EUROCENTRISM, ETHNOCENTRISM, AND MISERY OF POSITION: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN EUROPE – A PROBLEMATIC OVERSIGHT*

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Abstract: Since the 1980s, International Relations (IR) scholars have emphasised the ‘geo-epistemological’ dynamics underpinning the global structuration of discipline diversity. By focusing mainly on the study of ‘American’ and ‘non-Western’ IR, this debate has given little attention to the voices, perspectives, and practices of those scholars who study IR in Europe. This article aims reflexively to question the identity dynamics of the marginalisation of European cases in the debate about diversity and hegemony in International Relations. Using anthropological and sociological tools, such as the idea of ‘misery of position’ developed by Pierre Bourdieu, it explores the postcolonial and eurocentric narratives that can explain this situation, while also putting forward why assuming a balanced ethnocentric stance would provide a more appropriate relational model to promote pluralism.

Keywords: eurocentrism; ethnocentrism; International Relations in Europe; sociology of science; anthropology of science

This article takes as a starting point the marginality of works focusing on Europe in the discussion of diversity and the circulation of knowledge in International Relations (IR) globally. On the one hand, although American parochialism and eurocentrism are described as the two main issues impeding the advent of a truly global IR, the concrete manifestations of contemporary eurocentrism among European scholars have been the focus of very little academic inquiry in comparison to the study of American parochialism.¹ On the other hand, although European scholars have made

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some contributions that are being closely followed and discussed in other parts of the world – such as the Copenhagen School or the English School, and indirectly, with a significant number of European Social Theorists (Foucault, Bourdieu…) being applied to the study of IR – the literature examining the specific contributions produced by the different IR communities worldwide has mainly focused on the contributions emerging from the so-called ‘Global South’. Publications focusing on European national cases do exist, but they are mainly grounded in the literature related to those country-specific cases without connecting to the broader debate regarding hegemony versus diversity in the discipline. In fact, those focal points appear to be reserved exclusively for US and ‘non-Western’ cases.

The fact that the study of European cases is marginalised is even more surprising considering the ‘global dialogic’ and reflexive stances that are increasingly being taken in the literature. Indeed, while the search for dialogue throughout the discipline is commonly embarked upon, the way the literature focusing on European IR approaches the duality of the ‘dia’logue appears dubious, as the mapping of the specificities mainly concerns IR produced outside of Europe, without acknowledging the fact that little is known about the voices, perspectives, and practices of those scholars who study IR on the European continent. As a result, apart from the famous European schools mentioned above, other potential contributions are lost in terms


