very naming of alternative ways of knowing as 'cosmovisions' or 'mythologies' or 'belief systems' is the perpetuation of the disqualification of that body of knowledge within the academy (Estermann 2009, 113).

A critique of Estermann's (2009) point could be that because there is an emphasis placed on the cosmos which is inherent to the Andean Cosmovision, it is only natural for the term 'cosmovision' to be used. However, it is important to consider that in engaging with indigenous bodies of knowledge, one can still be misrepresentative in a way that is detrimental. Many of the caveats considered with regard to the Akan philosophy are valid here as well in terms of translation and assumptions of homogeneity, so the arguments are not reprised here.

Conclusion

One of the primary aims of the chapter was to illustrate how the Andean Cosmovision challenges the anthropocentric foundations of the IR discipline. In attempting to do so, it first

discussed Pacha Mama and how it transcends linear conceptions of time and space. In connecting this to IR, this chapter defended the claim that IR is based on a linear understanding of time which is incompatible with the Andean Cosmovision. As such, the Andean Cosmovision is an alternative ontology that challenges the discipline; one that does not disregard and devalue the past. The importance of this was made in relation to the climate crisis; through the Andean Cosmovision, the earth ought to be respected and protected from human damage not only to conserve the future but also to preserve the past.

The chapter then highlighted the second way in which anthropocentrism is confronted. The principle of relationality, because it holds that all beings, inanimate or animate, are equally important and valued, does not make any distinction between them and therefore questions the duality between man and nature and the exploitation of the former by the latter. Additionally, the principle of relationality holds that everything in the cosmos is inextricably linked and related thereby challenging IR's understanding of the world wherein the international system is a closed and fixed system.

Finally, the ethos of Buen Vivir, because it is based on the principle of relationality and a deep connection between humans and Pachamama, challenges the notion that there cannot be alternative and pluriversal ways of operating in the international system. Altogether, not only do these three aspects of the Andean Cosmovision confront anthropocentrism in IR, they also confront the idea that knowledge about the world cannot be produced from context-specific origins. The following chapter further crystallises these arguments by linking the Andean Cosmovision and Akan philosophy to the issue of the climate crisis arguing that theorising about the crisis through these worldviews can ultimately allow for more expansive and beneficial solutions.

Chapter Five: Contending with Climate Change by Thinking with the Non-human.

Introduction and aims

Ghosh (2017), in speaking about the modern intellectual tradition, highlights how scholars, writers and even humanity at large have failed to truly and deeply contend with the climate crisis at hand despite its long-lasting and large-scale effects. He attributes this lack of imagination and comprehension of climate change, to exceptional levels of individualism and human exceptionalism pushed forward by Western intellectual traditions as well as colonialism and imperialism. In essence, he argues that climate change has revealed the extent to which humans have centred themselves, and perceived and related to the world around them, through reference of the self only. He encapsulates the extent to which humans have become so disturbed in their thinking in the term the 'Great Derangement.'

This kind of "deranged thinking" manifests everywhere but Ghosh (2017) stresses its presence within social theory. He points to how the hegemony of Western thinking has supressed other modes of thinking which engaged better with various entities and not just the human. Ghosh (2017) suggests that the only way out of deranged thinking, is to move to a different perspective and engage with the non-human especially. A better world requires a new imaginary which can only happen through a cultural shift away from individualist thinking. In order to do so, Ghosh (2017) suggests the importance of diversifying the ways in which we think about the world by of drawing from indigenous cultures and ancient traditions.

Ghosh's (2017) claim that modern thinking is deranged in its disengagement with the climate crisis can be applied to IR. Because of its deep-seated anthropocentrism, and the valorization of nation-states, it is blind to its own shortfalls and the extent to which this contributes to the worsening of the climate crisis. This chapter discusses why the need to think differently, as Ghosh (2017) suggests, is especially pertinent within IR. Additionally, in line with the pursuit of departing from derangement, this chapter suggests how IR can engage with the non-human by taking the Andean Cosmovision and Akan philosophy as starting points.

Climate change is worsening rapidly and its global impacts are no longer deniable. Global net anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gasses (GHG) increased by 12% between 2010 and 2012 alone, which is 54% higher than it was in 1990 (IPCC 2023, 4). The impacts of climate change are limitless. The rise in sea levels, increase in greenhouse gas emissions and the warming of the earth's core temperature have already caused substantial damage to the terrestrial, freshwater and open ocean ecosystems and have reduced food and water security, slowing the growth of agricultural productivity (IPCC 2023). Furthermore, climate change has resulted in human mortality and morbidity because of the rise of climate-related food and water-borne diseases (IPCC 2023, 6). Climate and weather extremes such as Cyclone Idai in southeastern Africa, drought and famine in the Horn of Africa, wildfires in South America and glacial melting in the Andes Mountain range have increasingly driven displacement and the loss of livelihoods.

Crutzen and Stoermer's (2000) essay declaring the Anthropocene was a particularly important turning point in climate change discourse. It posits that humanity's impact on the earth, because of its large scale and permanent effects, constitutes the current geological epoch that the earth is in. In other words, humanity is now a geological force (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). They link this claim to the increase in deforestation, the burning of fossil fuels, the increase of Greenhouse Gas emissions and urbanisation. This date this new epoch, the Anthropocene, to the latter half of the 18th century coinciding with the Industrial Revolution and the rapid increase in urbanization and the strengthening of capitalism and globalization (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). Anthropocene discourse has impacted and reframed scientific research, and reporting and has impacted the social sciences too (Satgar 2021). The idea of Anthropogenic effects on the earth has been widely accepted; since 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has framed its reports through this lens and in its most recent report stated that "human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gasses, have unequivocally caused global warming" (Satgar 2021; IPCC 2023). However, Anthropocene discourse has been met with substantial critique.

Anthropocene discourse is critiqued on the basis that it frames climate change as resulting from the actions of all humans. In other words, it places blame and responsibility on all of humanity equally. This is problematic because it does not account for unequal and oppressive systems

namely colonialism, imperial expansion and neo-colonialism which are premised on the exploitation and destruction of humans, the environment, and the relationship between humans and nature (Simangan 2023). It also assumes that individuals are equally responsible even though individuals do not share the same power and capacity that corporations, especially multinational corporations and states have and continue to have under neo-colonialism (Satgar 2021).

Anthropocene discourse does not recognize that colonial powers and the Global North created extractivist economies which thrive because of the rapid advancement of capitalism and globalization, at the expense of the Global South (Simangan 2023, 858). Extractivist economies are based on the exploitation of both the earth and humans within a system designed to benefit the global north, a system which achieves this aim at any cost (Yusoff 2018). This is elucidated by Yusoff (2018, 14): "Historically, both slaves and gold have to be materially and epistemically made through the recognition and extraction of their inhuman properties." Extractivist economies are only possible because racism and power are its sources of sustenance; displacement, violence, eradication and destruction of land, connections with the earth, ways of being and living are a result of the categorization of black and indigenous people as 'inhuman' by colonial and imperial powers (Yusoff 2018, 14). On this basis, Yusoff (2018) also contests the timeline that Crutzen and Stoermer (2000) put forward, arguing that the destruction of the earth began long before the Industrial Revolution, a kind of rhetoric that is a convenient escape from the Global North's entrenched and disproportionately larger complicity in bringing about climate change. Hence, to ignore the ways in which climate change was brought about by colonialism and imperialism is to be racially blind and it is that blindness which allows problematic planetary imaginations that do not engage with the discomfort of how we have gotten here, to persist (Yusoff 2018, 12). This critique is again best captured by Yusoff (2018, 11-12):

> "If the Anthropocene proclaims a sudden concern with the exposures of environmental harm to white liberal communities, it does so in the wake of histories in which these harms have been knowingly exported to black and brown communities under the rubric of civilization, progress, modernization, and capitalism. The Anthropocene might seem to offer a dystopic future that laments the end of the world, but imperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence. The Anthropocene as a politically infused geology and scientific/popular

> discourse is just now noticing the extinction it has chosen to continually overlook in the making of its modernity and freedom."

Thus, Satgar's (2021) claim that the Anthropocene discourse, in underpinning both the practice of international relations and the discipline, reinforces coloniality, is exceptionally important and must be contended with.

The IR discipline's disengagement with the Climate Crisis

(A) The Limitations of Traditional IR Theory

The IR discipline has the purpose of theorizing about and mitigating threats to human and state security. It fails to achieve this mandate in failing to engage with the climate crisis. This has far-reaching implications. Pereira (2017) investigated whether the environment is overlooked by collecting data concerning the number of articles engaging with the environment and climate change that have been published in the most relevant IR journals between 2004 and 2014. Pereira's (2017, 11) findings reveal that for ten years, only 2-3% of all published articles related to the environment. Additionally, less than 1% (with an average of 0.6%) of all articles produced throughout the ten years, spoke specifically on the topic of climate change (Pereria 2017, 11). The only outlier was in 2012 during which two special issues on the environment were produced in the *Journal of Peace Research and International Affairs*. Importantly, even in 2012, with the addition of the special issues on the environment, articles on environmental issues constituted less than 6% of all articles published (Pereria 2017, 11). Notably, this is an assessment of the frequency alone and not the quality of the articles that were produced.

It is not just problematic that the climate crisis appears infrequently in IR but also that when climate-related discourse does appear, it fails to critically address the matter. Climate-related discourse occurs within the confines of traditional IR theories which, as has been discussed throughout the dissertation, occur from an ontological viewpoint which is tied to racism and epistemicide. Further, it takes the Anthopocene discourse as its starting point and in doing so, adopts its approach to climate change which reproduces coloniality (Satgar 2021).

Debates about the securitisation of climate change in the late 90s and 2000s led to its presence in the discipline. There were two streams of reasoning supporting the securitisation of climate change. First, concern was premised on the idea that climate change would lead to the proliferation of 'failed states' because issues such as food insecurity and drought would worsen crevices within developing states, leading to increased terrorist activity, migration and political instability (Baysal and Karakaş 2017, 24). In other words, climate change was seen as a 'threat multiplier', worsening instability, migrancy and therefore conflict between states. Second, the shift from traditional approaches to security to that of human security within the discipline prompted a focus toward climate change as it has implications for human security (Baysal and Karakaş 2017, 28). This is reflective of traditional realist thinking that the international system is an anarchical space which operates according to power politics and, informs the discipline's reaction toward climate change (Khan 2016, 15). Realist perspectives stress adaptation and mitigation strategies to address the climate crisis which are beneficial for richer states because they have fewer incentives to reduce emissions (Khan 2016). Liberalist and neo-liberalist perspectives often engage the climate crisis from the premise that maintaining a peaceful international system, through the provision of funding for adaptation by richer states, sustains an environment ripe for unrestricted trade and investment, especially in developing countries (Khan 2016, 16). Through this theoretical lens, economic and capital gain are the main drivers of climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. Hence, traditional IR engages with climate change in so far as it concerns the state system, capital, trade and individuals.

It is IR's anthropocentric and Western ontological framework that lies at the root of its inadequacy in adequately addressing climate change. I briefly turn to the concept of violence and genocide, specifically in the case of Palestine, to illustrate important connections between themes such as sovereignty, the anarchical system, the environment and humans in both the practise of international relations and the discipline. This is done to illustrate what the consequences of a Western, anthropocentric discipline are and why then it becomes particularly important to theorise from a different place, one that decentres the human and even considers the non-human in this new geological era.

(B) De-centring the Human in the Era of the Anthropocene: Necropolitics and 'Collateral Damage'

The assumption that war and conflict are a means to achieve sovereignty and peace is a core premise of traditional IR. Mbembe (2003) and Puar (2015) strongly challenge this assumption, employing the concept of necropolitics. Mbembe (2003, 11) posits that sovereignty is less about the ability of a state to exercise political autonomy than it is an expression of the power a state has, to choose who can live or die. Mbembe (2003) and Puar (2015) suggest that sovereignty is much more than political autonomy and is in fact a means by which traditional IR conceals the politics of who lives or dies, who suffers through violence and injury, and who gets to live peacefully. This is what they refer to as 'necropolitics.' The ability to control mortality is the absolute manifestation of power (Mbembe 2003, 12).

Both scholars use the case of Palestine and specifically Gaza to illustrate the manifestation of necropolitics. There are three ways in which the right of Palestinians to live or die is controlled. First, through what Mbembe calls 'territorial fragmentation' wherein movement by the Palestinian people is impossible and the territory is divided and separated (Mbembe 2003, 28). Instead of a state border to divide two nations, there are multiple separations and boundaries which are a means by which surveillance and control are exercised (Mbembe 2003, 28). Secondly and linked to the first, in traditional cases of war and conflict, the battleground is the earth. However, in this case, every part of the divided and separated areas are subject to attacks; even the airspace is divided into lower and upper layers, and the underground too, is a conflict zone (Mbembe 2003, 29). In this way, "Killing becomes precisely targeted" (Mbembe 2003, 29). A third way in which necropolitics manifests is through the tactics of warfare in which infrastructural networks are targeted, destroying land and water. The destruction of cities, houses, olive tree plantations, healthcare facilities and resources, water and electricity sources are a means to ensure that Palestinian people cannot access their right to life (Mbembe 2003, 29). In this way, Mbembe (2003, 14) illustrates that sovereignty, violence and conflict, which underpins the anarchic international system, is not premised on achieving freedom, political autonomy or security, but rather through the exercise of power, about the "instrumentalisation of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations."

Puar (2015) extends Mbembe's idea of necropolitics; more than the right to live and die is controlled, she makes clear that power and sovereignty are about wounding and disabling too.

In other words, by controlling the bodily integrity of people, their vitality and health, surveillance and control is exercised. Puar (2015, 3-5) lists some of the warfare tactics the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) use such as 'shoot to cripple', bullets that create a 'snowstorm' effect in the body, the use of dum dum bullets and attacks on healthcare facilities. These tactics are employed, often against their banning under international human rights law, to inflict harm and guarantee one's suffering. Moreover, Israeli attacks on Palestinian medical facilities and resources are intended specifically to debilitate a developing healthcare system and prevent Palestinians from receiving treatment and humanitarian aid (Puar 2015, 4). Puar (2015, 5) emphasises the infrastructural damage caused by the IDF, arguing that it constitutes a kind of 'spaciocide' wherein the land is dependent on Israeli infrastructural support – which is either not provided or completely destroyed. For instance, there are specific and calculated attempts at targeting water and sewage systems to the point where these systems are rendered completely dysfunctional.

Just as the concept of sovereignty appears at first as a means through which political autonomy is exercised, the tactics by the IDF are also used strategically to appear to be a humanitarian approach to warfare where in actuality, they are intended to inflict harm and torture (Puar 2015). That the bare minimum requisites for life are controlled and can be withheld at any point by the IDF, is indicative of the control over both life as well as putting down resistance to colonial occupation and domination. Thus, Puar (2015, 5) suggests that intrinsic to the aims of Israel is to measure how much resistance can be impeded without exterminating the entire Palestinian population. More specifically, by focusing on the idea of 'maiming' through warfare tactics the IDF employs, Puar (2015) elucidates that the aim is neither 'to kill' nor 'to allow to live' and in that space between the two, the intention is to cause suffering, permanent disability, and debilitation to everything and everyone. Hence, sovereignty is not just an exercise of control over life and death as Mbembe (2003) suggested but also a 'right to maim' as she suggests (Puar 2015).

Puar's (2015) critique, whilst situated in the Palestinian context, can be applied to other instances of war, violence and genocide as well as colonialism and imperialism. Israel and Israeli allies proclaim that there exists no deliberate intention to kill Palestinian civilians because Palestinian civilians are given 'adequate' warning prior to the destruction of homes, healthcare facilities and critical infrastructure. As such, they posit that the harm and death of Palestinian civilians, the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure, healthcare facilities and

resources, the land and the environment are merely ‘collateral damage’ in an effort to achieve self-defense (Puar 2015, 10). By revealing how warfare tactics are used specifically with the intention to completely harm and disable life, Puar (2015) delegitimizes the claim of ‘collateral damage.’ In other words, collateral damage and the intention to harm are not mutually exclusive and placing intentional harm under the guise of collateral damage is an attempt to hide necropolitics at play.

Discussing necropolitics is not misplaced; its importance lies in that it can be extended to understanding the relationship between IR and the environment. In doing so, I make the following claim; that anthropocentrism, through its employment both in the practice of international relations and the discipline, allows for the destruction of the earth to be framed and concealed as ‘collateral damage’ when it is in fact intentional in the pursuit of capitalism, development and modernisation. The connection between the environment and necropolitics, although not discussed explicitly by Mbembe (2003) and Puar (2015) is certainly alluded to. However, it is Moore (2017, 4) who engages with this connection directly suggesting that the ‘Capitalocene’ is a ‘Necrocene’ because it intentionally seeks to drive extinction. To substantiate the claim I make, it is necessary to first contend with the idea of the Capitalocene.

Emerging as a critique of the Anthropocene concept put forward by Crutzen and Stoermer (2000), the Capitalocene situates climate change in the context of capitalism which is premised on the divide between man and nature as well as the exploitation of certain populations, their land, labour and access to resources (Moore 2017). One of the most important contributions of the idea of the Capitalocene is that it demonstrates how the systematic use of the earth and subordinated people for capitalist expansion and gain is an intentionally created and orchestrated system. This is best illustrated when Moore (2017) speaks of the concept of ‘world ecology’ which refers to the deep intertwining of nature and humanity within the capitalist system. Because capitalism is a system to which power and profit is central, world ecology is a web for the connections between people, nature, power and capital accumulation. Colonialism and imperialism are key sites for the development of these world ecologies; primitive accumulation allowed for the idea of “Cheap Nature” to emerge as a praxis of this new world ecology (More 2017, 7). Cheap Nature holds two meanings. First, it refers to the reduction in the cost of working for capital through the use of exploitative labour and through the excessive accumulation of capital. Second, it refers to the ‘cheapening’ of both people and nature; indigenous people, women, people of colour as well as the earth, ecosystems, natural

resources, animals, natural habitats were all rendered unvaluable and unworthy of dignity (Moore 2017, 7). Colonialism and imperialism sought to create these 'world ecologies' based on Cheap Nature such that unequal capital accumulation could persist; neo-imperialism is evidence of this. There is no way to accumulate capital through the degradation of the earth and the exploitation of certain populations without it being inherently violent (Moore 2017).

As has been illustrated with the case studies of the Akan philosophy and the Andean Cosmovision, the earth is a significant component of people's lives and livelihoods. Hence, in the exercise of control over land, access to resources, labour and the relationship between humans and nature, the Anthropocene can quality as both Capitalocene and Necrocene. It is about the politics of who gets to live or die and the right of those in power to maim. It is the politics of who gets access to the earth, land, resources and who exploit these. The surveillance, exploitation and destruction of the earth is therefore also the surveillance, exploitation and destruction of people's lives and livelihoods.

In the same way that Puar (2015) delegitimises the claim of 'collateral damage' employed by Israel, Moore's (2017) illustration of how the Capitalocene is an orchestrated system intended to cause violence, destruction and harm, delegitimises the claim that the environment is merely 'collateral damage.' Under the guise of 'collateral damage' adaptation and mitigation strategies sound sufficient where in actuality it allows for the Capitalocene to prevail.

The consequences of an anthropocentric discipline are profoundly detrimental. IR's non-engagement with climate change allows for the persistence of the Capitalocene. That humans are a geological force is indicative of how far gone and impactful the Capitalocene is. Hence, decentring the human is especially important in this new geological epoch of the earth. This raises the question, what then does an IR which decentres the human and engages with the non-human actually look like? My answer can only be a tentative one, but the need for reorientation is too urgent to fall back into timidity.

Conclusion: What can IR look like? Findings, Connections and Learnings from the Akan Philosophy and the Andean Cosmovision

Drawing from the case studies of the Akan philosophy and the Andean Cosmovision, there are two important threads that we can make use of to inspire alternative ways of thinking, and to better theorize about the climate in IR. Both bodies of knowledge in their rejection of anthropocentrism, have encouraged consideration of non-human entities, referring equally to both animate and inanimate entities. Secondly, a central principle of both is that of that of relationality; all entities, including both living and non-living are connected within large systems which govern the function of the world. I discuss how we can draw from these ideas in theorizing about the climate crisis, thereafter, I apply the ideas to the issues of (i) the role of agency in IR, (ii) the idea of power (iii) international cooperation and (iv) the issue of security, demonstrating the impact that thinking differently has in IR.

If IR were to theorize from the place of the non-human and from a relational perspective, it would engage deeply with indigenous bodies of knowledge to learn how indigenous people have maintained peaceful relations with the environment for centuries. It would draw on their knowledge of how to take care of the environment, how to preserve it and how to listen to it to understand its needs. As is the case within the Andean Cosmovision, Andean people can decipher what the environment needs from the reactions it has and changes in the climate. This could mean for instance, changes in the levels of precipitation of a region would not be understood as merely uncontrollable phenomena, but indications of where humans need to better provide and care for the earth. Theorizing from the place of the non-human and from a relational perspective would also entail taking more critical understandings of various systems within nature and how humans rely on those systems, as a starting place from which to derive climate policy. For example, humans rely heavily on bees and the system of pollination for the growth of crops and food production. Climate related policies would not only develop new ways to secure the production of crops in the context of volatile climate changes, but those policies would also seek to protect bees and the system of pollination itself. In this way, thinking from the place of the non-human has significant changes for how we theorize about the climate.

Thinking relationally and from the place of the non-human has profound implications for the concept of agency within IR. Traditional IR suggests that only individuals, states and organizations have agency and can affect global politics and phenomena. In contrast, thinking from the place of the non-human allows us to consider that various actors have agency. Specifically, the climate has agency because it has far-reaching and impacts on the lives of

individuals, the movement of individuals, on states at large, state borders and organizations, to name a few. By expanding the scope of agency, IR can better understand complex systems which drive and impact issues such as conflict, cooperation and security. For example, IR can consider the issue of human migration as a phenomenon that results not only from economic and political needs but environmental impact too. In this way, it can engage more deeply with the climate as a propeller of human movement and transformation.

Specifically related to the issue of climate change, thinking from the place of the non-human would enable both the discipline and the practise of IR to be better prepared for climate events. If we were to understand the earth as an actor with its own agency that expresses its agency based on its interactions with humans, we are better able to govern and manage human behaviour. Moreover, we can reframe the climate crisis from an understanding that human behaviour ought not to infringe on the agency and sovereignty of the climate, just as states are expected not to infringe upon another's sovereignty.

Thinking from the place of the non-human similarly has implications for how we think about power and justice. In traditional IR, power is considered as the exertion of influence over another, and is generally limited to states, individuals and organizations. Although it is relative to the entity's capacity, power can manifest in many ways though traditional IR places importance on military and economic power as a means through which states achieve hegemonic power. In contrast, thinking with the consideration of the non-human in mind, we can understand that more actors can hold power, thus leading us to deeper and more complex understandings of various systems within IR. For example, multinational corporations (MNCs) exert power over state economies and individuals; they influence international trading policies, economic regulations and even impact state economic systems. When thinking from an alternative paradigm, one can consider that MNCs do not operate and exert power within a closed system of their own, but other actors, like the climate, can exert power and influence on MNCs. By acknowledging the role of the non-human in shaping our world, we can develop a deeper understanding of what power is, what it entails, and how the climate is an actor which can exert power over individuals, states and the international system at large.

Thirdly, thinking from the non-human, relational perspective challenges our traditional ideas of diplomacy and international cooperation. Rather than a focus on cooperation between humans and between states, this perspective encourages us to consider cooperation on different levels. For example, the cooperation between states and the climate, states and individuals,

individuals and the climate and other entities that may be important to the individuals. Moreover, cooperation would not just be driven by the goal of preventing violence but rather, with an attempt to foster deeper relationships between various entities such as animals, ecosystems and the climate toward more collective efforts at addressing global crises. Concerning climate change, this could help foster effective transnational cooperation where the non-human is considered an equal part in treaties and mitigation efforts.

Finally, this paradigm shift has important consequences for the concept of security within IR. Although security has been advanced from a traditional conception to include that of human security, it remains limited. Human security focuses on the extent to which physical factors such as the lack of access to water, sanitation and sustainable food systems have on the security of the individual. Whilst these are important and necessary considerations to make especially in the context of the climate crisis, they can be expanded upon. For instance, human security can also include the extent to which humans feel safe in the praxis of their worldviews, especially worldviews like the Akan philosophy and Andean Cosmovision in which the interactions between humans, nature and the environment at large is sacrosanct. In other words, to what extent does climate change, resulting from human behaviour, impact the ability of humans to maintain their relationship with the environment when it is increasingly damaged and destructed? Furthermore, human security can be expanded upon to include the security of the non-human; ecosystems, animals and the environment at large should be seen as part of the 'international' thereby also requiring protection. This allows for the environment to be considered as a legitimate actor in its own right.

This chapter has illustrated the dangers of theorizing about the climate from traditional IR; doing so allows the environment to be yet another site where necropolitics is at play. In preventing this, a radical alternative way of thinking is required and this can kind of thinking can be found within the Akan philosophy and Andean Cosmovision.

Conclusion

I do not wish to reiterate the arguments that have already been presented, but rather, highlight how this dissertation has attempted to constitute a tentative step toward the renewal of IR in a world challenged by violence, climate change and the persistence of coloniality. The climate crisis we are currently facing presents us with an opportunity; we can either think radically and differently than what we have or continue the path of 'derangement' as Ghosh (2017) has termed it. This dissertation has taken up the option of the former and has attempted to illustrate what thinking radically differently could look like. The suggestion that this dissertation has put forward is that pluriversalising International Relations is not only a theoretical exercise but equally and importantly, a practical necessity too. How we think informs how we organize in the world, how we interact with one another and non-human entities and lastly, the quality of our state of being within the world. Climate change mirrors how we have been thinking unethically, parochially and destructively. Thus, how we engage with the climate crisis and whether we continue down the path of greater destruction is a matter of shifting our perspective; of adopting many different ontological and epistemological foundations.

This dissertation has offered an imaginary of what a renewed IR and an alternative world could look like. This imaginary entails redefining what knowledge is, and its importance to us. Knowledge should no longer be subject to Western adjudications premised on questions of relative 'modernity' and 'rationality.' Furthermore, knowledge should no longer be a mechanism for political, economic and cultural repression and the destruction of both human and non-human life. Rather, knowledge should be a tool that helps us understand the depths and complexities of human and non-human life. It should be fluid, holding different worlds and different understandings of those worlds at once. This is not only for the purpose of a wider variety of theories in IR, but it is important because it is an effort towards epistemic justice.

This dissertation highlights the necessity to continuously question and reflect not just on power, institutions and ideologies but hierarchies of knowledge, anthropocentrism, coloniality and racism too. We cannot continue to deny that the foundations of the IR discipline – and the social sciences at large – are deeply rooted in colonialism, racism and imperialism. Although scholars have inherited the discipline with these systemic issues, we are responsible for the future of the discipline in much the same way as we are responsible for the future of the climate crisis. That is because alternative thinking is not possible within the confines of coloniality and

epistemicide. It is not that the climate crisis cannot be contended with, but rather, that it cannot be contended with within the bounds of Western thinking. This dissertation has shown the aspirations for a shift in IR's prevailing indifference toward racism and epistemicide.

Redefining what knowledge is includes rethinking the relationship between humans and non-human entities. To be anthropocentric is to severely limit our understanding and engagement with the world. To redefine knowledge means that we can begin to think from a place of relationality, reciprocity and interconnectedness. Our solutions to the problems that we face, especially that of climate change, would be rooted in creativity and collaboration and would occur from a more ethical position. In this way, by broadening our perspectives, we can gain a better understanding of what it means to be human in relation to the non-human rather than in relation to ourselves.

Thus, a renewed IR is one that is more ethical, expansive and one that employs more inter-disciplinary thinking. A renewed IR is also one that has better solutions for the crises we face and new methodologies and frameworks through which to understand ourselves and phenomena. The alternative pathways that have been described in this dissertation present IR with the possibility of a new consciousness altogether.

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