## 1NC

### Framework

#### A – Interpretation:

#### Topical affirmatives must affirm the resolution through instrumental defense of action by the United States Federal Government.

#### B – Definitions

#### Should denotes an expectation of enacting a plan

#### American Heritage Dictionary 2000 (Dictionary.com)

should. The will to do something or have something take place: I shall go out if I feel like it.

#### Federal government is the central government in Washington DC

Encarta Online 2005,

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\_1741500781\_6/United\_States\_(Government).html#howtocite

United States (Government), the combination of federal, state, and local laws, bodies, and agencies that is responsible for carrying out the operations of the United States. The federal government of the United States is centered in [Washington, D.C.](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761576320/Washington_D_C.html)

#### Resolved implies a policy

Louisiana House 3-8-2005, <http://house.louisiana.gov/house-glossary.htm>

Resolution A legislative instrument that generally is used for making declarations, stating policies, and making decisions where some other form is not required. A bill includes the constitutionally required enacting clause; a resolution uses the term "resolved". Not subject to a time limit for introduction nor to governor's veto. ( Const. Art. III, §17(B) and House Rules 8.11 , 13.1 , 6.8 , and 7.4)

#### C – Vote neg – We have four net benefits

#### First is Decisionmaking

#### The primary purpose of debate should be to improve our skills as decision-makers. We are all individual policy-makers who make choices every day that affect us and those around us. We have an obligation to the people affected by our decisions to use debate as a method for honing these critical thinking and information processing abilities.

Austin J. Freeley and David L. Steinberg – John Carroll University / U Miami – 2009, Argumentation and Debate: Critical Thinking for Reasoned Decision Making, p. 1-4, googlebooks

After several days of intense debate, first the United States House of Representatives and then the U.S. Senate voted to authorize President George W. Bush to attack Iraq if Saddam Hussein refused to give up weapons of mass destruction as required by United Nations's resolutions. Debate about a possible military\* action against Iraq continued in various governmental bodies and in the public for six months, until President Bush ordered an attack on Baghdad, beginning Operation Iraqi Freedom, the military campaign against the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. He did so despite the unwillingness of the U.N. Security Council to support the military action, and in the face of significant international opposition.¶ Meanwhile, and perhaps equally difficult for the parties involved, a young couple deliberated over whether they should purchase a large home to accommodate their growing family or should sacrifice living space to reside in an area with better public schools; elsewhere a college sophomore reconsidered his major and a senior her choice of law school, graduate school, or a job. Each of these\* situations called for decisions to be made. Each decision maker worked hard to make well-reasoned decisions.¶ Decision making is a thoughtful process of choosing among a variety of options for acting or thinking. It requires that the decider make a choice. Life demands decision making. We make countless individual decisions every day. To make some of those decisions, we work hard to employ care and consideration; others seem to just happen. Couples, families, groups of friends, and coworkers come together to make choices, and decision-making bodies from committees to juries to the U.S. Congress and the United Nations make decisions that impact us all. Every profession requires effective and ethical decision making, as do our school, community, and social organizations.¶ We all make many decisions every day. To refinance or sell one's home, to buy a high-performance SUV or an economical hybrid car. what major to select, what to have for dinner, what candidate to vote for, paper or plastic, all present us with choices. Should the president deal with an international crisis through military invasion or diplomacy? How should the U.S. Congress act to address illegal immigration?¶ Is the defendant guilty as accused? The Daily Show or the ball game? And upon what information should I rely to make my decision? Certainly some of these decisions are more consequential than others. Which amendment to vote for, what television program to watch, what course to take, which phone plan to purchase, and which diet to pursue all present unique challenges. At our best, we seek out research and data to inform our decisions. Yet even the choice of which information to attend to requires decision making. In 2006, TIME magazine named YOU its "Person of the Year." Congratulations! Its selection was based on the participation not of ''great men" in the creation of history, but rather on the contributions of a community of anonymous participants in the evolution of information. Through blogs. online networking. You Tube. Facebook, MySpace, Wikipedia, and many other "wikis," knowledge and "truth" are created from the bottom up, bypassing the authoritarian control of newspeople, academics, and publishers. We have access to infinite quantities of information, but how do we sort through it and select the best information for our needs?¶ The ability of every decision maker to make good, reasoned, and ethical decisions relies heavily upon their ability to think critically. Critical thinking enables one to break argumentation down to its component parts in order to evaluate its relative validity and strength. Critical thinkers are better users of information, as well as better advocates.¶ Colleges and universities expect their students to develop their critical thinking skills and may require students to take designated courses to that end. The importance and value of such study is widely recognized.¶ Much of the most significant communication of our lives is conducted in the form of debates. These may take place in intrapersonal communications, in which we weigh the pros and cons of an important decision in our own minds, or they may take place in interpersonal communications, in which we listen to arguments intended to influence our decision or participate in exchanges to influence the decisions of others.¶ Our success or failure in life is largely determined by our ability to make wise decisions for ourselves and to influence the decisions of others in ways that are beneficial to us. Much of our significant, purposeful activity is concerned with making decisions. Whether to join a campus organization, go to graduate school, accept a job oiler, buy a car or house, move to another city, invest in a certain stock, or vote for Garcia—these are just a few of the thousands of decisions we may have to make. Often, intelligent self-interest or a sense of responsibility will require us to win the support of others. We may want a scholarship or a particular job for ourselves, a customer for out product, or a vote for our favored political candidate.

#### Additionally, The best route to improving decision-making is through discussion about public policy

#### Mutually accessible information – There is a wide swath of literature on governmental policy topics – that ensures there will be informed, predictable, and in-depth debate over the aff’s decision. Individual policymaking is highly variable depending on the person and inaccessible to outsiders.

#### Harder decisions make better decisionmakers – The problems facing public policymakers are a magnitude greater than private decisions. We all know plans don’t actually happen, but practicing imagining the consequences of our decisions in the high-stakes games of public policymaking makes other decisionmaking easier.

#### Second is Predictable Limits - The resolution proposes the question the negative is prepared to answer and creates a bounded list of potential affs for us to think about. Debate has unique potential to change attitudes and grow critical thinking skills because it forces pre-round internal deliberation on a of a focused, common ground of debate

Robert E. Goodin and Simon J. Niemeyer- Australian National University- 2003,

When Does Deliberation Begin? Internal Reflection versus Public Discussion in Deliberative Democracy, POLITICAL STUDIES: 2003 VOL 51, 627–649, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.0032-3217.2003.00450.x/pdf

What happened in this particular case, as in any particular case, was in some respects peculiar unto itself. The problem of the Bloomfield Track had been well known and much discussed in the local community for a long time. Exaggerated claims and counter-claims had become entrenched, and unreflective public opinion polarized around them. In this circumstance, the effect of the information phase of deliberative processes was to brush away those highly polarized attitudes, dispel the myths and symbolic posturing on both sides that had come to dominate the debate, and liberate people to act upon their attitudes toward the protection of rainforest itself. The key point, from the perspective of ‘democratic deliberation within’, is that that happened in the earlier stages of deliberation – before the formal discussions (‘deliberations’, in the discursive sense) of the jury process ever began. The simple process of jurors seeing the site for themselves, focusing their minds on the issues and listening to what experts had to say did virtually all the work in changing jurors’ attitudes. Talking among themselves, as a jury, did very little of it. However, the same might happen in cases very different from this one. Suppose that instead of highly polarized symbolic attitudes, what we have at the outset is mass ignorance or mass apathy or non-attitudes. There again, people’s engaging with the issue – focusing on it, acquiring information about it, thinking hard about it – would be something that is likely to occur earlier rather than later in the deliberative process. And more to our point, it is something that is most likely to occur within individuals themselves or in informal interactions, well in advance of any formal, organized group discussion. There is much in the large literature on attitudes and the mechanisms by which they change to support that speculation.31 Consider, for example, the literature on ‘central’ versus ‘peripheral’ routes to the formation of attitudes. Before deliberation, individuals may not have given the issue much thought or bothered to engage in an extensive process of reflection.32 In such cases, positions may be arrived at via peripheral routes, taking cognitive shortcuts or arriving at ‘top of the head’ conclusions or even simply following the lead of others believed to hold similar attitudes or values (Lupia, 1994). These shorthand approaches involve the use of available cues such as ‘expertness’ or ‘attractiveness’ (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) – not deliberation in the internal-reflective sense we have described. Where peripheral shortcuts are employed, there may be inconsistencies in logic and the formation of positions, based on partial information or incomplete information processing. In contrast, ‘central’ routes to the development of attitudes involve the application of more deliberate effort to the matter at hand, in a way that is more akin to the internal-reflective deliberative ideal. Importantly for our thesis, there is nothing intrinsic to the ‘central’ route that requires group deliberation. Research in this area stresses instead the importance simply of ‘sufficient impetus’ for engaging in deliberation, such as when an individual is stimulated by personal involvement in the issue.33 The same is true of ‘on-line’ versus ‘memory-based’ processes of attitude change.34 The suggestion here is that we lead our ordinary lives largely on autopilot, doing routine things in routine ways without much thought or reflection. When we come across something ‘new’, we update our routines – our ‘running’ beliefs and pro cedures, attitudes and evaluations – accordingly. But having updated, we then drop the impetus for the update into deep-stored ‘memory’. A consequence of this procedure is that, when asked in the ordinary course of events ‘what we believe’ or ‘what attitude we take’ toward something, we easily retrieve what we think but we cannot so easily retrieve the reasons why. That more fully reasoned assessment – the sort of thing we have been calling internal-reflective deliberation – requires us to call up reasons from stored memory rather than just consulting our running on-line ‘summary judgments’. Crucially for our present discussion, once again, what prompts that shift from online to more deeply reflective deliberation is not necessarily interpersonal discussion. The impetus for fixing one’s attention on a topic, and retrieving reasons from stored memory, might come from any of a number sources: group discussion is only one. And again, even in the context of a group discussion, this shift from ‘online’ to ‘memory-based’ processing is likely to occur earlier rather than later in the process, often before the formal discussion ever begins. All this is simply to say that, on a great many models and in a great many different sorts of settings, it seems likely that elements of the pre-discursive process are likely to prove crucial to the shaping and reshaping of people’s attitudes in a citizens’ jury-style process. The initial processes of focusing attention on a topic, providing information about it and inviting people to think hard about it is likely to provide a strong impetus to internal-reflective deliberation, altering not just the information people have about the issue but also the way people process that information and hence (perhaps) what they think about the issue. What happens once people have shifted into this more internal-reflective mode is, obviously, an open question. Maybe people would then come to an easy consensus, as they did in their attitudes toward the Daintree rainforest.35 Or maybe people would come to divergent conclusions; and they then may (or may not) be open to argument and counter-argument, with talk actually changing minds. Our claim is not that group discussion will always matter as little as it did in our citizens’ jury.36 Our claim is instead merely that the earliest steps in the jury process – the sheer focusing of attention on the issue at hand and acquiring more information about it, and the internal-reflective deliberation that that prompts – will invariably matter more than deliberative democrats of a more discursive stripe would have us believe. However much or little difference formal group discussions might make, on any given occasion, the pre-discursive phases of the jury process will invariably have a considerable impact on changing the way jurors approach an issue. From Citizens’ Juries to Ordinary Mass Politics? In a citizens’ jury sort of setting, then, it seems that informal, pre-group deliberation – ‘deliberation within’ – will inevitably do much of the work that deliberative democrats ordinarily want to attribute to the more formal discursive processes. What are the preconditions for that happening? To what extent, in that sense, can findings about citizens’ juries be extended to other larger or less well-ordered deliberative settings? Even in citizens’ juries, deliberation will work only if people are attentive, open and willing to change their minds as appropriate. So, too, in mass politics. In citizens’ juries the need to participate (or **the anticipation of participating) in formally organized group discussions might be the ‘prompt’ that evokes those attributes**. But there might be many other possible ‘prompts’ that can be found in less formally structured mass-political settings. Here are a few ways citizens’ juries (and all cognate micro-deliberative processes)37 might be different from mass politics, and in which lessons drawn from that experience might not therefore carry over to ordinary politics: • A citizens’ jury concentrates people’s minds on a single issue. Ordinary politics involve many issues at once. • A citizens’ jury is often supplied a background briefing that has been agreed by all stakeholders (Smith and Wales, 2000, p. 58). In ordinary mass politics, there is rarely any equivalent common ground on which debates are conducted. • A citizens’ jury separates the process of acquiring information from that of discussing the issues. In ordinary mass politics, those processes are invariably intertwined. • A citizens’ jury is provided with a set of experts. They can be questioned, debated or discounted. But there is a strictly limited set of ‘competing experts’ on the same subject. In ordinary mass politics, claims and sources of expertise often seem virtually limitless, allowing for much greater ‘selective perception’. • Participating in something called a ‘citizens’ jury’ evokes certain very particular norms: norms concerning the ‘impartiality’ appropriate to jurors; norms concerning the ‘common good’ orientation appropriate to people in their capacity as citizens.38 There is a very different ethos at work in ordinary mass politics, which are typically driven by flagrantly partisan appeals to sectional interest (or utter disinterest and voter apathy). • In a citizens’ jury, **we think and listen in anticipation of the discussion phase, knowing that we soon will have to defend our views in a discursive setting where they will be probed intensively**.39 In ordinary mass-political settings, there is no such incentive for paying attention. It is perfectly true that citizens’ juries are ‘special’ in all those ways. But if being special in all those ways makes for a better – more ‘reflective’, more ‘deliberative’ – political process, then those are design features that we ought try to mimic as best we can in ordinary mass politics as well. There are various ways that that might be done. Briefing books might be prepared by sponsors of American presidential debates (the League of Women Voters, and such like) in consultation with the stakeholders involved. Agreed panels of experts might be questioned on prime-time television. Issues might be sequenced for debate and resolution, to avoid too much competition for people’s time and attention. Variations on the Ackerman and Fishkin (2002) proposal for a ‘deliberation day’ before every election might be generalized, with a day every few months being given over to small meetings in local schools to discuss public issues. All that is pretty visionary, perhaps. And (although it is clearly beyond the scope of the present paper to explore them in depth) there are doubtless many other more-or-less visionary ways of introducing into real-world politics analogues of the elements that induce citizens’ jurors to practice ‘democratic deliberation within’, even before the jury discussion gets underway. Here, we have to content ourselves with identifying those features that need to be replicated in real-world politics in order to achieve that goal – and with the ‘possibility theorem’ that is established by the fact that (as sketched immediately above) there is at least one possible way of doing that for each of those key features.

#### Third is Dogmatism – Most problems are not black and white but have complex, uncertain interactions. By declaring that \_\_\_\_\_ is always bad, they prevent us from understanding the nuances of an incredibly important and complex issue. This is the epitome of dogmatism

Keller, et. al,– Asst. professor School of Social Service Administration U. of Chicago - 2001

(Thomas E., James K., and Tracly K., Asst. professor School of Social Service Administration U. of Chicago, professor of Social Work, and doctoral student School of Social Work, “Student debates in policy courses: promoting policy practice skills and knowledge through active learning,” Journal of Social Work Education, Spr/Summer 2001, EBSCOhost)

John Dewey, the philosopher and educational reformer, suggested that the initial advance in the development of reflective thought occurs in the transition from holding fixed, static ideas to an attitude of doubt and questioning engendered by exposure to alternative views in social discourse (Baker, 1955, pp. 36-40). Doubt, confusion, and conflict resulting from discussion of diverse perspectives "force comparison, selection, and reformulation of ideas and meanings" (Baker, 1955, p. 45). Subsequent educational theorists have contended that learning requires openness to divergent ideas in combination with the ability to synthesize disparate views into a purposeful resolution (Kolb, 1984; Perry, 1970). On the one hand, clinging to the certainty of one's beliefs risks dogmatism, rigidity, and the inability to learn from new experiences. On the other hand, if one's opinion is altered by every new experience, the result is insecurity, paralysis, and the inability to take effective action. The educator's role is to help students develop the capacity to incorporate new and sometimes conflicting ideas and experiences into a coherent cognitive framework. Kolb suggests that, "if the education process begins by bringing out the learner's beliefs and theories, examining and testing them, and then integrating the new, more refined ideas in the person's belief systems, the learning process will be facilitated" (p. 28).

The authors believe that involving students in substantive debates challenges them to learn and grow in the fashion described by Dewey and Kolb. Participation in a debate stimulates clarification and critical evaluation of the evidence, logic, and values underlying one's own policy position. In addition, to debate effectively students must understand and accurately evaluate the opposing perspective. The ensuing tension between two distinct but legitimate views is designed to yield a reevaluation and reconstruction of knowledge and beliefs pertaining to the issue.

#### Our method solves – Even if the resolution is wrong, having a devil’s advocate in deliberation is vitally important to critical thinking skills and avoiding groupthink

Hugo Mercier and Hélène Landemore- 2011

(Philosophy, Politics and Economics prof @ U of Penn, Poli Sci prof @ Yale), Reasoning is for arguing: Understanding the successes and failures of deliberation, Political Psychology, http://sites.google.com/site/hugomercier/publications

Reasoning can function outside of its normal conditions when it is used purely internally. But it is not enough for reasoning to be done in public to achieve good results. And indeed the problems of individual reasoning highlighted above, such as polarization and overconfidence, can also be found in group reasoning (Janis, 1982; Stasser & Titus, 1985; Sunstein, 2002). Polarization and overconfidence happen because not all group discussion is deliberative. According to some definitions of deliberation, including the one used in this paper, reasoning has to be applied to the same thread of argument *from different opinions* for deliberation to occur. As a consequence, “If the participants are mostly like-minded or hold the same views before they enter into the discussion, they are not situated in the circumstances of deliberation.” (Thompson, 2008: 502). We will presently review evidence showing that the absence or the silencing of dissent is a quasi-necessary condition for polarization or overconfidence to occur in groups. Group polarization has received substantial empirical support. 11 So much support in fact that Sunstein has granted group polarization the status of law (Sunstein, 2002). There is however an important caveat: group polarization will mostly happen when people share an opinion to begin with. In defense of his claim, Sunstein reviews an impressive number of empirical studies showing that many groups tend to form more extreme opinions following discussion. The examples he uses, however, offer as convincing an illustration of group polarization than of the necessity of having group members that share similar beliefs at the outset for polarization to happen (e.g. Sunstein, 2002: 178). Likewise, in his review of the group polarization literature, Baron notes that “The crucial antecedent condition for group polarization to occur is the presence of a likeminded group; i.e. individuals who share a preference for one side of the issue.” (Baron, 2005). Accordingly, when groups do not share an opinion, they tend to depolarize. This has been shown in several experiments in the laboratory (e.g. Kogan & Wallach, 1966; Vinokur & Burnstein, 1978). Likewise, studies of deliberation about political or legal issues report that many groups do not polarize (Kaplan & Miller, 1987; Luskin, Fishkin, & Hahn, 2007; Luskin et al., 2002; Luskin, Iyengar, & Fishkin, 2004; Mendelberg & Karpowitz, 2000). On the contrary, some groups show a homogenization of their attitude (they depolarize) (Luskin et al., 2007; Luskin et al., 2002). The contrasting effect of discussions with a supportive versus dissenting audience is transparent in the results reported by Hansen ( 2003 reported by Fishkin & Luskin, 2005). Participants had been exposed to new information about a political issue. When they discussed it with their family and friends, they learned more facts supporting their initial position. On the other hand, during the deliberative weekend—and the exposition to other opinions that took place—they learned more of the facts supporting the view they disagreed with. The present theory, far from being contradicted by the observation that groups of likeminded people reasoning together tend to polarize, can in fact account straightforwardly for this observation. When people are engaged in a genuine deliberation, the confirmation bias present in each individual’s reasoning is checked, compensated by the confirmation bias of individuals who defend another opinion. When no other opinion is present (or expressed, or listened to), people will be disinclined to use reasoning to critically examine the arguments put forward by other discussants, since they share their opinion. Instead, they will use reasoning to strengthen these arguments or find other arguments supporting the same opinion. In most cases the reasons each individual has for holding the same opinion will be partially non-overlapping. Each participant will then be exposed to new reasons supporting the common opinion, reasons that she is unlikely to criticize. It is then only to be expected that group members should strengthen their support for the common opinion in light of these new arguments. In fact, groups of like-minded people should have little endogenous motivation to start reasoning together: what is the point of arguing with people we agree with? In most cases, such groups are lead to argue because of some external constraint. These constraints can be more or less artificial—a psychologist telling participants to deliberate or a judge asking a jury for a well supported verdict—but they have to be factored in the explanation of the phenomenon. 4. Conclusion: a situational approach to improving reasoning We have argued that reasoning should not be evaluated primarily, if at all, as a device that helps us generate knowledge and make better decisions through private reflection. Reasoning, in fact, does not do those things very well. Instead, we rely on the hypothesis that the function of reasoning is to find and evaluate arguments in deliberative contexts. This evolutionary hypothesis explains why, when reasoning is used in its normal conditions—in a deliberation—it can be expected to lead to better outcomes, consistently allowing deliberating groups to reach epistemically superior outcomes and improve their epistemic status. Moreover, seeing reasoning as an argumentative device also provides a straightforward account of the otherwise puzzling confirmation bias—the tendency to search for arguments that favor our opinion. The confirmation bias, in turn, generates most of the problems people face when they reason in abnormal conditions— when they are not deliberating. This will happen to people who reason alone while failing to entertain other opinions in a private deliberation and to groups in which one opinion is so dominant as to make all others opinions—if they are even present—unable to voice arguments. In both cases, the confirmation bias will go unchecked and create polarization and overconfidence. We believe that the argumentative theory offers a good explanation of the most salient facts about private and public reasoning. This explanation is meant to supplement, rather than replace, existing psychological theories by providing both an answer to the why-questions and a coherent integrative framework for many previously disparate findings. The present article was mostly aimed at comparing deliberative vs. non-deliberative situations, but the theory could also be used to make finer grained predictions within deliberative situations. It is important to stress that the theory used as the backbone for the article is a theory of reasoning. The theory can only make predictions about reasoning, and not about the various other psychological mechanisms that impact the outcome of group discussion. We did not aim at providing a general theory of group processes that could account for all the results in this domain. But it is our contention that the best way to reach this end is by investigating the relevant psychological mechanisms and their interaction. For these reasons, the present article should only be considered a first step towards more fined grained predictions of when and why deliberation is efficient. Turning now to the consequences of the present theory, we can note first that our emphasis on the efficiency of diverse groups sits well with another recent a priori account of group competence. According to Hong and Page’s Diversity Trumps Ability Theorem for example, under certain plausible conditions, a diverse sample of moderately competent individuals will outperform a group of the most competent individuals (Hong & Page, 2004). Specifically, what explains the superiority of some groups of average people over smaller groups of experts is the fact that cognitive diversity (roughly, the ability to interpret the world differently) can be more crucial to group competence than individual ability (Page, 2007). That argument has been carried over from groups of problem-solvers in business and practical matters to democratically deliberating groups in politics (e.g., Anderson, 2006; Author, 2007, In press). At the practical level, the present theory potentially has important implications. Given that individual reasoning works best when confronted to different opinions, the present theory supports the improvement of the presence or expression of dissenting opinions in deliberative settings. Evidently, many people, in the field of deliberative democracy or elsewhere, are also advocating such changes. While these common sense suggestions have been made in the past (e.g., Bohman,

2007; Sunstein, 2003, 2006), the present theory provides additional arguments for them. It also explains why approaches focusing on individual rather than collective reasoning are not likely to be successful. Specifically tailored practical suggestions can also be made by using departures from the normal conditions of reasoning as diagnostic tools. Thus, different departures will entail different solutions. Accountability—having to defends one’s opinion in front of an audience—can be used to bring individual reasoners closer to a situation of private deliberation. The use of different aggregation mechanisms could help identify the risk of deliberation among like-minded people. For example, before a group launches a discussion, a preliminary vote or poll could establish the extent to which different opinions are represented. If this procedure shows that people agree on the issue at hand, then skipping the discussion may save the group some efforts and reduce the risk of polarization. Alternatively, a **devil’s advocate** could be introduced in the group to defend an alternative opinion (e.g. Schweiger, Sandberg, & Ragan, 1986).

### 1NC 2

#### Their use of ontological blackness creates reliance on white superiority and erases individuality – ontological blackness opposes itself to whiteness, affirming white superiority by grounding blackness in suffering and the experience of anti-blackness – that reduces all experience to negative experience of racial constitution, which crushes individuality and causes social death

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(Anthony, Agnes Cullen Arnold Professor of Humanities and Professor of Religious Studies at Rice University whose work focuses on black liberation theology, African-American religion, and African-American humanism, Review of “Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism by Victor Anderson”, *African American Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer, 1997), pp. 320-323)

In chapter one Anderson defines religious criticism, cultural criticism, and other terms that comprise the core of his essay's vocabulary. Using critical theorists such as Edward Said and Hans Blumenberg, Anderson leads the reader through a discussion of central issues in modern criticism: religious vs. secular criticism debates and internal inconsistency based upon false dichotomies. And with the larger critical theory debate outlined, he places criticism within the "racialized culture" of the United States by using a racial genealogy reminiscent of Cornel West's approach. By grounding the humanistic sciences in a theory of natural inequality, Anderson argues that figures such as Immanuel Kant and Thomas Jefferson gave voice to a European genius (i.e., spirit of the age) that justified the bloody movement of modernity. He contends that categorical racism and white racial ideology are parts of a long list of exclusionary tactics justifying differentiation of humanity for overt economic, political, social, and spiritual goals. In response to this racism, Black criticism developed a counter-discourse that Anderson labels ontological blackness. Generally, Black apologists refute claims of white supremacy by presenting Black cultural genius-the uniqueness of African American contributions to culture-as the rationale for Black participation in social progress and democratic humanism. Although one might want initially to recognize the appealing quality of this argument with respect to Black survival, Anderson insightfully claims that it is fundamentally flawed because it is predicated upon acceptance of the whiteness-white superiority-Black apologists reject. Beyond embracing a reactionary identity, ontological blackness also denotes a provincial or "clan-ness" understanding of Black collective life, one that is synonymous with Black genius and its orthodox activities and attitudes. Collective identity so defined creates conflict between the group and the individual because desires and lifestyles at odds with the "party-line" are labeled "nonblack." Individuality is lost, and the freedom to "live, move and have one's being" is compromised through obsession with race. To avoid these dilemmas, African American criticism must be pragmatic enough to subvert all racial discourse and "cultural idolatry," and sensitive enough to appreciate diverse and utopian or transcendent visions of life. When this is done, both the friction between cultural and religious criticism highlighted by Said and Blumenberg and the preoccupation with blackness are resolved. Room is made for a religiously informed cultural criticism. Anderson grounds this new approach in Howard Thurman's theory of radical consciousness and human action, Cornel West's prophetic pragmatism and politics of difference, and the literary criticism of Toni Morrison and bell hooks. He highlights the manner in which these thinkers promote the existential condition of Black people as informed by race, but not limited to race. For them, life is not binary-black and white-or communal at the expense of individual choices and rights. So conceived, African American criticism draws from the best of critical theory and has an appreciation for the human impulse toward creative transformation. Cultural fulfillment, not blackness, is normative. The end product is a utopian yet pragmatic vision of life-fulfillment-forged in the arena of public (politicized) scrutiny. Beyond Ontological Blackness is, in short, an insightful movement toward African American public and critical theology. Yet the question remains: "What should African American cultural and religious criticism look like when they are no longer romantic in inspiration and the cult of heroic genius is displaced ... ? " Since Anderson is professionally entrenched in religious studies, it is not odd that application of his critical gaze would concretely involve a significant challenge to the Black theology enterprise. According to Anderson, Black theological discussions are entangled in ontological blackness. Accordingly, discussions of Black life revolve around a theological understanding of Black experience limited to suffering and survival in a racist system. The goal of this theology is to find the "meaning of black faith" in the merger of Black cultural consciousness, icons of genius, and post-World War II Black defiance. An admirable goal one would think, but here is the rub: Black theologians speak in opposition to ontological whiteness when they are actually dependent upon whiteness to legitimize their agenda. Furthermore, in a bizarre twist, ontological blackness's strong ties to suffering and survival result in blackness being dependent on these issues, and as a result social transformation brings into question what it means to be Black. Liberative outcomes ultimately force an identity crisis, a crisis of legitimation and utility. This conversation becomes more "refined" and more "Afrocentric" as new cultural resources are unpacked and various religious alternatives acknowledged. Yet the bottom line remains racialization of issues and agendas, life and love. Falsehood is perpetuated through the "hermeneutic of return" (Anderson uses Edward Said's term), by which ontological blackness is the paradigm of Black existence and sets the agenda of Black liberation within the "post-revolutionary context" of present-day America. By keeping ontological blackness alive, theologians maintain their raison d'etre and the vitality of their enterprise. Within the work of these theologians one ever finds the traces of the Black aesthetic which pushes for a dwarfed understanding of Black life and a sacrifice of individuality for the sake of an illusional unified Black "faith." Implicit in all of this is a crisis of faith, a fear to address both the glory and guts of Black existence- nihilistic tendencies that unless held in tension with claims of transcendence have the potential to overwhelm, to suffocate. How does one maintain this balance? Anderson looks to Nietzsche.

#### Their attempt to ontologically ground blackness is dependent on whiteness for the legitimacy—this recreates a conception of blackness as dependent on suffering, making resistance to oppression impossible within their framework.

AnthonyB. Pinn, Religious Studies at Macalester, 2004**.**

“‘‘Black Is, Black Ain’t’’: Victor Anderson, African American Theological Thought, and Identity,” Dialog: A Journal of Theology . Volume 43, Number 1

At its best, African American criticism draws from critical theory and has an appreciation for the human impulse toward creative transformation. Cultural fulfillment, not illusive blackness, is normative. The end product is a utopian yet pragmatic vision of life—fulfillment—forged in the arena of public (politicized) scrutiny, allowing for solid responses to the facts of contemporary black life. Yet the ques- tion remains: ‘‘what should African American cul- tural and religious criticism look like when they are no longer romantic in inspiration and the cult of heroic genius is displaced…?’’12 **This connection between ontological blackness and religion is natural because: ‘‘ontological blackness sig- nifies the totality of black existence, a binding together of black life and experience.** In its root, religio, religion denotes tying together, fastening behind, and binding together. Ontological blackness renders black life and experience a totality.’’13 According to Anderson, Black theological discussions are entangled in ontological blackness. And accordingly, discussions of black life revolve around a theological understanding of Black experience limited to suffering and survival in a racist system. The goal of this theology is to find the ‘‘mean- ing of black faith’’ in the merger of black cultural consciousness, icons of genius, and post-World War II Black defiance. An admirable goal to be sure, but here is the rub: **Black theologians speak**, according to Anderson, **in opposition to ontological whiteness when they are actually dependent upon whiteness for the legitimacy of their agenda**. Furthermore, onto- logical blackness’s strong ties to suffering and survi- val result in blackness being dependent on suffering, and as a result social transformation brings into question what it means to be black and religious. Liberative outcomes ultimately force an iden- tity crisis, a crisis of legitimation and utility. In Anderson’s words: Talk about liberation becomes hard to justify where freedom appears as nothing more than defiant self-assertion of a revolutionary racial consciousness that requires for its legitimacy the opposition of white racism. **Where there exists no possibility of transcending the black- ness that whiteness created, African American theologies of liberation must be seen** not only **as** crisis theologies; they remain **theologies in a crisis of legitimation**.14

#### The blackness affirmed by the 1AC is the blackness that whiteness created—the affirmative relies on the same type race theory of identity which characterizes white supremacy, locking essentialized understandings of blackness which exclude alternate configurations of black subjectivity—you should use your ballot to reject racialized identity construction, thus cutting off the cognitive foundation from which racism is even able to operate.

Trevor Eppehimer**,** Systematic Theology—Hood Seminary, 2006

“Victor Anderson’s Beyond Ontological Blackness and James Cone’s Black Theology: A Discussion,”

Black Theology: An International Journal 4:1

Simply stated, Anderson believes that **the “Blackness” with which Cone works in his theology is a “Blackness” that “Whiteness” created, a** Blackness Anderson derisively refers to as “**ontological Blackness**.” In following this type of inquiry, Anderson joins the increasing number of philosophers and critical theorists who have turned their attention both to the notions of race our age has inherited from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European thought and to their surprising appearance in the work of those once thought “progressive” on the issue, including noted Black and African nationalists of the past century. The narrative Anderson weaves about the invention of ontological Blackness, or the Blackness that Whiteness created, begins with a notion of “race” that was developed during the Western Enlightenment. Thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and Thomas Jefferson, Anderson argues, constructed both an ontological “Whiteness” and “Blackness”—two static realities that they believed, as Richard Rorty might say, “mirrored nature.” In such a view, racial identity is some- thing that is established prior to experience. Cultural and communal forces simply amplify what is already present in the self and do not do the actual work of inscribing an individual with a racial identity. As one might expect, “Whiteness” was thought to represent a superior way of being in the world, than “Blackness” in this Western Enlightenment racial aesthetic. Anderson’s central, somewhat counterintuitive thesis, however, is that **much of twentieth-century African American thought is patterned on these same “race” theories of modernity**. He believes that, rather than challenging the ade- quacy of the theories themselves, many African American intellectuals instead appropriated them to construct what he calls “ontological Blackness,” or the collection of essentialized categories that are thought to mirror nature. These categories, categorically, pertain, by deﬁnition, to all members of the Black community, without exception; the one difference being, of course, that, in this case, positive, rather than negative, attributes are ascribed to “Blackness.” As an illustration, Anderson observes that while W. E. B. Du Bois supplies the picture of the Black American as a categorically fragmented and alienated self in his doctrine of the Black “double consciousness” or the “two souls,” Marcus Garvey offers the promise of cultural fulﬁllment and self-reintegration through “Africa” and a “Pan-Africanism,” modeled on the Zionist movement of the modern era. Together they constitute two essential ingredients of “ontological Blackness,” or the essentialized, ﬁxed notion of Black reality and identity with which Anderson believes the dominant voices of twentieth- century African American thought have been uncritically working: Blacks as alienated, fractured and struggling selves and a return to “Africa” as the means by which those selves can be healed. Anderson believes **such notions about Black identity to be problematic because they fail to account for and honor the diversity that exists within Black communities.** Anderson, like the noted African philosopher Anthony Appiah, rejects the uncritical use of biological and essentialist conceptions of “race” as the premise for antiracist struggles. In their view, the **proper strategy for com- bating racism is not to reify, further, the racial categories developed by the Enlightenment, but to destabilize and complicate the category of “race” itself**, **so as to undercut the very foundation from which the racist cognitively operates**. **The challenge**, then, **for the public intellectual**, according to Appiah and Anderson, **is not to try to beat the racist** at his or her own game, as it were, and **with the ractist’s own categories**, **but**, rather, **to change the rules and the nature of the game itself by pointing to the shaky foundation upon which modern notions of “race” have been built in the ﬁrst place.** One does this, in Anderson’s case, by showing how generic conceptions of “Blackness” fail to do justice to the reality of what he calls contemporary postmodern Black existence: Throughout this book [Beyond Ontological Blackness], I describe this tendency toward racial reiﬁcation as ontological Blackness. Ontological Blackness is a covering term that connotes categorical, essentialist, and representational languages depic- ting Black life and experience. In contrast to ontological Blackness, I commend the racial discourse that bell hooks, a leading contemporary African American cultural critic, calls “postmodern Blackness”…. [which] recognizes that Black identities are continually being reconstituted as African Americans inhabit widely differentiated social spaces and communities of moral discourse… However, in many of the cultural studies that I examine, mostly philosophical and theological ones, “race” is often regarded as a topic in metaphysical ontology. In meta- physical ontology, “race” denotes essential properties (essences), such that to lack any one property renders one a member of a pseudospecies.4

### Case

#### The history of racism, while terrible, does not represent exceptional/gratuitous violence – white societies have produced equally excessive violence against one another – refuse their historiography because it relies on transforming an historically inaccurate claim about violence into an entire theory of ideology and subject formation

Coates 13

(Ta-Nehisi, senior editor for The Atlantic, “A Flawed America in Context”, February 13, 2013, http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/02/a-flawed-america-in-context/273546/)

Toward the end of our meal we began discussing how one can look at racism in history and avoid falling into depression. My answer was two-fold. 1) I enjoy the history for its own sake. I love history whether it has a political lesson to teach, or not. And 2) the history of white racism and its attendent victims is horrifying, but it should be seen in scale. A taste of what I mean: The fugitives who fled from the south after Nordlingen died of plague, hunger and exhaustion in the refugee camp at Frankfort or the overcrowded hospitals of Saxony; seven thousand were expelled from the cantons of Zurich because there was neither food no room for them, at Hanau the gates were closed against them, at Strasbourg they lay thick in the streets through the frosts of winter, so that by day the citizens stepped over their bodies, and by night lay awake listening to the groans of the sick and starving until the magistrates forcibly drove them out, thirty thousand of them. The Jesuits here and there fought manfully against the overwhelming distress; after the burning and desertion of Eichstatt they sought out the children who were hiding in the cellars, killing and eating rats, and carried them off to care for and educate them; at Hagenau they managed feed the poor out of their stores until the French troops raided their granary and took charge of the grain for the Army. By the irony of fate the wine harvest of 1634, which should have been excellent, was trampled down by fugitives, and invaders after Nordlingen; that of 635 suffered a like fate, and in the winter, from Wuttemberg to Lorraine, there raged the worst famine of many years. At Calw the pastor saw a woman gnawing on the raw flesh of a dead horse on which a hungry dog and some ravens were also feeding. In Alsace the bodies of criminals were torn from the gallows and devoured; in the whole Rhineland they watched the graveyards against marauders who sold the flesh of the newly buried for food; at Zweibrucken a woman confessed to having eater her child. Acorns, goats' skins, grass, were all cooked in Alsace; cats, dogs, and rats were sold in the market at Worms. In Fulda and Coburg and near Frankfort and the great refugee camp, men went in terror of being killed and eaten by those maddened by hunger... That is the great C.V. Wedgwood describing the last years of the Thirty Years War, in which eight million people died, and the population of "Germany" (to the extent it existed) was reduced by a third. One of my professors followed this up by noting that ten million Russians died in the first World War, and then 15 million more died in the second. When you study racism, with all its attendent woes, there is something comforting about those kind of numbers. It tells you that whatever you are struggling with here is not a deviation from the human experience, but an expression of it. There is very little that "white people" have done to "black people" that I can't imagine them doing to each other. America's particular failings are remarkable because America is remarkable, but they are not particularly deviant or outstanding on the misery index. This is just sort of what we do. The question hanging over us though is this: Is this what we what we will always do?

#### Their gut check response will be that gratuitous violence is internal to white society and that pre-colonization African societies were free of the violence produced by white culture – this claim is reactionary and historically inaccurate

Coates 13

(Ta-Nehisi, senior editor for The Atlantic, “A Flawed America in Context”, February 13, 2013, http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/02/a-flawed-america-in-context/273546/)

Lesson One: the rejection of the idea that history exists solely to bolster our self-esteem. Coming up, as I did, in a time when history was seen as the great weapon against racism, and in the shadow of a total denigration of black history, it was natural to try to erect a super-noble past. But at Howard I learned that this pose was ultimately reactionary, that no nobility was necessarily conveyed by having a boot on your neck, and that true humanism allowed all of history's actors the full range of features, both laudable and regrettable.

#### The American legal system and state are not inherently racist – their overly fatalistic narrative ignores massive progress and incorrectly assumes that the US uniquely represents a site of anti-blackness

Farber 98

(Daniel, Prof. of the Minnesota School of Law, “Is American Law Inherently Racist”, w/ Prof. Delgado, Berkeley Law Scholarship Repository, http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=facpubs)

Let me begin with the vision of the American legal system that Professor Delgado presented in his first twenty minutes. I do not intend to deny the reality of the dark side of American law in American legal history, and that dark side has indeed been very bad at times. Nevertheless, I think one might equally point to some more positive aspects of American legal society, and that we get only a skewed and incomplete picture if we focus only on one side of the picture: if we ignore the Thirteenth, 5 Fourteenth, 6 and Fifteenth 7 Amendments; if we ignore Brown v. Board of Education8" and the work of the Warren Court; if we ignore the Civil Rights Acts of 1964,' 9 1965,20 and 1990;2" and if we ignore or minimize the commitment to affirmative action that many American institutions, especially educational institutions, have had for the past two decades. I do not think you have to be a triumphalist to think that these are important developments-you only have to be a realist. Similarly, as serious as the problem of racial inequality remains in our society, it is also unrealistic to ignore the considerable amount of progress that has been made. Consider the emergence of the black middle class in the last generation or generation and a half, and the integration of important American institutions such as big-city police forces, which are important in the day-to-day lives of many minority people. The military has sometimes been described as the most successfully integrated institution in American society. We all know, as well, that the number of minority lawyers has risen substantially. In state and federal legislatures, there was no such thing as a black caucus in Congress thirty or forty years ago, because there would not have been enough black people present to call a caucus. And do not forget the considerable evidence of sharp changes in white attitudes over that period in a more favorable and tolerant direction. It is true that there is much in our history that we can only look back on with a feeling of shame, but there is also much to be proud of that we should not forget. I also think that the accusation that the American legal system is inherently racist lacks perspective in the sense that it seems to imply that there is something specifically American about this problem. If you look around the world, societies virtually everywhere are struggling with the problems of ethnic and cultural pluralism, and are trying to find ways to incorporate diverse groups into their governing structures. I think if you look around the world, including even countries like France which Professor Delgado referred to, it is far from clear that we are doing worse than the others. In some ways, I think we are doing considerably better than most.

#### The proper response to recurrent state/legal racism is protective measures – only legal reform can embed bulwarks against historical injustice

Delgado 98

(Richard, Jean N. Lindsley Professor of Law at the University of Colorado Law School, “Is American Law Inherently Racist”, Debate w/ Prof. Farber, Berkeley Law Scholarship Repository, http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=facpubs)

AUDIENCE: If we accept the premise that American law is inherently racist, what can be done about it? Where do we start? And related to that, how can an inherently racist law be made unracist, or are we just doomed to a perpetual battle to decrease the level of racism in our laws? PROFESSOR DELGADO: No. I don't think that it is a dispiriting or an overly pessimistic view, if one accepts the position-as I do, that American law is recurrently, inherently racist any more than, it is enervating to accept the proposition that the human body, let's say, is inherently frail. From which it follows then that one ought to take reasonable measures. One ought to wear safety belts, one ought to vaccinate children, and one does not simply give up from the recognition that something is inherently a difficulty or a problem. Vigilance is what is called for, not giving up. So no, I do not take the position that the inherent racism that seems to inflict our society requires any sort of surrender. Quite the contrary, it requires all of our efforts if we are to be the society that we can be and that we are in other respects. I will address this point later in my talk.

#### [if running short on time you can skip this] That turns the K – their assertion of an historically pure point of departure produces essentialism and re-creates the relations of domination they oppose – our aff overcomes their life-denying politics by building assemblages within the State that reverse relations of power to overcome relations of domination

We are all part of the institutions that oppress us – power relations work in multiple directions – ignoring the institutions that have power over us prevents it from being turned against itself – creates blackness as a subject position outside relationships of power – violence is called by other institutions, not by blackness – lots of bad stuff happens but there has been bad stuff black people do too and we’re all implicated in these – ignores the way it creates fissures

Newman ‘00, (Saul, Postdoctoral Fellow @ Macquarie University, “Anarchism and the Politics of Ressentiment”, muse)

Has anarchism as a political and social theory of revolution been invalidated because of the contradictions in its conception of human subjectivity? I do not think so. I have exposed a hidden strain of ressentiment in the essentialist categories and oppositional structures that inhabit anarchist discourse - in notions of a harmonious society governed by natural law and man's essential communality, and its opposition to the artificial law of the State. However I would argue that anarchism, if it can free itself from these essentialist and Manichean categories, can overcome the ressentiment that poisons and limits it. Classical anarchism is a politics of ressentiment because it seeks to overcome power. It sees power as evil, destructive, something that stultifies the full realization of the individual. Human essence is a point of departure uncontaminated by power, from which power is resisted. There is, as I have argued, a strict Manichean separation and opposition between the subject and power. However I have shown that this separation between the individual and power is itself unstable and threatened by a 'natural' desire for power - the power principle. Nietzsche would argue that this desire for power - will to power - is indeed 'natural', and it is the suppression of this desire that has had such a debilitating effect on man, turning him against himself and producing an attitude of ressentiment. However perhaps one could argue that this desire for power in man is produced precisely through attempts to deny or extinguish relations of power in the 'natural order'. Perhaps power may be seen in terms of the Lacanian Real - as that irrepressible lack that cannot be symbolized, and which always returns to haunt the symbolic order, disrupting any attempt by the subject to form a complete identity. For Jacques Lacan: "...the real is that which always comes back to the same place - to the place where the subject in so far as he thinks, where the res cogitans, does not meet it."[45] Anarchism attempts to complete the identity of the subject by separating him, in an absolute Manichean sense, from the world of power. The anarchist subject, as we have seen, is constituted in a 'natural' system that is dialectically opposed to the artificial world of power. Moreover because the subject is constituted in a 'natural' system governed by ethical laws of mutual cooperation, anarchists are able to posit a society free from relations of power, which will replace the State once it is overthrown. However, as we have seen, this world free of power is jeopardized by the desire for power latent in every individual. The more anarchism tries to free society from relations of power, the more it remains paradoxically caught up in power. Power here has returned as the real that haunts all attempts to free the world of power. The more one tries to repress power, the more obstinately it rears its head. This is because the attempts to deny power, through essentialist concepts of 'natural' laws and 'natural' morality, themselves constitute power, or at least are conditioned by relations of power. These essentialist identities and categories cannot be imposed without the radical exclusion of other identities. This exclusion is an act of power. If one attempts to radically exclude power, as the anarchists did, power 'returns' precisely in the structures of exclusion themselves. Nietzsche believes that this attempt to exclude and deny power is a form of ressentiment. So how does anarchism overcome this ressentiment that has shown to be so self destructive and life-denying? By positively affirming power, rather than denying it - to 'say yes' to power, as Nietzsche would put it. It is only by affirming power, by acknowledging that we come from the same world as power, not from a 'natural' world removed from it, and that we can never be entirely free from relations of power, that one can engage in politically-relevant strategies of resistance against power. This does not mean, of course, that anarchism should lay down its arms and embrace the State and political authority. On the contrary, anarchism can more effectively counter political domination by engaging with, rather than denying, power. Perhaps it is appropriate here to distinguish between relations of power and relations of domination. To use Michel Foucault's definition, power is a "mode of action upon the action of others."[46] Power is merely the effect of one's actions upon the actions of another. Nietzsche too sees power in terms of an effect without a subject: "... there is no being behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; 'the doer' is invented as an afterthought."[47] Power is not a commodity that can be possessed, and it cannot be centered in either the institution or the subject. It is merely a relationship of forces, forces that flow between different actors and throughout our everyday actions. Power is everywhere, according to Foucault.[48] Power does not emanate from institutions like the State - rather it is immanent throughout the entire social network, through various discourses and knowledges. For instance, rational and moral discourses, which anarchists saw as innocent of power and as weapons in the struggle against power, are themselves constituted by power relations and are embroiled in practices of power: "power and knowledge directly imply one another."[49] Power in this sense is productive rather than repressive. It is therefore senseless and indeed impossible to try to construct, as anarchists do, a world outside power. We will never be entirely free from relations of power. According to Foucault: "It seems to me that...one is never outside (power), that there are no margins for those who break with the system to gambol in."[50] However, just because one can never be free from power does not mean that one can never be free from domination. Domination must be distinguished from power in the following sense. For Foucault, relations of power become relations of domination when the free and unstable flow of power relations becomes blocked and congealed - when it forms unequal hierarchies and no longer allows reciprocal relationships.[51] These relations of domination form the basis of institutions such as the State. The State, according to Foucault, is merely an assemblage of different power relations that have become congealed in this way. This is a radically different way of looking at institutions such as the State. While anarchists see power as emanating from the State, Foucault sees the State as emanating from power. The State, in other words, is merely an effect of power relations that have crystallized into relations of domination. What is the point of this distinction between power and domination? Does this not bring us back to original anarchist position that society and our everyday actions, although oppressed by power, are ontologically separated from it? In other words, **why not merely call domination 'power'** once again, and revert back to the original, Manichean distinction between social life and power? However the **point of this distinction is to show that** this **essential separation is** now **impossible.** **Domination** -- oppressive political institutions like the State -- **now comes from the same world as power.** In other words it disrupts the strict Manichean separation of society and power. Anarchism and indeed radical politics generally, cannot remain in this comfortable illusion that we as political subjects, are somehow not complicit in the very regime that oppresses us. According to the Foucauldian definition of power that I have employed, we are all potentially complicit, through our everyday actions, in relations of domination. Our everyday actions, which inevitably involve power, are unstable and can easily form into relations that dominate us. **As political subjects** we can never relax and hide behind essentialist identities and Manichean structures -- behind a strict separation from the world of power. Rather **we must be constantly on our guard against the possibility of domination.** Foucault says: "My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous...If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism."[[52]](http://208.34.222.250/bin/rdas.dll/RDAS_SVR=muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v004/4.3newman.html#fn52) **In order to resist domination we must be aware of its risks** -- of the possibility that our own actions, even political action ostensibly against domination, can easily give rise to further domination. **There is always the possibility**, then, **of contesting domination**, and of minimizing its possibilities and effects. According to Foucault, **domination itself is unstable** and can give rise to reversals and resistance. Assemblages such as the State are based on unstable power relations that can just as easily turn against the institution they form the basis of. So there is always the possibility of resistance against domination. However resistance can never be in the form of revolution -- a grand dialectical overcoming of power, as the anarchists advocated. To abolish central institutions like the State with one stroke would be to neglect the multiform and diffuse relations of power they are based on, thus allowing new institutions and relations of domination to rise up**.** It would be to fall into the same reductionist trap as Marxism, and to court domination. Rather, **resistance must** **take the form of** what Foucault calls ***agonism*** -- an ongoing, strategic contestation with power -- based on mutual incitement and provocation -- **without any final hope of being free** from it.[[53]](http://208.34.222.250/bin/rdas.dll/RDAS_SVR=muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v004/4.3newman.html#fn53) **One can**, as I have argued, **never hope to overcome power** completely -- because every overcoming is itself the imposition of another regime of power. The **best** that can be hoped for **is a reorganization of power relations** -- through struggle and resistance -- in ways that are less oppressive and dominating. **Domination can therefore be minimized by acknowledging** our **inevitable involvement with power**, not by attempting to place ourselves impossibly outside the world of power. The classical idea of revolution as a dialectical overthrowing of power -- the image that has haunted the radical political imaginary -- must be abandoned. **We must recognize** the fact **that** power can never be overcome entirely**, and we must affirm this by working within** this world, **renegotiating our position to enhance** our possibilities of **freedom.**

#### All of their root cause and alt solvency args are epistemologically flawed – they presume that policies with racially disparate outcomes are produced by white institutional control – that allows them to neglect more complex policy issues about constituency formation and different interest groups with a neat narrative about the historical evolution of racism – in reality, non-white groups play an important role in advocating for policies with negative/racially disparate impacts

This position ignores

Farber 98

(Daniel, Prof. of the Minnesota School of Law, “Is American Law Inherently Racist”, w/ Prof. Delgado, Berkeley Law Scholarship Repository, http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=facpubs)

PROFESSOR FARBER: I thought I would begin by saying a little more about the criminal justice system since that came up. I think the discussion illustrates some of the problems that we fall into in this kind of debate. One would think from much of the literature, at least in law reviews, that stringent law enforcement against drugs and street crimes is a majority culture imposition. One might also get the \*384 impression that if members of minority groups had their way, those police would be pulled off the streets and instead would be patrolling the halls of Microsoft and General Motors looking for antitrust violations or consumer frauds. The reality is quite different. There was a Gallop Poll, for example, in 1993 that reported the following about public opinions among Blacks: eighty-two percent thought the courts in their area did not treat criminals harshly enough, seventy-five percent of Blacks favored putting more police on the streets to combat crime, and sixty-eight percent favored building more prisons so that longer sentences could be given. [FN31] The crack cocaine law, which I think Professor Delgado and I both disapprove of, originated in the House Committee on Narcotic Abuse and Control, which was chaired by a black congressman from Harlem. So, even when a racial impact may seem problematic to some of us, it does not necessarily follow that it should be interpreted as simply one group dominating another. This has also been true historically in America with immigration, in which immigration restrictions have been favored both by xenophobic natives and also by recent immigrants and their descendants, who are disturbed by the disruption and competition from further immigration. And that has been true both today and as far back as the early 1900's, when unions fought for restrictions on immigration to protect American workers. The dynamics of these things are just a lot more complicated than the simple reference to racism makes it appear.

#### Even if true, assumptions that the law/state are inherently racist collapse aff solvency – they foreground the assumption of racism, which turns debate and dialogue into a witch hunt to determine which kind of racism people are guilty of – this assumption of guilt and hopelessness of reform collapses coalitions and public dialogue on racism that are pre-requisites to solvency

Farber 98

(Daniel, Prof. of the Minnesota School of Law, “Is American Law Inherently Racist”, w/ Prof. Delgado, Berkeley Law Scholarship Repository, http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=facpubs)

Finally, and I think perhaps this is the most significant practical problem, the inherent racism approach is not a step toward bringing us to seriously confront the problems that our society has. In fact, I think it is taking us down a false path. The dynamics of the concept of inherent racism has several unfortunate effects. First of all, among even its adherents, it leads to a kind of "witch hunt" mentality, in which people are constantly searching for more and more subtle forms of racism among themselves, among their opponents in the legal system generally, and so forth. As a result, people invest their time combing the Internal Revenue Code for deductions that might seem more favorable to one group than another group, rather than looking at what is the stark and overwhelming problem-not how people's income is taxed but who is earning how much and why. So we become more and more obsessed with looking for more and more subtle flaws. Furthermore, at least in the hands of some of the practitioners or adherents to this position, it leads to a breakdown in debate, even both among people who are essentially on the liberal side of the spectrum and in disputes with their opponents. For example, consider the attacks on liberals like Randy Kennedy, a black professor on the Harvard Law School faculty. We see how people, who are in some sense fundamentally allies, who all support affirmative action and think racial problems are very important, find it impossible to hold a discussion because of this search for motives, hidden agendas, and biases. We see the same thing within critical legal studies in which two figures in the movement, Mark Tushnet and Gary Peller, bludgeoned each other in the pages of the Georgetown Law Journal 25 about their motivations and potential racism, etc. I do not think that is the way we can move forward. This thesis also has been destructive of dialogue with outsiders, with the rest of American society, with people who are not already believers in critical race theory or the inherent racism of American society and law. For example, at my own law school, a young member of our faculty, Jim Chen, wrote an article about racial intermarriage 6 that was considered to be inappropriate by some other minority group members. An entire issue27 of the Iowa Law Review was published, dedicated not only to criticizing his views, which I think was entirely appropriate, but to speculations about the kinds of twisted motives that could lead a member of a minority group to take a position other than the approved critical race theory position. That is not the way for us to move forward. We also see this in the attacks, of which we heard a distant echo from Professor Delgado earlier, on Daniel Moynihan, who has been a staunch liberal, strongly concerned about minorities during his entire career, and yet has been anathemized for making what were considered to be politically incorrect statements. I do not think this is going to lead us forward. And finally, what I fear the most is the response that seemed to be implied by one of the audience questions earlier. If it is true that American society is inherently racist, doesn't that mean that it is essentially hopeless? Now this conclusion does not logically follow from that premise, any more than it logically follows that if certain character traits have a genetic basis then it is hopeless to do anything about them. But nevertheless, we all recognize that when we are talking about individuals and biology, these genetic theories tend to discourage the idea of reform, and tend to reinforce, as a matter of social reality, the view that any bad behavior that we see is just inherent. I think we can expect to see the same kind of thing when we are dealing with the sociological equivalent involving the claim that there is this inherent genetic flaw in American society. You can see this most clearly in Derrick Bell's writings, which are redolent of despair and which, in that respect, curiously resemble Robert Bork's writings, who is similarly convinced that the genetic flaws of American society will prevent it from ever achieving his vision of justice.

## 2NC

#### Constraints don’t kill creativity, they create a safe space where greater creativity can be explored. Jazz proves

Van Hecke, Licensed clinical psychologist, 10

(The Brain Advantage: Become a More Effective Business Leader Using the Latest Brain Research, pg. 24)

Does that mean that leaders should proclaim free zones where innovators have no constraints? For example, should they be encouraged to ignore the practical realities of cost production or even the company’s strategic plan as they dream up new products and services? Well, no. The fact is that Jazz artists do have constraints. The genre of “jazz” has its own rules. There are many moves that an accomplished artist would not make during the improvisation of a particular piece. The Jazz artist who excels doesn’t have to think consciously about those rules. Rather than restricting innovation, these constraints free creativity because jazz musicians know that within those rules, they can try innovation they like. If not overly suffocating, constraints won’t destroy creativity – just the opposite – they create a safe space within which the jazz artist can wander at will

#### Absent questions of engagement with existing institutions their aff is useless – individual change is overshadowed by dominant structures

Wight – Professor of IR @ University of Sydney – 6

(Colin, Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology, pgs. 48-50

One important aspect of this relational ontology is that these relations constitute our identity as social actors. According to this relational model of societies, one is what one is, by virtue of the relations within which one is embedded. A worker is only a worker by virtue of his/her relationship to his/her employer and vice versa. ‘Our social being is constituted by relations and our social acts presuppose them.’ At any particular moment in time an individual may be implicated in all manner of relations, each exerting its own peculiar causal effects. This ‘lattice-work’ of relations constitutes the structure of particular societies and endures despite changes in the individuals occupying them. Thus, the relations, the structures, are ontologically distinct from the individuals who enter into them. At a minimum, the social sciences are concerned with two distinct, although mutually interdependent, strata. There is an ontological difference between people and structures: ‘people are not relations, societies are not conscious agents’. Any attempt to explain one in terms of the other should be rejected. If there is an ontological difference between society and people, however, we need to elaborate on the relationship between them. Bhaskar argues that we need a system of mediating concepts, encompassing both aspects of the duality of praxis into which active subjects must fit in order to reproduce it: that is, a system of concepts designating the ‘point of contact’ between human agency and social structures. This is known as a ‘positioned practice’ system. In many respects, the idea of ‘positioned practice’ is very similar to Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*. Bourdieu is primarily concerned with what individuals do in their daily lives. He is keen to refute the idea that social activity can be understood solely in terms of individual decision-making, or as determined by surpa-individual objective structures. Bourdieu’s notion of the *habitus* can be viewed as a bridge-building exercise across the explanatory gap between two extremes. Importantly, the notion of a habitus can only be understood in relation to the concept of a ‘social field’. According to Bourdieu, a social field is ‘a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined’. A social field, then, refers to a structured system of social positions occupied by individuals and/or institutions – the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants. This is a social field whose form is constituted in terms of the relations which define it as a field of a certain type. A *habitus* (positioned practices) is a mediating link between individuals’ subjective worlds and the socio-cultural world into which they are born and which they share with others. The power of the habitus derives from the thoughtlessness of habit and habituation, rather than consciously learned rules. The habitus is imprinted and encoded in a socializing process that commences during early childhood. It is inculcated more by experience than by explicit teaching. Socially competent performances are produced as a matter of routine, without explicit reference to a body of codified knowledge, and without the actors necessarily knowing what they are doing (in the sense of being able adequately to explain what they are doing). As such, the *habitus* can be seen as the site of ‘internalization of reality and the externalization of internality.’ Thus social practices are produced in, and by, the encounter between: (1) the *habitus* and its dispositions; (2) the constraints and demands of the socio-cultural field to which the habitus is appropriate or within; and (3) the dispositions of the individual agents located within both the socio-cultural field and the *habitus*. When placed within Bhaskar’s stratified complex social ontology the model we have is as depicted in Figure 1. The explanation of practices will require all three levels. Society, as field of relations, exists prior to, and is independent of, individual and collective understandings at any particular moment in time; that is, social action requires the conditions for action. Likewise, given that behavior is seemingly recurrent, patterned, ordered, institutionalised, and displays a degree of stability over time, there must be sets of relations and rules that govern it. Contrary to individualist theory, these relations, rules and roles are not dependent upon either knowledge of them by particular individuals, or the existence of actions by particular individuals; that is, their explanation cannot be reduced to consciousness or to the attributes of individuals. These emergent social forms must possess emergent powers. This leads on to arguments for the reality of society based on a causal criterion. Society, as opposed to the individuals that constitute it, is, as Foucault has put it, ‘a complex and independent reality that has its own laws and mechanisms of reaction, its regulations as well as its possibility of disturbance. This new reality is society…It becomes necessary to reflect upon it, upon its specific characteristics, its constants and its variables’.

## 1NR

### 1NR !

**They have no offense—ontological blackness reinforces racial ideology, placing a radical limit on the subjectivity available to african americans—our counter-educational approach interrupts dominant identity construction, making possible individual articulations of identity which can creates coalitions for non-dogmatic resistance—voting negative solves all their impact arguments while avoiding our essentialism DA.**

AnthonyB. **Pinn**, Religious Studies at Macalester, **2004.**“‘‘Black Is, Black Ain’t’’: Victor Anderson, African American Theological Thought, and Identity,” Dialog: A Journal of Theology . Volume 43, Number 1

It is in this segment of Anderson’s text that one first encounters his critique of ontological blackness. Albeit passionate and reasoned, Anderson argues that versions of this argument from the likes of David Walker, Maria Stewart, and Reverdy Ransom inadvertently re-enforced racial ideologies, thereby damaging life options available to African Americans. That is to say, only activities mirroring and advancing this particular sense of Black genius are acceptable; other activities exist outside of ‘‘Black life.’’ In a very real way African American collective identity so defined creates internal conflict because individual desires and styles are always subject to the Black ‘‘party- line.’’ The ‘‘conscious lives of blacks are experienced as bound by unresolved binary dialectics of slavery and freedom, negro and citizen, insider and outsider, black and white, struggle and survival.’’8 Viewing these issues from the context of overtly religious thought, it is reasonable to say that Black religious studies participates in this ideological game by demonstrating the uniqueness of Black religion in opposition to White religious expression. Ontologi- cal blackness denotes a provincial or ‘clan-ness’ understanding of Black collective life, one that is synonymous with Black genius and its orthodox activities and attitudes. Race is reified, that is, treated as an ‘‘objectively existing category independent of historically contingent factors and subjective inten- tions in the writings of historical and contemporary African American cultural and religious thinkers.…’’9 To avoid this dilemma, African American criticism must be pragmatic enough to subvert all racial dis- course and ‘‘cultural idolatry,’’ and sensitive enough to appreciate diverse and utopian or transcendent visions of life.10 When this is done, both the friction between cultural and religious criticism highlighted by Said and preoccupation with blackness—phys- ically and culturally—are resolved. Room is made for a religiously informed cultural criticism.

**Refusing the essentialism of black liberation theology does not mean that our alternative precludes acknowledging the importance of race—voting negative is an endorsement of liberation theology which avoids the pitfalls of ascribing only one appropriate identity for those who would resist oppression.**

AnthonyB. **Pinn**, Religious Studies at Macalester, **2004.**

“‘‘Black Is, Black Ain’t’’: Victor Anderson, African American Theological Thought, and Identity,” Dialog: A Journal of Theology . Volume 43, Number 1

Black liberation and Womanist theologies have fostered an optimism I find untenable, particularly in light of the continuing history of oppression that seems to mutate but maintain its strength. I would like to theologically temper this with an assertion: efforts toward social and personal transformation are based on individual will and the guiding influence of communal norms. This does not, however, entail a sense of defeatism nor is it nihilistic in nature. Rather, I would label it a measured realism. Within this system of ethics is a continuing concern with liberation (the ability to thrive on multiple levels of identity in healthy ways, simultaneously—complex subjectivity) and it requires struggle against all forms of oppression and injustice that serve to reify human identities, limiting them to narrow and truncated notions of being. It is understood that struggle may not result in the desired results. However, as I have argued elsewhere, success within this system of ethics is not defined by outcomes—the formal ending of racism, sexism, etc. In the place of this outcome driven system, my proposed ethical outlook locates success in the process, and in this way it requires a reformulation of religious language and grammar. That is to say, we continue to work toward liber- ation and maintain this effort because we have the potential to effect change, measuring the value of our work not in the product but in the process of struggle itself. The development of complex identity that entails the removal of oppressive structures is the norm; perpetual rebellion is the process. Within this struggle, the traditional dualism of ‘‘good’’ and ‘‘evil’’ are unreliable and problematic. Such sharp distinctions tend to foster disillusion- ment when the ‘‘good’’ are found guilty of participa- tion in ‘‘moral evil.’’ This rather absolutist distinction between these two—good and evil— does not allow for the recognition that all humanity is capable of both, and, what is more, are guilty of both.18

While I agree with Sharon Welch’s reluctance to think individuals and groups will ‘‘behave’’ in liber- ating ways, based upon existing foundations for moral and ethical activity, I disagree with her assumption that traditional ‘‘others’’ in the United States—women, African Americans, etc.,—have power and now must rethink their approach to social transformation based on their altered positions within the existing power structures. From my per- spective, the ‘‘enemies’’ are the same, their tactics and conversation have changed. Her appeal to discontent and disillusioned ‘‘baby boomers’’ does not, I believe, accurately note the manner in which many of those who represent the ‘‘other’’ continue to have little control over their surroundings. Keep in mind recent court decisions, prison statistics and college entrance rates.

Therefore, our system of ethics needs to reflect this risk and a reformulation of moral success and improvement, but not based on a chan- ging position of once oppressed folks—oppressed/ oppressors—but because the moral center, God, that guided and guaranteed moral action is no more. The change is premised on theological alterations as opposed to the socioeconomic and political reposi- tioning of ‘‘baby boomers who really do have power now and are grappling with the challenges of using it well.’’19 Furthermore, if we take Anderson’s push for complexity and diversity in the quest for fulfillment seriously, it raises questions concern black religion’s nature and modalities of expression. Hence, I sug- gest here what I have argued elsewhere; a sense of black individual and communal identity must also recognize the various ways in which African Ameri- cans express themselves religiously.20 Not all African Americans are Christian, nor are they even theistic; included within the African American community are agnostics, atheists, practitioners of traditional religions such as Santeria and Vodun. A proper understanding of African American identity must recognize this level of diversity. To deny this reli- gious richness is to harm African American identity, and to fail to recognize the manner in which so much of what we label ‘black’ religion involves a push for greater subjectivity, a complex subjectivity refined in the context of community.

### AT: Permutation

**Our alternative agrees with all of the affirmative except for the dogmatic notion of subjectivity upon which their project is grounded—only looking outside of the narrow confines black Christianity to a notion of grotesque genius can solve.**

AnthonyB. **Pinn**, Religious Studies at Macalester, **1997.**

“Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism. - book reviews,” African American Review, Summer 1997

In the final chapter of this book, by thinking through the encounter of European genius and the grotesque, Anderson explores ways to avoid ontological blackness and heroic genius that reduce Black life to race. The former, with its heroic epic, meets its match in the aesthetic categories of tragedy and the grotesque genius revived and espoused by Friedrich Nietzsche. The grotesque genius serves as an effective counter-discourse that enlarges the scope of life to embrace both the" light" and "dark" aspects of existence insofar as it holds in tension oppositional sensations--pleasure and pain, freedom and oppression. Applied to African Americans, the grotesque embodies the full range of Black all expressions, actions, attitudes, and behaviors. With a hermeneutic of the grotesque as the focus of religious and cultural criticism, such criticism is free from the totalizing nature of racial apologetics and the classical Black aesthetic. By extension, criticism and Black theology are then able to address both issues of survival and the larger goal of cultural fulfillment.

Anderson's hermeneutical use of fulfillment and the grotesque is intriguing, thought-provoking, and deserving of additional exploration. Subsequent work on this topic should clarify African American grotesquery, cultural fulfillment, and the nature and applications of religio-cultural criticism. I, for example, assume that Anderson's religio-cultural criticism requires a stronger response to the restricted canon of religious experience of Black religious studies. Recognition, in this way, of African American religiosity outside Christian churches would be an invaluable piece of reconstructive criticism and would serve as a significant step toward fulfillment. It is important that Anderson, whatever issue he next tackles, maintain fulfillment's mosaic structure and fluidity, and that his religio-cultural criticism not succumb to cultural paranoia. My personal queries aside, Anderson has undertaken an important work, and my call for clarification does not bring into question its merit. His analysis of the false basis of Black epistemology is convincing, and both his form of criticism and hermeneutical tool are invaluable. This text is academically rigorous, intellectually creative, and ideologically unsettling in a fruitful way. Beyond Ontological Blackness, in short, is a welcome challenge to existing paradigms. The serious student of African American life cannot ignore it.

### 1NR Solves Case

**our postmodern critique makes possible a black theology free of their totalizating notion of ontological blackness while still allowing for strategic utilization of blackness as one of many identities available to those who resist oppression—we solve all their offense, there is only a risk of a link.**

AnthonyB. **Pinn**, Religious Studies at Macalester, **2004.**

“‘‘Black Is, Black Ain’t’’: Victor Anderson, African American Theological Thought, and Identity,” Dialog: A Journal of Theology . Volume 43, Number 1

At the heart of this dilemma is friction between ontological blackness and ‘‘contemporary postmo- dern black life’’—issues, for example related to ‘‘selecting marriage partners, exercising freedom of movement, acting on gay and lesbian preferences, or choosing political parties.’’15 How does one foster balance while embracing difference as positive? Anderson looks to Nietzsche.

European genius, complete with its heroic epic, met its match in the aesthetic categories of tragedy and the grotesque genius revived and espoused by Friedreich Nietzsche. The grotesque genius served as an effective counter-discourse by embracing both the ‘light’ and ‘dark’ aspects of life, and holding in tension oppositional sensations—pleasure and pain, freedom and oppression.16 Utilizing Nietzsche’s work, Anderson ask: ‘‘what should African Ameri- can cultural and religious criticism look like when they are no longer romantic in inspiration and the cult of heroic genius is displaced by the grotesquery—full range of expression, actions, atti- tudes, behaviors everything found in African American life—of contemporary black expressive culture and public life?’’17

Applied to African Americans, the grotesque embodies the full range of African American life—all expressions, actions, attitudes, and behav- ior. With a hermeneutic of the grotesque as the foci, religio-cultural criticism is free from the total- izing nature of racial apologetics and the classical Black aesthetic. By extension, Black theology is able to address both issues of survival (Anderson sees their importance.) and the larger goal of cultural fulfillment, Anderson’s version of liberation. That is to say, placing ‘‘blackness’’ along side other indi- cators of identity allows African Americans to define themselves in a plethora of ways while main- taining their community status. This encourages African Americans to see themselves as they are— complex and diversified—no longer needing to surrender personal interests for the sake of mono- lithic collective status.

### AT: Ontology First

#### Privileging ontology doesn’t implicate any of our arguments

Owen, ’02

[University of Southampton, David Owen, Reader of Political Theory @ The Univ. of Southampton, Millennium Vol. 31 No. 3 2002 Pg. 655-7]

Commenting on the ‘philosophical turn’ in IR, Wæver remarks that ‘[a] frenzy for words like “epistemology” and “ontology” often signals this philosophical turn’, although he goes on to comment that these terms are often used loosely.4 However, loosely deployed or not, it is clear that debates concerning ontology and epistemology play a central role in the contemporary IR theory wars. In one respect, this is unsurprising since it is a characteristic feature of the social sciences that periods of disciplinary disorientation involve recourse to reflection on the philosophical commitments of different theoretical approaches, and there is no doubt that such reflection can play a valuable role in making explicit the commitments that characterise (and help individuate) diverse theoretical positions. Yet, such a philosophical turn is not without its dangers and I will briefly mention three before turning to consider a confusion that has, I will suggest, helped to promote the IR theory wars by motivating this philosophical turn. The first danger with the philosophical turn is that it has an inbuilt tendency to prioritise issues of ontology and epistemology over explanatory and/or interpretive power as if the latter two were merely a simple function of the former. But while the explanatory and/or interpretive power of a theoretical account is not wholly independent of its ontological and/or epistemological commitments (otherwise criticism of these features would not be a criticism that had any value), it is by no means clear that it is, in contrast, wholly dependent on these philosophical commitments. Thus, for example, one need not be sympathetic to rational choice theory to recognise that it can provide powerful accounts of certain kinds of problems, such as the tragedy of the commons in which dilemmas of collective action are foregrounded. It may, of course, be the case that the advocates of rational choice theory cannot give a good account of why this type of theory is powerful in accounting for this class of problems (i.e., how it is that the relevant actors come to exhibit features in these circumstances that approximate the assumptions of rational choice theory) and, if this is the case, it is a philosophical weakness—but this does not undermine the point that, for a certain class of problems, rational choice theory may provide the best account available to us. In other words, while the critical judgement of theoretical accounts in terms of their ontological and/or epistemological sophistication is one kind of critical judgement, it is not the only or even necessarily the most important kind. The second danger run by the philosophical turn is that because prioritisation of ontology and epistemology promotes theory-construction from philosophical first principles, it cultivates a theory-driven rather than problem-driven approach to IR. Paraphrasing Ian Shapiro, the point can be put like this: since it is the case that there is always a plurality of possible true descriptions of a given action, event or phenomenon, the challenge is to decide which is the most apt in terms of getting a perspicuous grip on the action, event or phenomenon in question given the purposes of the inquiry; yet, from this standpoint, ‘theory-driven work is part of a reductionist program’ in that it ‘dictates always opting for the description that calls for the explanation that flows from the preferred model or theory’.5 The justification offered for this strategy rests on the mistaken belief that it is necessary for social science because general explanations are required to characterise the classes of phenomena studied in similar terms. However, as Shapiro points out, this is to misunderstand the enterprise of science since ‘whether there are general explanations for classes of phenomena is a question for social-scientific inquiry, not to be prejudged before conducting that inquiry’.6 Moreover, this strategy easily slips into the promotion of the pursuit of generality over that of empirical validity. The third danger is that the preceding two combine to encourage the formation of a particular image of disciplinary debate in IR—what might be called (only slightly tongue in cheek) ‘the Highlander view’—namely, an image of warring theoretical approaches with each, despite occasional temporary tactical alliances, dedicated to the strategic achievement of sovereignty over the disciplinary field. It encourages this view because the turn to, and prioritisation of, ontology and epistemology stimulates the idea that there can only be one theoretical approach which gets things right, namely, the theoretical approach that gets its ontology and epistemology right. This image feeds back into IR exacerbating the first and second dangers, and so a potentially vicious circle arises.