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**State Personhood, Reality or Fiction?
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C. Escudé (1994) and A. Wendt (2004)**

Carlos Escudé

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State Personhood, Reality or Fiction? The Divergent Views of C. Escudé (1994) and A. Wendt (2004)*

By Carlos Escudé**

ABSTRACT - This paper counterpoises Carlos Escudé's 1994, 1995 and 1997 treatment of anthropomorphic metaphors of the state, with Alexander Wendt's 2004 treatment of the same subject. It stresses the need for a historical memory in IR scholarship, suggesting that the lack of an epistemological equivalent to the concept of 'discovery' in the harder sciences may open the way for less-than-scholarly attitudes towards precedents, making the accumulation of knowledge less likely. It discusses whether or not state personhood is actually a fiction. Finally, it explores the consequences, for IR theory in general and peripheral realist theory in particular, of state personhood being indeed a harmful fiction. The author argues that if anthropomorphisms of the state lead to fallacy, then Hedley Bull's domestic analogy is likewise fallacious. And if this is the case, the hierarchy of the structure of the interstate system is exposed, together with Waltz's error in postulating an anarchy.

Introduction: The problem of 'discovery' in IR theory

I 'discovered' that state personhood is a fiction that can oftentimes lead to flawed logic and foreign policy manipulation in the mid 1980s, when I was called by a radio reporter for an on-the-air interview on the subject of the left-of-center economic policies of Argentina vis-à-vis its sovereign debt. The reporter asked for my opinion regarding the utterings of a high official who had stated that it was intolerable that Argentina be on its knees before the International Monetary Fund. I answered that, not being an economist, I did not feel authorized to voice my opinions on debt policy, but that there was one thing I was absolutely sure of: Argentina has no knees. The reporter was stunned, and after a silence of several seconds that must have seemed endless to the radio audience, his line of questioning noticeably shifted from a state-centric, anthropomorphic discourse focused on the national humiliation of bowing to IMF directives, to one focused on the tangible consequences of different policy alternatives for the citizens of Argentina.

It was soon clear to me not only that the phenomenon of the state-as-person fiction went well beyond everyday parlance, but also that it impregnated theoretical discourse and that, lo and behold, it had been studied before. A little library research brought to my attention David G.

* The author's opinions are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of Universidad del CEMA.

** Investigador Principal, CONICET, and Director, CEIEG.

Hale's work on the 'analogy of the body politic'¹ and E.H. Carr's discussion, not quite *en passant*, of the 'fiction of the group-person'.²

Indeed, Hale focused on anthropomorphic political metaphors in the context of English Renaissance literature. Carr, in turn, actually defended the use of anthropomorphisms in relation to the state, attacking the 'utopians' that, in his day, were dead against them. In so doing, in his 1939 classic, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, he mentioned the well-known name of Léon Duguit, who in his 1927 *Traité de droit constitutionnel* had called the state-as-person fiction a 'valueless and meaningless anthropomorphism'.³

Obviously, thought I, there is nothing new under the sun. But no less obvious was the total lack of a historical memory in the social sciences. And this phenomenon was relevant far beyond the moral issue of due credit. Although, epistemologically, the social sciences may be very far away from other scientific fields in terms of the possibility of 'discovery', they are even further away than need be if, because of the careless attitude of scholars, past developments are ignored and eventually forgotten. Thus, its practitioners become not only less 'scientific' than their peers in other sciences, but also less scholarly than their reputation assumes and their social role demands.

With the benefit of hindsight, this realization is all the more dramatic in the present year of 2010. Indeed, my intuition of the mid-1980s with regard to the cognitive distortions generated by the state-as-person fiction, both in international politics and in IR theories, had immediate consequences for my scholarly production. I published papers and book chapters on state personhood in 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1997, in both Spanish and English, not only through 'obscure' Third World institutions but also through less obscure ones such as Harvard University.⁴ Yet in his 2004 article "The State as Person in International Theory",⁵ Alexander Wendt ignores the sum total of my work on the subject, as well as that of Léon Duguit, E.H. Carr and D.G. Hale. And anonymous disciples of Wendt whose work was sent to me

¹ D.G. Hale, *The Body Politic: A Political Metaphor in English Renaissance Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

² E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 147-149.

³ Léon Duguit, *Traité de droit constitutionnel* (Paris : E. de Boccard, 1927), vol. I, chap. 5.

⁴ For Escudé's publications on the state-as-person fiction in English in the United States, see "The Anthropomorphic Fallacy in International Relations Discourse", Working Paper #94-6, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, August 1994, and chapter 2 of *Foreign Policy Theory in Menem's Argentina* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997). For his publications on the same subject in Argentina, see chapter 2 of "International Relations Theory: A Peripheral Perspective", Universidad Torcuato Di Tella *Working Paper* Nº 1, June 1993; "La falacia antropomorfa en el discurso de las relaciones internacionales", *América Latina/Internacional* (FLACSO/Buenos Aires), Vol. 2:1 (Fall/Winter 1995), pp. 95-121, and chapter 2 of *El realismo de los Estados débiles: la política exterior del primer gobierno Menem frente a la teoría de las relaciones internacionales*, Buenos Aires: GEL, 1995.

⁵ Alexander Wendt, "The State as Person in International Theory", *Review of International Studies* 30 (2004), pp. 289-316.

for review by scholarly journals continue to display this curious obliviousness to previous work on the subject.⁶

On the other hand, this is not a case in which the kinship of two authors' line of enquiry is not apparent. Indeed, the first paragraph of Chapter 2 of my 1997 *Foreign Policy Theory in Menem's Argentina* (which with only slight revisions reproduced my 1994 Harvard paper, "The Anthropomorphic Fallacy in International Relations Discourse") began:

"This chapter deals with the often unnoticed practical and theoretical consequences of the anthropomorphic language used when referring to states as being, for example, 'weak' or 'strong' actors who 'suffer,' are 'honored,' are 'humiliated,' have 'pride' and aspire to 'glory.'"⁷

And the abstract to my 1994 Harvard paper added: "The anthropomorphic fallacy has been identified in the discourse of educators and practitioners, as well as in that of first rate theorists such as Hedley Bull, Robert Keohane,

⁶ It is not that Escudé's work on the anthropomorphic fallacy went totally without notice in the Anglo-American world. Among the English-language scholarly citations published before Wendt's 2004 paper, I have identified the following books and articles. From Benedict Kingsbury, "Sovereignty and Inequality", in Andrew Hurrell and Ngaire Woods (eds.), *Inequality, Globalization and World Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 69: "For a sweeping critique of 'the anthropomorphic fallacy in international relations discourse', see Carlos Escudé, *Foreign Policy Theory...*, 30-31." From Arlene B. Tickner, "Hearing Latin American Voices in International Relations Studies", *International Studies Perspectives*, 4 (2003), pp. 332-333: "Classical realism's emphasis upon the state and the national interest defined in terms of power, is especially problematic when applied to the periphery, given that state-centric approaches fail to specify the subject that state actions serve, and can legitimate specific group interests over others. Escudé describes this common tendency to present the state-as-person, in isolation from the particular interests represented therein, as the 'anthropomorphic fallacy' (49:1995)." From Nora Femenia, *National Identity in Times of Crises: The Scripts of the Falklands-Malvinas War* (Commack, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p. 37: "For (William) Bloom, (1990:58) the nation-state as the larger collective identity has the ultimate or transcending claim on its people's loyalty, and therefore it is connected with constructing the mythological script of nationality in some basic ways. For Kull this transindividual entity (1991:20) is seen as an anthropomorphic being having wishes, needs and intentions that may require war. When the transindividual entity is a collective entity such as a nation, it is still depicted as having (...) anthropomorphic qualities, such as when it is said that 'the nation's pride is injured.' Escudé (1994) (calls) this attribution of qualities (...) the 'anthropomorphic fallacy'". See also Jacques E. C. Hymans, "Applying Social Identity Theory to the Study of International Politics: A Caution and an Agenda", paper presented at the International Studies Association convention, New Orleans, Louisiana, March 24-27, 2002, p. 17; and Houchang Chehabi, "Dress Codes for Men in Turkey and Iran", in Touraj Atabaki and Erik Jan Zürcher (eds.), *Men of order: authoritarian modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (I.B.Tauris, 2004), p. 236. The anthropomorphic fallacy is also mentioned in some of the English-language scholarly reviews of *Foreign Policy Theory in Menem's Argentina*. Needless to say, in Spanish there were many more references to this conceptual development.

⁷ C. Escudé 1997, p. 22.

Stephen Krasner, Joseph Nye and Kenneth Waltz".⁸ Needless to say, all of these examples were developed in my 1997 book.

Notwithstanding, the first paragraph of Wendt's 2004 paper on the state-as-person, written a full decade after my first analysis of the phenomenon, began:

"To say that states are 'actors' or 'persons' is to attribute to them properties we associate first with human beings – rationality, identities, interests, beliefs, and so on. Such attributions pervade social science and International Relations (IR) scholarship in particular. They are found in the work of realists, liberals, institutionalists, Marxists, constructivists, behaviouralists, feminists, postmodernists, international lawyers, and almost everyone in between."

Wendt's ignorance of predecessors in the field is candidly acknowledged when he states:

"Given (the widespread personification of the state in theoretical discourse), one might expect state personhood to be the subject of considerable IR scholarship, but Arnold Wolfers' classic 1959 essay long remained the only sustained modern treatment of which I am aware.⁹ Recently several other relevant contributions have been made, although none focuses on state personhood as such."¹⁰

And a few lines down the road, Wendt presents himself as the pioneer in the field, when he states:

"My objectives are threefold. *Given that state personhood is uncharted territory in IR*, the first is simply to distinguish several questions one might ask about it (...)."¹¹

It is not my objective here to take issue with Wendt's sophisticated view that "state persons are real in at least one important sense: they are

⁸ C. Escudé 1994, p. 1.

⁹ Wendt here refers to Arnold Wolfers, "The Actors in International Politics", reprinted in Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), pp. 3–24, and to Christopher Achen's 'useful paper', "When is a State with Bureaucratic Politics Representable as a Unitary Rational Actor?", presented at the 1989 meeting of the International Studies Association, London, England. See Wendt 2004, pp. 291–292

¹⁰ See Wendt 2004, p. 292. Wendt refers here to Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991); Ronen Palan and Brook Blair, "On the Idealist Origins of the Realist Theory of International Relations", *Review of International Studies*, 19 (1993), pp. 385–99; Erik Ringmar, 'On the Ontological Status of the State', *European Journal of International Relations*, 2 (1996), pp. 439–66; Jens Bartelson, "Second Natures: Is the State Identical with Itself?", *European Journal of International Relations*, 4 (1998), pp. 295–326; Cynthia Weber, "Performative States", *Millennium*, 27 (1998), pp. 77–95; and Ola Tunander, "Swedish-German Geopolitics for a New Century: Rudolf Kjellen's 'The State as a Living Organism'", *Review of International Studies*, 27 (2001), pp. 451–63.

¹¹ A. Wendt 2004 *loc.cit.* My emphasis.

'intentional' or purposive actors." He makes this claim "broadly on *physicalist* grounds, drawing on recent philosophical efforts to articulate a 'non-reductive' physicalism that is compatible with the idea that collective intentions are real".¹²

To my mind this is a fascinating notion, inasmuch as it is closely analogous to the doctrine of 'universal hylomorphism' with which the 11th Century Judeo-Spanish philosopher Solomon Ibn Gabirol revolutionized Catholic scholasticism two centuries after his death.¹³ What is relevant in this context, however, is not the logic of Wendt's argument in itself, but the fact that it is not through his forgetfulness how the social sciences in general and IR theory in particular are going to live up to their promise.

Only with the accumulation of knowledge can a field be regarded as 'scientific,' and only with a process of successive 'discoveries' can knowledge be cumulative. Indeed, the 13th Century scholastics who refuted Thomas Aquinas and his teacher Albert the Great on the grounds established by Ibn Gabirol two centuries before seem to have been far less forgetful than the Andalusian philosopher's unlikely 21st Century disciple.

From the point of view of the advancement of science, that Wendt should have forgotten, among others, Duguit, Carr, Hale and Escudé (never mind Ibn Gabirol), is serious not so much on moral grounds, and certainly not because of these predecessors' shattered egos, intellectual legacy and/or legitimate professional interests. It is serious principally because it implies a denial of the possibility of scientific progress in the field of IR theory.

'Discovery' defined

Just how serious an issue it is, however, will depend on the degree to which work in this field can be considered a 'scientific discovery.' It is my contention that work on the state-as-person in international relations discourse should indeed be considered a scientific discovery, if it shows that anthropomorphic metaphors of the state can lead to a fallacious logic and to foreign policy decisions that involve the emotional manipulation of a state's citizens.

Before attempting to prove that the personifications of the state can lead to a fallacious logic that facilitates manipulation, however, we must delve

¹² A. Wendt, 2004 *loc.cit.*

¹³ See Solomon Ibn Gabirol, *The Fountain of Life* (Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books/BiblioLife), 2008, translated from Latin (*Fons Vitae*) by Harry E. Wedeck. Ibn Gabirol argued that not only physical objects, but also 'spiritual' ones such as human thought, are made of matter and form. He thus innovated upon the Aristotelean notion that only the 'physical' universe is made of matter and form, pitting the Greek philosopher's hylomorphism against his 'universal hylomorphism.' With due consideration of the different meanings attached to the terms 'matter' and 'physical' in the Medieval and contemporary philosophical cultures, it seems to me that Wendt's curious idea that state personhood is in some way 'physical' is quite akin to universal hylomorphism. Indeed, the 'non-reductive physicalism' propounded by Wendt is closely analogous to the non-reductive 'materialism' propounded by Ibn Gabirol.

briefly into the issue of discovery, which is rarely discussed in the social sciences. Indeed, without a definition, the evaluation of a scientific discovery is problematic if not impossible.

Following C. Blake and M. Rendall,¹⁴ among the specialized definitions of a scientific discovery one of the more cited ones is that of R. Valdés-Pérez: "discovery in science is the generation of novel, interesting, plausible and intelligible knowledge about the objects of study".¹⁵ Blake and Rendall attempted to move beyond this, however, surveying the opinions of twenty-one experienced scientists from the faculty of the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), as to what constitutes a scientific discovery for them. Through in-depth interviews, a series of discovery characteristics were highlighted, which the authors classified into five key themes: "novelty, building on existing ideas, a practical application, experimentation and theory, and simplicity."¹⁶

Defining the anthropomorphic fallacy

It seems reasonable to say that work on certain kinds of anthropomorphizations of the state in IR theory and discourse—in particular, what I have called the anthropomorphic fallacy—will merit the rank of a scientific discovery if it can be shown that it meets these discovery criteria specified by hard scientists.

Our first task, however, is to formally define the anthropomorphic fallacy in international relations discourse. In order to do this, in my 1994, 1995 and 1997 publications I generated an *ad hoc* classification of metaphors, both general and specific to the field of international relations. For metaphors that are specific to the field, I developed two complementary classifications. The first classification is made up of 'organismic metaphors' (in turn divided into those related to individual feelings such as honor, pride, dignity and glory; those related to parts of the human body, and those otherwise related to the state-as-person fiction, as when it is said that the United States did this or that), and 'mechanicist metaphors' (such as bipolarity, balance of power, etc.).

The second classification includes 'innocuous metaphors' (which help to conceptualize through the comparison of a concept or phenomenon with a more familiar one, but lack emotional effects, as might be the case of many mechanicist metaphors), and 'activating metaphors', which similarly help to conceptualize through comparison but have a potential for emotional mobilization and/or policy manipulation.

¹⁴ Catherine Blake and Meredith Rendall, "Scientific Discovery: A View from the Trenches", in Ljupčo Todorovski, Nada Lavrač, Klaus P. Jantke (eds.), *Discovery science: 9th international conference*, DS 2006 (proceedings), Barcelona, Spain, October 7-10, 2006.

¹⁵ Cf. Blake and Rendall, *loc.cit.*; R. Valdés-Pérez, "Principles of human computer collaboration for knowledge discovery in science", in *Artificial Intelligence*, 107:2 (1999), pp. 335-346.

¹⁶ Blake and Rendall, *ibid*, *loc.cit.*

Departing from here, I defined the anthropomorphic fallacy as an 'activating organismic metaphor.' On the one hand, this is a metaphor that establishes a comparison between a state and a living organism, whose constitutive elements (e.g. cells, arms, legs or feet) are essentially subordinated to the whole, cannot have a separate existence and have no rights. On the other hand, it is a metaphor that often leads (usually unintendedly) to a frame of mind whereby the individual is acknowledged rights only inasmuch as they do not conflict with the paramount interests of the state. The latter is unproblematically considered to be the representative of the 'national whole', just as the brain's commands rule over an individual's arms and legs.¹⁷

The anthropomorphic fallacy - a scientific discovery?

Having defined our object of study, we can now move on to determine whether or not the identification of this phenomenon has made the grade of a scientific discovery. In the present case, the 'experimentation and theory' requirement of a scientific discovery established by the UNC Chapel Hill survey is exemplified by the anecdote with which this paper began. When on the face of emotional expressions that claimed that Argentina should not kneel before the IMF, I retorted to the radio interviewer that Argentina has no knees, the focus of his discourse shifted from state-centrism to citizen-centrism. This observation can lead to empirical study through focus groups or other such techniques that could falsify or leave standing the hypothesis that some anthropomorphizations of the state can lead to fallacious reasoning.

Similarly, analyses of the personifications of the state in the propaganda issued by some regimes could be systematically undertaken. An example that comes easily to my mind is the analysis of the presence or absence of such anthropomorphizations in the propaganda of the Galtieri regime in Argentina, justifying the invasion of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands in 1982.

If it can be shown empirically that the personifications of the state do at times generate cognitive distortions that are useful for selling foreign policies that would not otherwise be popular, then it will have been proved that anthropomorphic metaphors lend themselves to manipulation and fallacy (as I postulated in 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1997), and that (*malgré* Wendt) the state-as-person is not only a fiction, but a harmful one.

In point of fact, to some extent this has already been accomplished. In her 1996 *National Identity in Times of Crises: The Scripts of the Falklands-Malvinas War*, Nora Femenia lists a series of statements made in Argentina by public officials, the press and common citizens quoted by the press, and then asserts:

"The preceding statements (...) are an excellent example of what Escudé (1994) has called the 'anthropomorphic fallacy'. Descriptions of the state as an 'actor', capable of developing attitudes and behaviors that only a living person can experience, are a product of a peculiar logic in which no

¹⁷ C. Escudé, 1997, pp. 24-25.

distinctions are made between individual citizens and larger organizations. Through such logic, the state becomes an end in itself. The state-as-person fallacy, concludes Escudé, has the potential for the mobilization of the loyalties and energies of individual citizens, thus helping to legitimize authoritarianism and repression."¹⁸

Femenia's findings are complementary to my 1994 survey of the logical consequences of the anthropomorphic discourse of IR theorists. I will mention just a couple.

Kenneth Waltz, for instance, tells us that "States, like people, are insecure to the extent of their freedom. If freedom is wanted, insecurity must be accepted."¹⁹ 'Freedom', we must remember, is a term that is unconsciously endowed with positive and noble qualities. Quite unintendedly, this assertion is almost a glorification of tyranny, insofar as this 'freedom' of states often leads to the subjection of masses of individual men and women who, without consultation, are thrown into battle and destruction.

Indeed, properly speaking, 'freedom' is a predicament (and a right) that applies to the human individual, not to the state. The state may be more or less conditioned, but (if we abide by liberal-democratic premises) it is mainly constrained by its responsibilities towards the citizens it should protect. As we shall see in our Conclusions, a state that maximizes its 'freedom' in the interstate system will inevitably tyrannize its citizens. If this is not what Waltz seeks, his choice of words should be different.

More serious, because it can easily lend itself to adoption as counsel for policy, is Stephen O. Krasner's language. His anthropomorphisms sometimes reach colossal proportions, as when, for example, he says that "the South will be unenthusiastic about Northern efforts to change international norms in areas like (...) human rights".²⁰ What does the 'South' and its 'enthusiasms' mean? Who is the subject of its enthusiasms or lack thereof? Obviously not the people, but the elites. A small group of people are thus endowed by the author with legitimacy and representation over billions of people. Krasner's South is a monster that does not care for human rights. That monster, however, does not in reality exist but is Krasner's creation. In other words, with his language, Krasner has metamorphosized the existing small power elites which do not care for human rights, into something much bigger and more powerful that

¹⁸ Nora Femenia, *National Identity in Times of Crises: The scripts of the Falklands-Malvinas War*, pp. 96-98. References to Escudé's anthropomorphic fallacy are included throughout the book, especially in chapter 2, "A Review of the Theoretical Landscape".

¹⁹ K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 165 (Spanish-language edition).

²⁰ S.D. Krasner, *Structural Conflict: The Third World Against Global Liberalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 268. It can be argued, of course, that in Islamic and some Asian societies a significant portion of the people themselves might reject the Western notion of human rights. Inasmuch as this is true, smaller 'monsters' do exist, but they are limited to fundamentalist societies, and Krasner's sweeping generalization is still fallacious, especially insofar as it is clear that he is really referring to the states and not to the citizenries of the 'South'.

fortunately does not exist... unless people like Krasner contribute to the process of its social construction.

Anyone cognizant of the field knows that one could go on endlessly with such examples, which are not irrelevant from the point of view of their potential feedback into both policy-making and the views of the 'enlightened' public. In the Latin American region at least, scholars with exposure to this sort of theory frequently are appointed or elected to high positions of government. Thus, the anthropomorphic fallacies of public officials, journalists and the general public are reinforced by the anthropomorphic fallacies of prestigious IR theorists, whose works are sometimes read by the former. Furthermore, when (as in the case of Argentina) the educational system has indoctrinated people for decades with diverse versions of the anthropomorphic fallacy, official rhetoric and scholarly discourse of this kind falls on fertile ground.²¹

Thus, Femenia's findings complement my own. Oftentimes, the personification of the state generates cognitive failures that can distort foreign and domestic policy, and which have served to justify authoritarianism and repression of various sorts. The identification of this phenomenon is indeed a scientific discovery. But far from being exclusively my merit, it is a discovery that can at least be traced back to Hale when he wrote, in 1971, that:

"In the history of political philosophy and polemic, the (body politic) analogy has been applied to many different forms of government and in

²¹ For the nationalistic contents of Argentina's educational curriculum, often expressed in terms of anthropomorphic metaphors, see C. Escudé, "Argentine Territorial Nationalism", in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 20:1 (May 1988), pp. 139-155; "Education, Political Culture and Foreign Policy: The Case of Argentina", Duke-UNC Working Papers Series, N° 4, November 1992; *La 'Riconquista' Argentina: Scuola e Nazionalismo* (Fiesole, Italy: Edizioni Cultura della Pace, 1992); "Cultura Política y Contenidos Educativos: el Caso de Argentina", in C. Barbé (ed.), *Le Ombre del Passato: Dimensioni Culturali e Psicosociali di un Processo di Democratizzazione* (Torino, Italy: G. Giappichelli Editore 1992), pp. 111-154; *El Fracaso del Proyecto Argentino: Educación e Ideología*, (Buenos Aires: Ed. Tesis/Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, 1990); *Patología del Nacionalismo: el Caso Argentino* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Tesis/Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, 1987); "Contenido Nacionalista de la Enseñanza de la Geografía en la República Argentina, 1879-1986", in *Malvinas Hoy: Herencia de un Conflicto*, A. A. Borón and J. Faúndez, eds. (Buenos Aires: Ed. Puntosur 1988), and "National and Territorial Identities in Contemporary Latin America and Europe", in Ryszard Stemplowski (ed.), *Europe and Latin America, Looking at Each Other?* (Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs, 2010). For lengthy citations and comments on these works, besides Femenia, see Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson, *Geopolitical Traditions: a century of geopolitical thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice – Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London & New York, I.B. Tauris, 2002); Carlos A. Parodi, *The Politics of South American Boundaries* (Wesport CT and London: Praeger, 2002); Monica Esti Rein, *Politics and Education in Argentina, 1946-1962* (London and New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998); Lawrence E. Harrison, *The Pan-American Dream* (Boulder: Westview, 1997); and C.N. Caviedes, "Conflict over the Falkland Islands: a never-ending story?", *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 29:2 (1994).

support of a variety of opinion. In general, however, these states are hierarchical and authoritarian and the ideas being supported are conservative, stressing social order and obedience."²²

Hale adds, notwithstanding, that "for the past three centuries, extended organic analogies have been generally absent from discussions of political issues. The phrase 'body politic' persists, but as a dead metaphor rather than a meaningful concept for analysis or argument."²³

I concur with him on the existence of such a long-term historical trend toward the lapsing of organismic metaphors in Western political theory proper (even if there have been some glaring exceptions such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile Durkheim, and most notably German philosophers like J.G. Herder, J.G. Fichte, F.W. Schelling and F. Schleiermacher.) Notwithstanding, Hale fails to notice that, even in political theory, there is one big and blatant exception to the lapsing of these metaphors that brings us fully into the present day: the exception in the fields of international law and international relations. My very minor role consists of making this amendment to his scientific discovery.

In sum, it seems clear that the identification of the anthropomorphic fallacy in international relations discourse meets the criteria for scientific discoveries set forth by the Blake and Rendall study. It not only includes experimentation and theory, as shown, but also builds on pre-existing ideas. It is novel enough to surprise not only my naïve radio interviewer but also sophisticated theoreticians caught off guard (indeed, in his 2004 paper Wendt argues that state personhood is not at all a fiction, and hence much less a fallacy.) It lends itself to practical application, because once a source of fallacious reasoning is identified, educational instruments can be applied to the acquisition of societal immunity to the problem.

Finally as regards simplicity, the survey authors present some of their scientists' charming opinions, which could not be more applicable to the anthropomorphic fallacy: "(Says L) 'a discovery doesn't have to be something that is very hard. It could be something very simple that you can get to work. It doesn't have to be tedious work or years spent. (...) As long as it is an elegant thing and hasn't been thought out already; I think that's fine. It's a discovery'."²⁴

Once we have discovery in place in a scientific culture, it is essential that there be a historical memory that makes it possible to link successive discoveries, so that knowledge is accumulated. This also requires an ethic of due credit. Forgetting what others have achieved before one entered the scene of a particular field is the best way of not having a science at all. It makes scientific progress impossible, limiting findings to the heyday of this or that scholar.

²² D.G. Hale, p. 67.

²³ D.G. Hale, p. 70.

²⁴ Blake and Rendall, p. 46.

Theoretical conclusions

It seems clear that state personhood is a fiction that oftentimes degenerates into fallacious reasoning. Theoretically, this finding is of the greatest importance because it unmasks the perils of what Hedley Bull called the 'domestic analogy,' which is in itself another fallacy. The state is *not* to the interstate system what the individual is to the state, because the elements that compose the individual's body, such as its cells, arms or legs, have no awareness or rights of their own, as do the individuals who compose a state.

This is why it was argued above that 'freedom' is a predicament and a right related to the individual but not properly to the state. It was awareness of this fundamental difference that led Hans Morgenthau to his dictum:

"The individual may say for himself: '*Fiat justitia, pereat mundus* (...),' but the state has no right to say so in the name of those who are in its care."²⁵

Indeed, state 'freedom' and individual freedom are fundamentally at odds with each other, simply because if the state is to have full 'freedom' to manoeuvre in the interstate order, it must be able to subject its population to whatever sacrifices are necessary to achieve its ends, sometimes with brutal limitations of individual freedom and other civil rights, which are themselves subordinated to the *raison d'état*. In other words:

Total state 'freedom' = absolute domestic tyranny

This is a 'universal law', valid for all states. But the paradox is that it is also the founding principle of my theory of 'peripheral realism',²⁶ because it applies differently to states with different capabilities.

The universal side of this law is evident in the fact that, were the United States to exercise total 'freedom' in its foreign policy, it would have to be capable of mobilizing its economic and human resources to the point of seriously violating the rights of its citizens. Fortunately, the fact is that in this day and age the rights and interests of its people so constrain it, that it

²⁵ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Albert P. Knopf, 1948), p. 10.

²⁶ For works on peripheral realism published in English, see C. Escudé, *Foreign Policy Theory...; El realismo de los Estados débiles...*; "An Introduction to Peripheral Realism and its Implications for the Interstate System: Argentina and the Cóndor II Missile Project", in Stephanie Neuman (ed.), *International Relations Theory and the Third World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 55-76, and "Peripheral Realism: An Argentine Theory-Building Experience, 1986-1997", in José Flávio Sombra Saraiva (ed.), *Concepts, Histories and Theories of International Relations for the 21st Century: Regional and National Approaches* (Brasília: IBRI, 2009), pp. 223-247. For a survey of the modest amount of global attention received by peripheral realism, see "Una investigación en el mercado de las ideas: la penetración global del concepto de 'realismo periférico' en la bibliografía especializada en relaciones internacionales (a noviembre de 2008)", [Universidad del CEMA, Working Paper N° 387, Dec. 2008.](#)

does not even have an obligatory military service. To pour troops into Iraq and Afghanistan as it did in Europe, Africa and the Pacific during the Second World War, it would have to either change its laws or violate them.

However, the weaker a state is, the closer the threshold beyond which exercising state 'freedom' leads to domestic authoritarianism and even tyranny. France, for example, can intervene discreetly in some of its former colonies without having to impose unacceptable levies and taxes on its citizens, but it could not intervene in the Middle East in a measure comparable to the United States today without oppressing its own people. Due to the differences in wealth and power between them, the Élysée Palace would have to recur to dictatorial domestic practices in order to do what the White House can do under democratic rule.

Further down in the interstate hierarchy, it is only because its people are muzzled that Iran has a potentially dangerous nuclear program. Its underdevelopment is such that it is unable to refine most of its own oil. Its population, which is mostly moderate, would never vote for a nuclear program that comes together with humongous economic and political costs. The regime can play at being 'free', defying the West, only because it is dictatorial.

And even further below in the hierarchy of the interstate order, North Korea can exercise its 'sovereign right' to have nuclear devices only because it subjects its people to the most extreme totalitarianism. Only thus can a pauper state concentrate its tiny resources in the production of such an expensive weapon, suffering such costly international sanctions as well. In order to be able to assert that it is as sovereign as the United States, the Pyongyang regime has to subject its people to virtual serfdom.

The theoretical point being made here is that, when we acknowledge that state personhood is a fiction that leads to fallacy and policy distortions, we unmask the fact that the domestic analogy does not work and that it is as fallacious as state personhood. And once we realize that the domestic analogy does not work, the interstate hierarchy is dramatically exposed!

Indeed, Waltzian anarchy is undone once the consequences of the discovery of the anthropomorphic fallacy dawn upon us. It is not true that states are 'like units' except in the sense that they all have citizens to care for, and are therefore under the *universal* law established in the above equation.

And it is precisely this law that sets states apart, generating a pecking order in the very structure of the interstate system. Very powerful states are inevitably rule-makers because they have more 'freedom' (i.e., a greater margin of manoeuvre) in the interstate system. All other states are necessarily rule-takers, except those that rebel against the order established by the oligopoly of very powerful ones, but this they can achieve only through domestic tyranny: they are the so called rogue states.

The concealment of this hierarchical structure seems to be the underlying function of the state-as-person fiction. It would appear people are happier not knowing!