

explanations—Latour argues—if we have indeed admitted that Durkheim is dead. Statements about the global, and about the local, for example, are simply meaningless (as analytic philosophy would point out if anybody consulted it, but that is another story). For Latour, the task is to painstakingly trace the “associations” that are all that we can ever know of our world. If “the word social is not used to replace one kind of stuff with another but it used instead to deploy the associations that have rendered some state of affairs solid and durable, then another social theory might become audible at last” (p. 93).

Of particular interest is Latour’s observation that actor-network analysis is not necessarily best used to study processes that happen to look like networks (e.g., a laboratory, the Internet). A network in Latour’s usage “does not designate a thing out there that would have roughly the shape of interconnected points . . . It is nothing more than an indicator of the quality of the text about the topics at hand” (p. 129). “Network is a concept, not a thing out there” (p. 131). “The consequence is that you can provide an actor-network account of topics which have in no way the shape of a network—a symphony, *a piece of legislation*.” (p. 131; emphasis added).

For those already familiar with actor-network scholarship, *Re-assembling the Social* does not break any new ground—with the exception of the emphasis on actor-network analysis being a way to *write* an account more than a theory (or a method of collecting data). I found it highly repetitive, and in places annoyingly didactic. However, I know from teaching theory that new approaches can only be explained by multiplying trivial examples and repeating the same point in different words. Thus, as an introduction to actor-network approaches to social research, this book, written in Latour’s signature faux-folksy style, will be of great use.

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Global Biopiracy: Patents, Plants and Indigenous Knowledge. By Ikechi Mgbefo. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006. Pp. xiv+311. \$22.95 paper.

Reviewed by Graham Dutfield, School of Law, University of Leeds

Academic interest in the debate on biodiversity regulation, intellectual property, and indigenous knowledge has mushroomed in recent years. And what a contentious debate it is! Drug companies find themselves condemned as “biopirates” for stealing plants and plant-based indigenous knowledge from developing countries and

then claiming them as intellectual property to be sold back to the source countries and communities at premium prices. These businesses counter that “biopiracy” is an exaggerated concern and that they are not responsible for the poverty of countries that have biodiversity and indigenous knowledge in abundance but are unable to exploit them commercially.

Hitherto an area of interest only to a handful of legal scholars, this is now a mainstream and respectable field of research. In many ways this is all to the good. So much of what has been written so far is emotional, rhetorical, and ill-informed. The calmer, more nuanced tone of most academic law writing, which usefully explains that this issue is not as black and white as it is usually painted, is thus to be welcomed. On the other hand, the relevant law journal articles have tended almost exclusively to cite other legal works, and this is unfortunate. Again and again, relevant and highly insightful social science literature is overlooked. Undoubtedly, sole reliance on legalistic approaches can provide reliable insights and sophisticated prescriptions; reductionism has its uses, here as elsewhere. But inevitably there will be unreliable and naïve ones too.

Ikechi Mgbeoji’s fine book applies some much-needed erudition to the debate. The book displays a prodigious amount of reading, much of it nonlegal. However, it would have benefited from Mgbeoji delving deeper into the anthropological literature than he did. The book provides a wealth of fascinating historical facts, illuminating philosophical insights, and provocative assertions. Mgbeoji also clears up a number of popular misconceptions, including the mistaken assumption that until the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity, the common heritage of mankind principle applied to plants growing or stored within national territories. Overall there is much to learn from the book and a great deal to agree with, whatever one may think of the biases inherent to his overall approach. He tries to be fair, and generally succeeds. But he does not pretend to be impartial; Mgbeoji is clearly on the side of the angels, who are the indigenous peoples and the developing countries. Admittedly, he is sometimes critical of these countries’ governments, as he should be. However, he is quite robustly anti-Western.

Ambitiously, Mgbeoji digs deep to find the roots of the problem of biopiracy. What he unearths for us is the imposition of an all-dominating, inherently racist, male-oriented, and environmentally destructive Western worldview that has shaped not only international law, including patent law, but also the way that science is done and how business is normally conducted. The results for indigenous peoples and the environment are nothing short of disastrous. We also suffer, since without indigenous knowledge and

biodiversity, the supply of new drugs and crop varieties will be drastically reduced.

Who or what is to blame? It is fashionable in some academic circles to accuse the Enlightenment. But Mgbeoji goes much further back in time to point the finger squarely at Judeo-Christian values. Mgbeoji makes a reasonably good case. Doubtless, a lot of his criticisms are perfectly valid. But they are case unproven, and also case overstated. The Book of Genesis does not give us *carte blanche* to be environmentally destructive. Evidence suggests that wiping out species and turning fertile landscapes into deserts has gone on for millennia and among peoples who had to that time never seen a Bible. These include the Maoris and Aboriginals, whose holistic worldviews are praised by Mgbeoji. One might add that mainly non-Christian China and India have their share of dark satanic mills spewing out noxious substances. The notorious Three Gorges Project in China was hardly inspired by Christianity or Judaism. In fact, Mgbeoji romanticizes non-Western cultures (pp. 52–4) while throughout the book condemning the West, giving it little credit for anything good. Even Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth are inspired by Zen Buddhism (p. 60). The West is the source of human rights as we understand them today, something not acknowledged in this book. As for the phrase *Christian racism* (p. 57), I would merely comment that Christian theology justifying racism is bad theology and not at all Christian.

Overall, criticisms and a few factual errors aside, this is a solid, thorough, and worthwhile contribution to a highly polarized debate. Those on both sides of the barricades would benefit from reading it, as would scholars from a number of disciplines who are interested in what has become a very high-profile debate.

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America's Struggle for Same-Sex Marriage. By Daniel R. Pinello. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. xiii+213. \$55.00 cloth; \$19.99 paper.

Reviewed by Kathleen E. Hull, University of Minnesota

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's ruling in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* in November 2003, finding a right to marriage for same-sex couples, triggered a chain of highly visible and dramatic developments in marriage law and politics. In early 2004, after hearing President George W. Bush vow to protect the sanctity of marriage in his State of the Union address, newly elected San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom took the bold step of