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TOWARD A RESTRUCTURING OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

by

MARK A. NEUFELD, B.A., M.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Science

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

December 1990

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation explores the question of why theory committed to human emancipation remains poorly developed within the discipline of international relations. Taking as its point of departure the recognition that social and political theory on the one hand, and international relations theory on the other, can no longer be treated as fields separate and distinct, the dissertation draws on the insights of the first to explore the theme of emancipatory theorizing in terms of the second.

The lack of theorizing committed to human emancipation within the discipline of international relations is attributed to the predominance of the positivist approach to the study of international politics. The three core tenets that make up the positivistic logic of investigation - "truth as correspondence", the methodological unity of science, and the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge - are treated in turn to demonstrate how together they serve to inhibit the development of the three central elements of emancipatory theory: theoretical reflexivity, attention to the creative role of human consciousness, and social criticism oriented toward emancipatory practice. Each of positivism's three core tenets is also challenged by calling into question the validity of the assumptions on which they rest.

However, the dissertation goes beyond identifying key

impediments to the development of emancipatory theorizing within the discipline of international relations, and then challenging those impediments in the hope of creating a "space" for such theorizing within the discipline. For not only does the dissertation maintain that international relations theory must be re-ordered in a non-positivist direction, it also argues that recent (meta)-theoretical developments in the discipline should be interpreted as evidence that international relations theory is already in the process of being re-ordered.

In sum, the dissertation argues that international relations theory not only needs to be - but already is being - "restructured" as a form of emancipation-oriented, critical theory. If brought to fulfilment, the "restructuring" of international relations theory holds out a real hope that the discipline will make a meaningful contribution to the welfare and future of the planet.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter One:

Introduction

International politics being but a specific instance of a general political theory, the main task is to understand the requirements and problems of a theory. For if this assumption is correct, the key to a theory of international politics will not be found in the specific subject matter of international politics but in the requirements and problems of a general political theory.

Hans J. Morgenthau¹

Maybe there are periods when one can get along without theory, but at present its deficiency denigrates people and renders them helpless against force. The fact that theory may evaporate into a hollow and bloodless idealism or sink into a tiresome and empty rehashing of phrases, does not mean that these forms are its true forms. (As far as tedium and banality are concerned, philosophy more than finds its equal in the so-called investigation of facts.) In any case, today the whole historical dynamic has placed philosophy at the centre of social actuality, and social actuality at the centre of philosophy.

Max Horkheimer²

This introductory chapter has five objectives: i) to state the central argument of the study; ii) to introduce the research strategy that is adopted; iii) to draw attention to the nature of the methodology employed; iv) to note briefly

¹"The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations," in Theoretical Aspects of International Relations, ed. William T. R. Fox (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), p. 16.

²"Die gesellschaftliche Funktion der Philosophie," in M. Horkheimer, Kritische Theorie: Eine Dokumentation, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1968), II, 308, my translation.

the specificity of the approach adopted here in view of other possible approaches to the matter at hand; and v) to sketch a general outline of the study as a whole.

To begin, then, this study is concerned with providing an answer to a very specific question: why is it that theory oriented toward human emancipation remains poorly developed within the discipline of international relations? The answer offered is one rooted in an analysis and critique of the predominant approach to the study of international politics - that of positivism. In short, it is argued that it is the internal logic of positivism - the positivist "logic of investigation" - that accounts for international relations theory's lack of emancipatory content. Consequently, international relations theory needs to be "restructured" in a non-positivist direction; it must be reconstituted as a form of "critical" theory if it is to make a meaningful contribution to human emancipation. Moreover, it is also argued that there is evidence in contemporary theorizing about international politics that such a meta-theoretical "restructuring" process is already underway.

The research strategy used to make this argument is a rather unconventional one. That is, in the effort to develop the central argument, this study straddles the line between two distinct subfields of social science: "social and political theory" and "international relations theory". It seeks to apply the insights generated within the field of

social and political theory to theorizing about international relations.

Although such a research strategy is, admittedly, somewhat unusual, the time for an inquiry which applies the insights of social and political theory to the discipline of international relations does seem propitious for two reasons. First, as Mark Hoffman has noted, recent developments in the discipline - perhaps most importantly, the "breakdown of the Realist consensus that has dominated International Relations" - have "undermined the legitimacy of claims that International Relations is a discrete area of action and discourse, separate from social and political theory".³ This being the case, there would no longer seem to be grounds for arguing that the application of the insights of social and political theory to international relations theory is inappropriate - if, indeed, any such grounds ever existed.

A second reason is that today the discipline of international relations is confronted with theoretical challenges it seems incapable of meeting on its own. These include:

i) calls for ways to promote meaningful discussion and debate in a discipline increasingly marked by paradigmatic pluralism;

ii) calls for theory which is as competent and comfortable in theorizing change in the world order as it is in analyzing continuity;

³Mark Hoffman, "Critical Theory and the Inter-Paradigm Debate," Millennium, 16, No. 2 (1987), 231.

iii) calls for theory to guide practice which can address normative concerns as well as questions of practical efficacy.

Grappling with these kinds of issues is at the very core of the field of social and political theory. Hence the insights afforded by social and political theory are now more relevant than ever for the discipline of international relations.

The strategy of applying the insights of social and political theory to the discipline of international relations - and, indeed, a good part of the argument being advanced here - are rooted in Richard Bernstein's path-breaking study of the mid-1970s: The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory⁴. Drawing on the efforts of philosophers of science, phenomenologists and hermeneuticists, as well as theorists associated with the Frankfurt School, Bernstein argued that the social sciences were undergoing a "dialectical movement" of restructuring at a (meta)-theoretical level. The restructuring process posited by Bernstein involved a shift away from a positivist approach to the study of the social world to one which - while not neglecting empirical analysis - incorporates both a concern with achieving an interpretive understanding of the intersubjective meanings which constitute that world, as well as an interest in criticizing that world

⁴(New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976). Indeed, it was the title of Bernstein's work which provided the inspiration for that of the present study.

as part of the effort to change it in a way consistent with the political project of human emancipation.

Bernstein's discussion of a (meta)-theoretical restructuring process taking social science in a critically-interpretive, post-positivist direction led me to wonder if his thesis might not also have relevance for the discipline of international relations. As I began to explore this possibility, I became convinced that not only is a restructuring of international relations theory in a non-positivist direction necessary, but that evidence for a restructuring process similar to that outlined by Bernstein does exist in contemporary theorizing about international politics.⁵ I became convinced as well that the outcome of that restructuring process will have profound consequences not only

⁵I say "similar" rather than "identical" for two reasons. First, rather than seeing "critique" as one dimension of the restructuring process among others (along with, for example, an interpretive approach), in this study the notion of "critical theory" is understood to subsume all of the elements of the restructuring process within it. (See chapter two of this study.)

Secondly, while I agree with Bernstein that the restructuring process must involve both a concern with achieving an interpretive understanding of the intersubjective meanings which constitute the social world, as well as an interest in criticizing that world as part of the effort to change it, I also argue that a third element of a critical restructuring is "theoretical reflexivity" - i.e., theoretical reflection upon the process of theorizing itself. (See chapter two.) However, while "theoretical reflexivity" was not featured in The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory, Bernstein does address this issue in his subsequent study, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) - a work upon which I draw heavily in my discussion of "theoretical reflexivity". (See chapter four of this study.)

in terms of the discipline's ability to meet adequately the theoretical challenges noted above, but in terms of the larger issue of making a meaningful contribution to human emancipation.

A final point needs to be made concerning the research strategy being adopted here. This is a study in meta-theory. That is, this study concerns itself with the background of philosophical tenets and assumptions that provide rules for the construction of particular theories and a framework for the analysis of particular issues. As such, the focus of attention is the presuppositions of a critical international relations theory rather than the details of its structure. Consequently, specific analyses of concrete issues in international politics will not be offered. Indeed, as will be noted in the concluding chapter, the translation of the meta-theoretical gains of the restructuring process into advances in the analysis of specific topics in international politics remains to be effected.

Beyond the issues of central argument and research strategy, the methodology adopted in this study also bears noting. What will be undertaken here, in the effort to explore the issue of a (meta)-theoretical restructuring of international relations theory, is what is referred to in the tradition of critical theory as an "immanent critique" of positivist social science/ international relations theory. The method of "immanent critique", which is central to the work

of Hegel, and advocated by members of the Frankfurt School such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno,

starts with the conceptual principles and standards of an object, and unfolds their implications and consequences. Then it re-examines and reassesses the object (the object's function, for instance) in light of these implications and consequences. Critique proceeds, so to speak, "from within" and hopes to avoid, thereby, the charge that its concepts impose irrelevant criteria of evaluation of the object.

As a result, a new understanding of the object is generated - a new comprehension of contradictions and possibilities.... The object's view of itself is contradicted by its effective actuality. Through reflection and critique, it can become aware of its own limitations; that is, that it fails by its own standards. Through this awareness it develops and becomes open to radical change.⁶

We have now treated the issues of central argument, research strategy, and methodology. Before moving to an

⁶David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 184-185.

The adoption of the methodology of "immanent critique", then, has implications not only for the kind of analysis which is privileged, but also for those that are not. One which is, in consequence, not privileged is that of a "sociology of knowledge" of positivist social science/ international relations theory - i.e., a study of the relation between knowledge and a social base. It is not privileged, not because such a study is not important, but because positivism's designation of positivist knowledge as true regardless of the social base out of which positivism springs means that a "sociology of knowledge"-based critique of positivist social science/ international relations theory would be subject to just the kind of criticism that an "immanent critique" is meant to avoid: i.e., that "its concepts impose irrelevant criteria of evaluation of the object". In sum, a "sociology of knowledge"-based critique of positivist forms of theorizing may have an important contribution to make, but in a context in which the positivist approach remains dominant, the "sociology of knowledge" is not the right place to begin.

overview of chapter content, however, it is important to draw attention to the specificity of this study, particularly as regards other possible approaches to the subject matter.

The objective of this study is to present to the mainstream international relations studies community - in as accessible a fashion as possible - an argument about what a critical approach to the study of international politics would look like, and how such an approach would differ from a non-critical one. Given the relative lack of familiarity with social and political theory among the members of the mainstream international relations studies community, a decision was made to develop an argument that is straightforward and simple, though hopefully not simplistic.

While being optimal in terms of accessibility, this decision does carry some liabilities. Perhaps the most serious is the fact that as a consequence of the decision to privilege an argument that is straightforward and as uncomplicated as possible, only one philosophical tradition is represented in the process of defining critical and non-critical forms of theorizing. Specifically, the approach of this study privileges the tradition of Western Marxism - and particularly the contribution of the Frankfurt School - while other equally substantive traditions which also aim to generate and sustain critical forms of theorizing are not considered in any detail. These include: i) the tradition of "scientific realism",

represented in social and political theory by Roy Bhaskar,⁷ Jim Urry and Russell Keat,⁸ and in international relations theory by individuals such as John Maclean⁹ and Alexander Wendt;¹⁰ ii) post-modernism, represented in social and political theory by Michel Foucault¹¹ and Jacques Derrida,¹² and in international relations theory by individuals such as James Der Derian and Richard Ashley;¹³ and iii) the "'realist' critique of marxism," represented in social and political

⁷For a good introduction to Bhaskar's thought, see his collection of essays entitled Reclaiming Reality: A Critical Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy (London: Verso, 1989).

⁸See Russell Keat and John Urry, Social Theory as Science, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

⁹See his "Marxist Epistemology, Explanations of 'Change', and the Study of International Relations," in Change and the Study of International Relations, eds. Barry Buzan and R. J. Barry Jones (London: Frances Pinter, 1981).

¹⁰"The agent-structure problem in international relations theory," International Organization 41, No. 3 (1987).

¹¹For a good introduction to Foucault, see The Foucault Reader, Paul Rabinow, ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

¹²See Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, Alan Bass, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

¹³See James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, eds., International/ Intertextual Relations (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1989).

theory by Anthony Giddens,¹⁴ and in international relations theory by Andrew Linklater.¹⁵

¹⁴See his The Nation-State and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

¹⁵The phrase the "'realist' critique of marxism" is taken from Linklater's Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. vii.

Because Linklater's work is perhaps the closest of the three alternatives to the present effort, it may be useful to note some of the differences between his argument and the one presented here. First, in terms of the definition of critical theory, Linklater relies heavily upon a restatement of specific arguments of Horkheimer (critical vs. traditional theory" and Habermas (theory of cognitive interests). In contrast, the present effort attempts to extract the essence of critical forms of theorizing from the tradition as a whole, aiming ultimately at a more general and abstract definition of critical theory in terms of three central elements (see below, chapter two).

Secondly, in discussing the various approaches in international relations theory Linklater draws upon Martin Wight's categories of "realism", "rationalism" and "revolutionism". The content Linklater gives to these three categories, however, correspond to the contemporary approaches of neorealism (realism), classical realism (rationalism) and marxism/ structuralism (revolutionism). As a consequence, the approach of pluralism - represented in contemporary theorizing about international politics by individuals such as John Burton and the "World Society" school - is omitted (see Banks' discussion of paradigms in contemporary theorizing about international relations in chapter four below).

The most significant difference, however, derives from Linklater's acceptance of the need for accommodation to a (neo)realist conceptualization of the interstate system - an acceptance rooted in Giddens' work on the interstate system (see The Nation-State and Violence). It can be argued, moreover, that this acceptance is also the most serious difficulty in Linklater's effort to elaborate a critical international relations theory. As Ashley has noted, the problem with Giddens' conceptualization of the state/ interstate system is that despite his announced intention to

give priority to synchrony over diachrony, he finds himself describing the nation-state system from an objectivist standpoint. It appears as a "world-wide
(continued...)

Unfortunately, a comprehensive treatment of these alternative traditions of critical theorizing is beyond the scope of this study; indeed, their inclusion would quite likely have had the effect of rendering this work inaccessible

¹⁵(...continued)

common denominator among political systems of otherwise widely variant complexions," and its most important element is its monopoly of the means of violence. To be sure, Giddens wants to understand this nation-state system historically, and he wants to give an account of its control of violence that draws links back to Marx's interpretation of the capitalist labour contract.... Yet, once emerged, this system looms before Giddens in pure synchrony, as an external closure that threatens to defeat revolutionary imagination.

Concludes Ashley:

Only a fool would counsel rosy optimism in the nuclear age. I think, however, that despair in the face of the "structure of anarchy" plays into the hands of reaction. Critical social theorists, Giddens included, need to break decisively with the Weberian thematization of international politics - itself a projection of the thematization of domestic politics - and they need to state their break along just the sort of lines that Giddens has so incisively described in other contexts. Not the ahistorical ~~structure~~ of international politics but the historical **structuring practices** of international politics merit the emphasis of critical social theorists. (Richard Ashley, "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," Alternatives, 12 (1987), pp. 430-31, note #8, emphasis in the original).

In sum, while it is true that Linklater, like Giddens, wants to understand the nation-state/ interstate system historically, it is not clear - drawing as heavily upon Giddens as he does - that Linklater is not subject to the same type of criticism raised by Ashley. (For an attempt to sketch out the main elements of an approach more compatible with an emphasis on "structuring practices", see below, chapter five).

to the intended audience. Even so, it is hoped that at a minimum the present effort to develop and present in as clear a fashion as possible at least one critical form of theorizing will prove useful in the encounters of the various critically-oriented philosophical traditions now in evidence on the margins of theorizing about international politics - encounters which must occur if the restructuring process now underway in the discipline of international relations is to realize its fullest promise.¹⁶

On the basis of this brief discussion of central argument, research strategy, methodology, and specificity, I will now outline the course this study will follow. In chapter two, the inadequacy of contemporary theorizing in the discipline of international relations will be discussed. Specifically, it will be argued that in its failure to place the issue of human emancipation at the centre of theorizing, the discipline of international relations is missing an historic opportunity to contribute to the betterment - if not the very survival - of the human species. It is argued that if international relations theory is to make a meaningful contribution to human emancipation, it will need to be fundamentally "restructured" so as to incorporate the elements

¹⁶For an example of the kind of encounters which I have in mind, see the exchange between Mark Hoffman and N. J. Rengger in Millennium, 18, No. 1 (1988), pp. 81-95, as well as that between Richard Ashley, Ramashray Roy and R. B. J. Walker in Alternatives, 13 (1988), pp. 77-102.

necessary for theorizing in terms of the goal of human emancipation. Drawing on the tradition of "critical theory", three such elements are identified.

In chapter three, and as part of the effort to account for the absence of the elements which characterize "critical theory" from theorizing about international relations, an examination of the dominant approach to the study of international politics - that of "positivism" - is undertaken. Specifically, the central tenets and underlying assumptions of "positivism" as an approach to the study of human society are identified. Furthermore, the predominance of the positivist approach within the discipline of international relations is established.

In the three chapters which follow, each of the three elements which characterize critical theory is discussed in relation to contemporary theorizing about international relations. In each case, the absence of the critical element is explained in terms of the predominance of the positivist approach. As a consequence, it is argued that part of the process of "restructuring" international relations theory in a critical fashion must involve a challenge to positivism itself.

However, the study goes beyond simply indicating the elements which must be integrated if international relations is to be reconstituted as a critical discipline. Rather, in each case it is argued that the process of challenging

positivism and of restructuring international relations theory is already underway. Indeed, it is the central contention of this study that contemporary developments in the discipline which seem at first glance to be unrelated - if significant - challenges to positivist orthodoxy are in fact evidence of a profound process of theoretical "restructuring": a "restructuring" which is already taking international relations theory in a more critical direction.

In the final chapter, some concluding thoughts are advanced as to the relevance of meta-theoretical discussions to the discipline of international relations, and as to the importance of the "restructuring" process underway. It is affirmed that despite identifiable counter-tendencies and the virtual certainty of concerted opposition, the meta-theoretical "restructuring" of international relations theory holds out the best hope for the discipline to make a meaningful contribution to the life of our species, and indeed, to the welfare of our planet as a whole.

Chapter Two:

International Relations Theory and the Aristotelian Project

Perhaps no event has had a more disastrous effect upon the development of political science than the dichotomy between political theory and political science. For it has made political theory sterile by cutting it off from contact with the contemporary issues of politics, and it has tended to deprive political science of intellectual content by severing its ties with the Western tradition of political thought, its concerns, its accumulation of wisdom and knowledge.

Hans J. Morgenthau¹

To the extent that it is correct to speak of a crisis in science, that crisis cannot be separated from the general crisis.

Max Horkheimer²

Introduction:

"The leading of a good and just life in the polis" was the "Aristotelian telos" of all political inquiry.³ Exploring

¹"The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations," in Theoretical Aspects of International Relations, ed. William T. R. Fox (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), p. 16.

²"Bemerkungen über Wissenschaft und Krise," in M. Horkheimer, Kritische Theorie: Eine Dokumentation, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1968), I, 7, my translation.

³Richard J. Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. xxii; Leonard Harris, "Review of The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory," International Philosophical Quarterly, 19 (1979), p. 485.

the basis upon which the citizens of the polis might lead such a life - the "Aristotelian project" - was the task of all responsible students of human society. No other justification for their activity as scholars was necessary, or, indeed, acceptable.

The nature of the polis was of central concern for those working within the Aristotelian project. In this regard, it is important to note that the polis was not so much a "place" as a "way of living". As Hannah Arendt has argued, the Aristotelian conception of the polis was that of a very special and freely chosen form of political organization.⁴ Central to this form of political organization was the understanding that to live in a polis meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion, and not through force and violence.⁵

But the idea of the polis involved more than the simple absence of overt violence. It was also coterminous with the values of liberty and equality. The polis "knew only equals" whose shared objective was "neither to rule nor to be ruled". And it was on this basis of equality that the realm of the polis was to be the "sphere of freedom".⁶

⁴Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 13-14.

⁵Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 26.

⁶Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 32.

It should be noted, however, that equality between the members of the polis was not understood in terms of some objective quality of human beings located outside of history. It was viewed neither as a natural condition of human beings, nor as an attribute or right with which human beings have been endowed by their creator. Rather, this freedom-guaranteeing equality was seen as a function of the polis itself. In Arendt's words,

Isonomy guaranteed ... equality, but not because all men were born or created equal, but, on the contrary, because men were by nature... not equal, and needed an artificial institution, the polis, which ... would make them equal.⁷

It is clear then, that the polis was not a naturally-existing locality. Nor should it be understood as a locality defined by fixed geographical boundaries. Rather, the polis was a socially-created "political space" whose dimensions were determined by the people participating in its creation. Notes Arendt, "not Athens but the Athenians were the polis":⁸

The polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. "Wherever you go, you will be a polis": these famous words ... expressed the conviction that action and speech create a space

⁷On Revolution (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 23. See also Richard Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), p. 208.

⁸The Human Condition, p. 195.

between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere.⁹

Arendt's point that the polis can be created by willing participants "almost any time and anywhere" is an important one. It is also important to note that different times and historical contexts may require different conceptions of the spatial dimensions of the polis.

As was observed above, the function of the political arrangement known as the polis was to ensure the conditions necessary for the leading of a good and just life, a life encompassing the values of equality and freedom. It follows that to be capable of this, the polis "must be coterminous with the minimum self-sufficient human reality..."¹⁰

During the time period of classical Greece, the small city-state was viewed as adequate to this task. In modern history, however, it has been considered that a polis of those dimensions can no longer suffice. For Hegel, writing at the

⁹The Human Condition, p. 198. Of course, it can be argued that in historical terms the "golden age" of the Greek city-state deviated in many respects from the ideal contained in classical political theory: ie. that those made "free and equal" by the polis tended to be a narrow strata of men, with a sizable female and slave underclass excluded from the noble interaction of unconstrained speech and action. Nonetheless, it is the powerful image of the polis as a "realm of freedom" for all with which I am concerned here.

For a recent challenge to this unflattering appraisal of the Greek city-state, see Ellen Meiksins Wood, Peasant-Citizen and Slave: The Foundations of Athenian Democracy (London: Verso, 1988).

¹⁰Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 93.

beginning of the 19th century, the political institution which best conformed to the requirement of being "coterminous with the minimum self-sufficient human reality" was that of the modern nation-state.¹¹ In contrast to the focus of the classical Greeks on their fellow-citizens in the city-state, for thinkers such as Hegel - and especially for his followers, the Young Hegelians - it was the fellow citizens of one's nation-state who were to be of central concern to those committed to working within the Aristotelian project.

Even before Hegel's time, however, there were those openly questioning whether the modern nation-state was an adequate geopolitical container for the ideal of just human relationships. Perhaps one of the best representatives of this group was Immanuel Kant. What was innovative about Kant's approach to international politics was the substitution of

¹¹Hegel and Modern Society, p. 93. See also, Andrew Linklater, Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 146-149. As Linklater notes, Hegel opposed any doctrine of "cosmopolitanism which took issue with the roles and responsibilities integral to the state" (p. 147). At the same time, however, Linklater also underscores the fact that there does appear to be a contradiction between Hegel's "principle of human freedom, which demands the rational organization of political life, and the actual operations of the international states-system, the coercive or uncontrolled relations which pertain to the life of states" (p. 148). Avineri's argument that for Hegel, history involved the creation of a community of states within a world "united by culture and reason" may be one way of resolving this contradiction. See Shlomo Avineri, Hegel's Theory of the Modern State (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 207. It may also serve to temper the Hegelian claim that "the European state represented the highest form of political association" (Linklater, p. 149).

"human beings" for "citizens" as the proper subjects of moral concern.¹² This substitution can be seen as an important step in the modern effort to redefine the Aristotelian project in more universal terms through the "extension of the area of the common good".¹³

This effort has taken on new impetus in the twentieth century. The threats to human well-being and autonomy posed by nuclear weapons, the ecological crisis, the systematic

¹²Linklater, Men and Citizens, It can be argued that Kant was preceded in theorizing the conceptual shift from the rights and freedoms of "citizens" to "persons" by Rousseau. See Linklater, Men and Citizens, *passim*. See also Michael C. Williams, "Rousseau, Realism and Realpolitik," Millennium, 18, No. 2 (1989), pp. 188-204. It is also Linklater's contention that Kant's "desire for a universal community of free individuals" stands at the centre of the theorizing of Karl Marx (p. 159).

For a good overview of Linklater's discussion of Kant, see the review essay "Philosophers crossing borders: recent literature on ethics and international relations," Raino Malnes, Journal of Peace Research, 20, No. 2 (1983), pp. 193-200.

¹³The words are T. H. Green's from his Prolegomena to Ethics (Oxford, 1906), p. 283, and are quoted in Linklater, Men and Citizens, p. 208, note #20.

This is not to argue that Kant's understanding of "politics" was in the tradition of classical political theory. As Habermas notes, the classical tradition viewed politics as the continuation of ethics, and saw no opposition between the constitution formulated in the nomoi and the ethos of civil life. In contrast, for non-classical political theorists such as Kant, "the ethical conduct of the individual who is free only inwardly is clearly distinguished from the legality of his external actions. And just as morality is separated from legality, so the two in turn are separated from politics, which is accorded a most dubious role as the technical expertise in a utilitarian doctrine of prudence". See Jürgen Habermas, "The classical doctrine of politics in relation to social philosophy," in Habermas, Theory and Practice, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 42.

violation of human rights around the globe, and the growing disparity between rich and poor within an increasingly interdependent world economy, have been interpreted as requiring a supercession of the present world order, and as demanding a transformation of our most basic political categories.¹⁴

In a context in which the factors which will determine whether the human species will survive or perish, suffer or prosper, operate on a global scale, a good case can be made that the polis which is "coterminous with the minimum self-sufficient human reality" is the planet itself. In short, the problems presently faced by the human species call out for the identification of the idea of the polis with the planet as a whole: a truly global polis.¹⁵

¹⁴Including the nation-states system. See, for example, Richard Falk, The End of World Order (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983). See also, Linklater, Men and Citizens, p. 6. For a similar conclusion, this time from a realist perspective, see John Herz, The Nation-State and the Crisis of World Politics (New York: David McKay, 1976), pp. 15-19. Notes Herz, "only a radical change in attitudes [in the direction of universalism] and policies could, in the long run, save the world from disaster", pp. 15-16.

¹⁵For a parallel conclusion, developed from within the revival of "traditionalist" political theory, see Dante Germino, Political Philosophy and the Open Society (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982). Notes Germino,

All previous political philosophy has been burdened with a limited horizon. For Plato and Aristotle that horizon was the polis, for the Stoics it was the ecumenic empire, for Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Hegel it was the nation-state (pp. 170-171).

(continued...)

As was noted at the beginning of this essay, the Aristotelian project involved theoretical reflection on the conditions necessary for the leading of a "good and just life in the polis", where the polis is defined as a "sphere of freedom".¹⁶ It follows that if we are now to speak of a global polis, distinguished by the presence of global-level threats to human well-being, then we shall require a body of theory capable of conceptualizing the Aristotelian project on a global scale and in terms of contemporary challenges. In short, what we require is nothing less than a body of theory which can provide us with a "new, encompassing language for political discourse on a planetary scale".¹⁷

¹⁵(...continued)

In contrast, concludes Germino, we must recognize "mankind to be a universal community" (p. 180).

It should be noted that although I have endeavoured to avoid sexist language, the strategy adopted in this study of allowing as much as possible theorists to speak for themselves has necessarily resulted in the inclusion of some rather unfortunate expressions and formulations.

¹⁶A way of life, it will be remembered, designed to promote equality between those participating in it.

¹⁷Falk, The End of World Order, p. 15.

It should be noted that Arendt herself, and despite her assertion that the polis could be created almost anywhere and anytime, would most probably have had great difficulty in conceptualizing the polis in global terms. This is because Arendt held that only small groups of people allowed for the creative actions which distinguished the polis. In larger collectivities of people, argued Arendt, creative action was invariably supplanted by conformist behaviour. See Arendt, pp. 42-43. See also Terence Ball, "Ontological Presuppositions and Political Consequences," in Changing Social Science, ed. Daniel R. Sabia, Jr., and Jerald T. Wallulis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 40-42.

(continued...)

It could be argued that the most logical candidate for such a task is "international relations theory". Moreover, it is worth noting that prominent theorists within this discipline are, with increasing frequency, claiming just such a role for international relations theory. In the words of Stanley Hoffmann:

... the architectonic role Aristotle attributed to the science of politics might well belong today to international relations, for these have become in the twentieth century the very condition of our daily life. To philosophise about the ideal state in isolation, or to theorise about political systems in the abstract, has become almost meaningless.¹⁸

Indeed, a number of prominent international relations scholars would seem to share classical theory's concern with contributing to the quality of human life. "An introduction to the study of international relations in our time," writes Karl Deutsch, "is an introduction to the art and science of

¹⁷(...continued)

In response, one could argue that there is no reason why a world order created in conformity with the idea of the polis could not be based on loose federation of communities small enough to allow for the kind of creative, non-conformist behaviour Arendt fears is lost in larger groups. For an effort to theorize a global order in terms of the notion of a "global polis" while attempting to accommodate the kind of concerns raised by Arendt, see Richard Falk, "Anarchism and World Order," Nomos, 19 (1978).

¹⁸Stanley Hoffmann, Contemporary Theory in International Relations, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1960), p. 4. Also quoted in Linklater, Men and Citizens, p. 5.

the survival of mankind".¹⁹ "We study world politics", affirms Robert Keohane, "because we think it will determine the fate of the earth".²⁰ And "specialists in world affairs", argues J. David Singer, "have a special responsibility ... to address the major problems confronting the global village".²¹

Yet one cannot but be disappointed upon examining the theoretical content of the discipline of international relations in light of the idea of the polis. For theory which is oriented toward making human relations at the global level

¹⁹See Karl Deutsch, The Analysis of International Relations, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1988), p. ix.

²⁰Robert Keohane, "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in Neorealism and Its Critics, ed. R. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 199. Keohane is clearly making reference to the work of Jonathan Schell. See J. Schell, The Fate of the Earth (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982).

²¹J. David Singer, "The Responsibilities of Competence in the Global Village," International Studies Quarterly, 29 (1985), p. 245.

Within the sub-fields of international relations theory similar sentiments can be found. "In earlier centuries, when change was slower and societies less complex," notes James Rosenau, "foreign policy could be - and was - the sport of kings.... Today, however, the sport of kings has become the deadly serious business of everyone's life. Accordingly, as the world has become ever more interdependent, so has the study of foreign policy become ever more challenging and intriguing.... With the passage of time, in short, foreign policy has come to encompass nothing less than the full range of individual and collective processes where people seek to give meaning and hope to their lives." "Introduction: New Directions and Recurrent Questions in the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy," in New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy, ed. Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and James N. Rosenau (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 2-3, my emphasis.

a "sphere of freedom" must, in light of the considerable constraints on human autonomy, be theory which addresses the question of human emancipation. Lamentably, it is just this kind of theory which is so notably absent from the discipline of international relations. As Andrew Linklater notes in his review of the discipline,

Little elaboration is needed ... of the fact that theory committed to the reduction or eradication of constraints upon human autonomy remains poorly developed within the field of international relations.²²

If Linklater's assessment is accurate - and it is a central contention of this study that it is - then we are forced to confront an unattractive conclusion. Despite its prima facie suitability for a global analysis, and despite the professed desire of a number of its leading scholars, in its present state international relations theory is incapable of making a meaningful contribution in the terms set out by the Aristotelian project. Furthermore, it is equally clear that if a meaningful contribution is to be made, a fundamental transformation of the discipline - a "restructuring" of international relations theory which will place the question of human emancipation at centre-stage - is required.

Contemplating the idea of a "restructuring" of international relations theory raises two important questions. First, there is the question of why "theory committed to the

²²"Realism, Marxism and critical international theory," Review of International Studies, 12, No. 4 (1986), p. 308.

reduction or eradication of constraints upon human autonomy remains poorly developed within the field of international relations": that is, why are the defining characteristics of emancipatory theory absent from international relations theory? Secondly, there is the question of the future evolution of the discipline of international relations in relation to the Aristotelian project: that is, what are the prospects that international relations theory can be "restructured" so as to incorporate the defining characteristics of emancipatory theory into the discipline?

It is the task of the chapters that follow to provide answers to these two questions. Before proceeding any further however, a third question must first be addressed. It concerns the nature of theorizing that does place the issue of the "reduction or eradication of constraints upon human autonomy" at the centre of its concerns: that is, what are the defining characteristics of emancipatory theory? The remainder of this chapter will concern itself with providing an answer to this question.

Human Emancipation and the Tradition of Critical Theory

Perhaps the best way to identify the defining characteristics of emancipatory theory is to focus on one tradition of political theory which has consistently placed the question of human freedom at the centre of its concerns: that of "critical" theory. By critical theory is meant that

tradition of theorizing which has its roots in the Enlightenment notion of "critique".²³

In fact, the term "critique" itself predates the Enlightenment. It was first used by Humanists and Reformers during the Reformation period who were engaged in biblical criticism, and described the "art of informed judgment appropriate to the study of ancient texts".²⁴ This "art" was used to uncover hidden assumptions and, above all, to debunk claims to authority. In the pre-Enlightenment context of the Reformation, then, critique served as a powerful weapon in the hands of those engaged in the criticism of established ecclesiastical practice. Thus, from the beginning, the tradition of theorizing associated with the notion of critique

²³This historical review will focus on the Enlightenment origins of critical theory, and in particular, the evolution of the tradition through the 18th and 19th centuries. It is true, of course, that additional modifications and reformulations were made during the 20th century, especially by those identified with the tradition of Western Marxism: Lukács, Korsch, Gramsci, and, of course, the members of the Frankfurt School, who adopted the term "Critical Theory" to describe their work. Nonetheless, with Marx's contribution to the base already laid by Kant and Hegel, the broad outlines of critical theory which concern us here were already established.

²⁴Paul Connerton, editor's introduction to Critical Sociology: Selected Readings, (New York: Penguin, 1976), p. 15. See also the heading "critique" in the Dictionary of Sociology, p. 56.

served as an instrument for the delegitimization of established power and privilege.²⁵

It was in the context of the Enlightenment, however, that the "art of critique" assumed its mature form. For it was then that critique began to enjoy a status independent of the authoritative scriptures to which it was applied. Increasingly, critique was adopted as a criterion of truth, where truth was defined as the product of clear and rational thinking. Indeed, much to the chagrin of all of the contending factions during the reformation, the critical definition of truth began to assume a place in opposition to that of "truth from revelation".

Indeed, critique was now equated with the "essential activity of reason" itself. As such, it claimed to stand in judgement of "all spheres of life",²⁶ including the political sphere. Indeed, in the context of the Enlightenment, critique was viewed to have acquired "public force",²⁷ and became virtually synonymous with the existence of an informed, critical public.²⁸ And it was in the Enlightenment context

²⁵Of course, as Connerton notes, the weapon of critique was double-edged, as Catholics employed philological methods to demonstrate the very necessity of the Church tradition which Protestants were seeking to undermine. See Connerton, p. 15.

²⁶Connerton, p. 16.

²⁷Connerton, p. 16.

²⁸See Jürgen Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1962).

that critique - in its ability to combat "unfreedom" rooted in false beliefs - became inextricably linked to the project of human emancipation. In the words of the philosopher Holbach:

To error we owe the oppressive chains which despots and priests everywhere forge for the people. To error we owe the slavery in which people languish in almost all countries. To error we owe the religious terrors which freeze human beings in fear and make them slaughter each other for the sake of figments of the mind.²⁹

It is thus understandable that Immanuel Kant asserts, in the preface to the Critique of Pure Reason (1781),³⁰ that his time should be understood as no less than the "age of critique".³¹ Nor is there any question that Kant shared this Enlightenment orientation:

Enlightenment is humankind's release from its self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is humankind's inability to make use of its understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in the lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! "Have courage

²⁹Paul Thiry d'Holbach, Nature and Her Laws by Mirabaud (London, 1816), pp. 5-6, as quoted by Habermas in Theory and Practice, (Boston, 1973), p. 257. Holbach is Habermas's choice as an example of an Enlightenment philosophe advocating the adoption of critical thinking in regard to society and its traditions.

³⁰Trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan, 1929), p. 9.

³¹Literally, "das Zeitalter der Kritik".

to use your own reason!" - that is the motto of enlightenment.³²

Indeed, Kant's own contributions to the notion of critique were considerable, and the Kantian element in the tradition of critical theory is fundamental. In keeping with the Enlightenment notion that "unfreedom" was rooted in false beliefs, for Kant, critique was defined first and foremost as reflection on conditions of reliable knowledge for human beings possessing the faculties of knowing, speaking, and acting. Specifically, Kant's central question, which served as the guiding thread to his theorizing in the Critique of Pure Reason, was the following: what are the conditions of human knowledge through which our experience of the world around us is possible?

Kant's philosophical adversaries were the empiricists Locke and Hume, who argued that inquiry must be restricted to the "contents" of consciousness: that is, the world experienced through sense impressions. Kant did not deny these "contents". But where he diverged from the empiricists was in insisting that the organization and interpretation of these "contents" also bore examination. For the fact is that only an incoherent profusion of impressions and sensations are

³²"Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" in German Literature: Texts and Contexts, ed. Bernhard Blume (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 93. Also quoted in Thomas McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), p. 77.

given in perception. And yet, noted Kant, we always perceive the world as a realm of ordered things.³³

The fact that we do so, argued Kant, can only be understood in terms of the creative and ordering function of human consciousness. Thus, in contrast to the empiricists, who affirmed that reliable knowledge - to the degree to which it was attainable at all - was the product of a passive reception of sense impressions, Kant affirmed that empirical reality is always apprehended "in a mediated fashion by means of a priori categories of the mind".³⁴ In short, argued Kant, while reality is not a pure construct of mind, knowledge is dependent on the "active, synthetic function of the mind".³⁵

Kant's assertion of the need for theorizing about the origins and nature of knowledge, as well as his emphasis on the creative role of human consciousness was further developed by the second major Enlightenment contributor to the tradition of critical theory: George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. It should be noted that for Kant, the creative role of human consciousness in the ordering of perceived reality and the production of knowledge was framed in terms of a self-

³³Connerton, p. 17.

³⁴Scott, Warren, The Emergence of Dialectical Theory: Philosophy and Political Inquiry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 29.

³⁵Warren, p. 29.

contained and unchanging transcendental subject.³⁶ Furthermore, in Kant's terms, the need for theorizing about the origins and nature of knowledge was limited to a concern with "epistemology", narrowly conceived.³⁷ Hegel's contribution to the development of the tradition of critical theory involved a radical transformation of both of these formulations.

First, Hegel rejected Kant's notion of a self-contained and unchanging transcendental subject, a formulation corresponding to the liberal conception of the autonomous, atomized individual as the starting point for understanding human interaction and development. The problem with Kant's liberal-inspired formulation was that it did not recognize that society as an expression of the interaction of free

³⁶Literally "das Ich". Warren argues that it is more accurate to translate this concept as the transcendental "I" than as the more common transcendental "ego":

One of Kant's main arguments concerns the impossibility of objectifying transcendental apperception of the "I". The term "ego" presupposes objectification, whereas the term "I" connotes the kind of transcendental, pure "subjectivity" of which Kant is speaking.

The Emergence of Dialectical Theory, p. 205, note #9.

³⁷That is, the exploration of the conditions through which modern natural science is possible. In part, Kant's relatively narrow conceptualization of epistemological issues can be traced to his assumption of a normative concept of science, with modern physics taken as the model of legitimate "scientific knowledge". See Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 13-15.

individuals was itself historically contingent; that individuation is not a timeless state but a social process.³⁸

It was thus Hegel's contribution that he underscored the fact of the "intersubjective" and historically-contingent nature of human identity and human consciousness. The synthesizing categories of the mind to which Kant had drawn attention - but for which he was unable to account theoretically³⁹ - were now understood as historically-emergent intersubjective categories shared by mutually interdependent members of a community. Moreover, because these categories were now understood as products of an historical process, they were also seen to be subject to change and further evolution as human communities continued their struggle to comprehend and master a changing social environment of which they are, at one and the same time, the product and the creator. In short, argued Hegel, the criteria of reliable knowledge are themselves historically-emergent social products.

In conjunction with, and as a consequence of, this first reformulation, Hegel redefined Kant's conceptualization of theoretical reflection on reliable knowledge as being limited to the concerns of "epistemology". For while not denying the

³⁸Linklater, Men and Citizens, p. 144.

³⁹It was the inability of Kant's epistemology to justify itself - to explain how the preconditions of knowledge are themselves already knowledge - that led Hegel to deem Kant's formulation a "bad infinity" incapable of serving as a "first philosophy". For a fuller discussion of this point, see Warren, pp. 33-34.

importance of epistemological questions,⁴⁰ it was clearly one of Hegel's most important innovations that he re-located the question of epistemology within the context of the "historical self-formative process" (Bildungsprozess) noted above: an historical process whose endpoint was that of truth defined as self-realization.⁴¹ In Hegel's words:

...the truth is the whole. The whole, however, is merely the essential nature reaching its completeness through the process of its own development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only at the end is it what it is in its very truth; and just in that consists its nature, which is to be actual, subject or self-becoming, self-development.⁴²

The importance of this "re-location" is central to the development of the problematic of human emancipation within the tradition of "critique". At the core of Hegel's theorizing is the Enlightenment position that a defining characteristic of human existence throughout history has been the presence

⁴⁰It can be argued, as does Habermas, that in one sense, Hegel's reformulation did not so much radicalize epistemology as abolish it; that Hegel's "philosophy of identity" subsumed epistemology within the notion of "absolute knowledge" and thus left itself - and by extension, the entire tradition of critical theorizing - open to being discredited by the ensuing practical successes achieved by positivist natural sciences. See Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, chapter one. See also McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas Part I, as well as Garbis Kortian, Métacritique (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979), pp. 19-20.

⁴¹John B. Thompson, Critical Hermeneutics (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 72.

⁴²G. W. F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind, trans. J. B. Baillie (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 81-82. Also quoted in Thompson, Critical Hermeneutics, p. 73.

within human communities of a system of constraints on human autonomy which are themselves humanly produced. However, because the true origins of these constraints are rarely recognized - because, for example, social distinctions are perceived to be part of nature, and thus "naturally sanctioned" - constraints are seen as unchangeable. In short, it is the recurring misrecognition of the nature of socially-constructed constraints on human autonomy which has to a great extent resulted in their persistence, and, as a consequence, in an alienated existence.

Yet Hegel also argued that an equally fundamental characteristic of human history and historically-contingent rationality is the process of "negation": that is "the criticism in life and in thought of the constraints imposed by each of its specific historical forms".⁴³ It was Hegel's contention that

At each new stage in the self-development of consciousness, the subject reconstructs its self-understanding in relation to its past. This reconstruction involves the "negation" of the old form of consciousness, which are forms of, and attitudes toward, concrete life.⁴⁴

It was this process of "negation" that led to the recognition that history is nothing more than "human practice"; that social relations have the source not in nature, but in that same practice, and thus may be "determined

⁴³Connerton, p. 19.

⁴⁴Warren, p. 36, emphasis in the original.

by human deliberations".⁴⁵ In short, affirmed Hegel, it was critical thinking that would promote the development of the "species-powers" necessary to human freedom.

In this way, Hegel radicalized Kant's epistemological preoccupation to introduce the notion of a human subject who attains knowledge through a struggle for understanding and for recognition with others. Henceforth, critical theory's task is extended to that of reflecting upon a system of constraints on human liberty which are themselves humanly produced.⁴⁶ Henceforth, the notion of critique will be identified with "the experience of an emancipation by means of critical insight into relationships of power, the strength of which lies, at least in part, in the fact that there relationships have not been seen through".⁴⁷ Henceforth, critical theoretical reflection will be understood to involve more than the questions specific to epistemology narrowly

⁴⁵Linklater, Men and Citizens, p. 146.

⁴⁶Hegel himself provides an outstanding example of this kind of emancipation-oriented theoretical reflection which presents the idea of liberation from coercive illusions in his discussion of the Master-Slave relationship in the Phenomenology of Mind. The Master tries to make the Slave the instrument of his will. The Slave expresses himself in his productive activity and then recognizes that expression in the objects he has created. As a consequence, the Slave experiences himself as a subject. And it is in this way that the distorting pressures of slavery leads dialectically to the demand for freedom.

It must be stressed again that for Hegel, the Bildungsprozess evident in the Master-Slave relationship was a universal feature of human life and thought.

⁴⁷Connerton, p. 19.

defined. Henceforth, the "critique of knowledge" (Kant) will be seen to "[entail] a critique of rational action or forms of life" (Hegel).⁴⁸

Thus, it was in specifying the role of critique as more than "negative judgement" - indeed, as playing a central and positive role in the historical movement from "self-estrangement" to "self-determination" - that Hegel reinforced the link between critical theory and the goal of human emancipation. Yet it was left to a third and final Enlightenment contributor to the tradition of critique - Karl Marx - to bring that tradition to its mature formulation.

To begin, there is no question that Marx identified himself with the tradition of critical theorizing begun by Kant and extended by Hegel.⁴⁹ It cannot be denied, for example, that "the dominant characteristic of history as a history of human capacities of species-powers is reiterated within Marx's framework".⁵⁰ Even after his break with the "Young Hegelians", Marx retained the notion of critique as a process of theoretical reflection oriented toward human

⁴⁸Warren, p. 36.

⁴⁹Nor is it inappropriate to discuss Marx's theorizing in terms of the larger Aristotelian project. As the Western Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács noted, the entire Hegelian-inspired tradition of historicist marxism can be understood as a form of left-wing Aristotelianism. See Tom Rockmore, ed., Lukács Today (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1988), p. 5.

⁵⁰Linklater, Men and Citizens, p. 151.

emancipation. As the Western Marxist philosopher Korsch has noted, it is not insignificant that Marx subtitled all of his major works as "critique".⁵¹

Notwithstanding his identification with the central emphasis of Kant, and especially Hegel, Marx did go beyond both of their conceptualizations to make a vital contribution to the evolution of the tradition of critical theory. The nature of his contribution grew out of his dissatisfaction with the highly "speculative" nature of Hegel's philosophy as concerned the nature of the creative subject in history as well as the general path to human emancipation. We shall examine these two elements in turn.

The difficulty Marx saw in Hegel's theoretical formulation was that the human dimension of social and political life was subsumed within - and, indeed, subordinated to - the central and creative role of "Geist" (spirit). In place of the unfolding of the "World Spirit", Marx underscored "'sensuous human activity' through which labouring subjects regulate their material exchange process with nature and in so doing constitute a world".⁵² "People make their own history", affirmed Marx, even if not under the circumstances

⁵¹See the discussion of Marx and "critique" in the section dealing with the tradition of "Western marxism" in the Dictionary of Marxist Thought, ed. Tom Bottomore (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 523-526.

⁵²McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 55. McCarthy is paraphrasing Habermas. See Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 28.

of their choosing.⁵³ Thus one of Marx's primary contributions to the development of the critical tradition was to replace "spirit" with thinking and acting human subjects as the creative force in history.

Marx also felt dissatisfaction with the path to emancipation outlined by Hegel. As was noted above, it was the central contention of Hegel's Enlightenment-inspired tradition of critique that human unfreedom was rooted in "false beliefs" (ideology). As a consequence, it was held that one had only to "reform consciousness to set the individual on the path to autonomy".⁵⁴

While certainly accepting that false beliefs lay at the root of human alienation, Marx was clearly dissatisfied with the proffered solution. The problem with the Hegelian conceptualization, noted Marx, is that it is "a merely theoretical emancipation".⁵⁵ As such, it risked reducing the Enlightenment notion of emancipation as "self-determination" to that of reconciliation with the status quo. In short, the major flaw in the Hegelian solution to the problem of unfreedom is that it left the real world untouched.

⁵³"Der Achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte," in Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels: Ausgewählte Werke (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), p. 99, my translation.

⁵⁴Steven Seidman, ed., Introduction to Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), p. 3.

⁵⁵Karl Marx, "Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", quoted in McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 16.

This was a major failing, for while Marx agreed that the reform of consciousness was a vital and necessary first step in overcoming alienated human existence, he also recognized that the goal of human emancipation required fundamental change in the way society was organized. And it was no doubt in response to this important limitation in Hegel's theoretical contribution that Marx formulated his well-known eleventh thesis on Feuerbach:

The philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point, however, is to change it.⁵⁶

In short, critique would be understood as more than theoretical reflection on epistemological concerns, and even as more than intellectual judgments on ideology. As a result of Marx's reformulation, critical theory would be understood in terms of practical political activity - undertaken by "conscienticized" human agents - and oriented toward a radical transformation of society.⁵⁷

On the basis of this admittedly schematic overview of the origins and evolution of the emancipation-oriented theoretical tradition associated with the notion of "critique", we are now in a position to identify the defining

⁵⁶"Thesen über Feuerbach," in Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels: Ausgewählte Werke, p. 28, (my translation).

⁵⁷"Conscientization" is the English transliteration of the Portuguese word conscientização by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. See P. Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury Press, 1970).

characteristics of emancipatory theory.⁵⁸ Simply put, the defining characteristics of emancipatory theory are those core elements which together constitute the critical tradition. There are three.

The first defining characteristic of emancipatory theory is that of theoretical "reflexivity"; this concerns the notion, highlighted by Kant, and re-affirmed by Hegel and Marx, that theorizing which hopes to make a meaningful contribution to human emancipation must involve an on-going process of "theoretical reflection on the process of theorizing itself". Of particular importance in addressing the question of reliable knowledge is the recognition that the standards for what is to count as reliable knowledge are themselves socially-constituted and historically-dependent. As a consequence, the origins, nature and - most importantly - the relative merits of accepted standards of reliable knowledge (in the light of possible alternatives), are issues which emancipation-oriented theorists must consider and reconsider at every stage.

⁵⁸In addition to the influence of Bernstein noted in chapter one, the three defining characteristics employed here were also inspired by and, at least in part, derived from those of "reflexivity, the acceptance of a methodological and ontological orientation distinct from the naturalist paradigm, and a commitment to social criticism and advocacy", advanced by Sabia and Wallulis in their discussion of "critical social science". See Daniel R. Sabia, Jr. and Jerald Wallulis, "The Idea of a Critical Social Science," in Changing Social Science: Critical Theory and Other Critical Perspectives, ed. D. Sabia and J. Wallulis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 6-7.

The second characteristic derives from the recognition, underscored by Kant, and broadened by Hegel and Marx, of the creative role of human consciousness: a role which goes beyond the process of knowledge production, narrowly defined, to include the constitution and transformation of modes of social and political life. It is the on-going attention to the constitutive and non-reductive power of human consciousness in dialectical interaction with the natural environment which stands as the second characteristic of emancipatory forms of theorizing.⁵⁹

And finally, in keeping with the general orientation of the Aristotelian project, emancipatory theory is characterized by its engagement in social criticism in support of practical political activity oriented toward societal transformation. Specifically, emancipatory theory seeks to promote a process of education and "conscientization" among those poorly served by present social and political arrangements, through which the disadvantaged can empower themselves to effect radical social change. In short, emancipatory theory is characterized

⁵⁹For a fuller discussion of the importance of the "creative activity" of human consciousness for critical forms of theorizing, see Warren, pp. 191-192.

by the desire to serve as "the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age".⁶⁰

Conclusion:

In this chapter we have accomplished two tasks. First, we have noted the failure of the discipline of international relations to make a meaningful contribution in terms of the contemporary requirements of the Aristotelian project. Specifically, international relations theory has been faulted for not having placed the issue of human emancipation at the centre of its theoretical concerns, a weakness all the more ironic in view of the clear interest of some of its leading theorists in promoting human welfare.

Secondly, we have examined a tradition of theorizing that has consistently placed the question of human emancipation at centre stage: that of critical theory. In the process, we have identified the three "critical" elements which characterize emancipatory theory: theoretical reflexivity, attention to the creative role of human consciousness, and a concern with social criticism in support of practical political activity oriented toward radical social change.

⁶⁰Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 41; quoted in Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" in Feminism as Critique, ed. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 31.

In the following chapters, it will be argued that if international relations theory has not placed the question of human emancipation at the centre of its theoretical concerns, this can be best understood in terms of the traditional absence of the core elements of the theoretical tradition of "critique". Moreover, it will be argued that the absence of these "critical" elements is not accidental. Specifically, it will be argued that the absence of these elements is a direct result of the predominance of a particular philosophy of science in the discipline of international relations: that of positivism. Before the relationship between the presence of positivism and the absence of the elements of emancipatory (critical) theory can be understood, however, the characteristics of positivism must be identified and the fact of its predominance in the discipline of international relations established. That is the task of the chapter which follows.

Chapter Three:

Positivism and International Relations Theory

It is the task of theory to detect in the welter of the unique facts of experience that which is uniform, similar, and typical. It is its task to reduce the facts of experience to mere specific instances of general propositions, to detect behind them the general laws to which they owe their existence and which determine their development.

Hans J. Morgenthau¹

The question "What is theory?" appears to pose no great problems for contemporary science. What counts for theory in customary research is the sum-total of propositions about a subject area that are connected to each other such that from a few one can derive the rest Theory is a store of knowledge in a form that makes it useful for the most thorough-going description of facts.

Max Horkheimer²

Introduction:

The aim of the present chapter is twofold: first, to achieve a fuller understanding of the positivist approach to theorizing within the social sciences, and secondly, to establish the degree to which positivism predominates in the study of international politics. To that end, the first part

¹"The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations," in Theoretical Aspects of International Relations, ed. William T. R. Fox (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), pp. 19-20.

²"Traditionelle und kritische Theorie," in M. Horkheimer, Kritische Theorie: Eine Dokumentation, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1968), II, 137, my translation.

of this chapter will develop a general definition of "positivism" which can be used to assess social scientific literature. Then, in the second part of this chapter the definition of positivism will be applied to the discipline of international relations in order to establish the fact of positivism's predominance in international relations theory. It is on this basis that we will be able to see clearly the link between the predominance of positivism and the absence of critical elements in international relations theory. It is also on this basis that we will be able to explore how the limitations of positivism direct us toward a restructuring of international relations theory in a way more compatible with the Aristotelian project.

Part I: Positivism and Social Science

Before proceeding any further it is important to have a clear idea of what is meant by a positivist approach in the context of the social sciences. This is a critical question and it is important to be clear about what is being argued here. To that end, it may be useful to begin by pointing out what is not being argued in this study.

First of all, it is not being argued that positivism can be understood in terms of the popular caricature identified with a-moral, a-theoretical, "number crunchers". This popular caricature is inappropriate because many positivists have strong moral commitments and are quite concerned with theory.

Furthermore, as will hopefully become clear, quantification is neither sufficient nor necessary for a study of the social world to qualify as positivist.

It will also not be argued that one can equate positivism in the social sciences with the work of self-designated positivists; such a strategy is simply too restrictive. It must be recognized that many social scientists are self-consciously "agnostic" with regard to questions concerning the philosophy of (social) science. However, because individual scholars do not consciously identify themselves with the positivist approach does not mean that such an approach has not been adopted unconsciously. Moreover, whether or not positivism is consistently applied by specific individuals, it can be argued that through the combined effect of the unconscious adoption of the positivist approach by the members of the research community, positivism is structuring the bulk of the research that is being undertaken.

Consequently, were we to limit ourselves to those individuals who have self-consciously and rigourously pursued a positivist research agenda, the extent of positivism's influence on theorizing about international politics would be greatly underestimated. Of course, we cannot escape making reference to individual statements and analyses in the effort to show the predominance of positivism in the study of the social world. However, the point is what these statements/analyses say in their combination about the discipline in

question, rather than whether the individual researchers to whom they are attached are self-conscious and consistent adherents of the positivist approach.

Finally, it will not be argued that positivism can be defined in terms of the specific methodological characteristics of one or another of the more well-known variants of positivism. This strategy is not useful for the simple reason that the positivist tradition has spawned many variants which often differ significantly in both methodology and research design, not to mention the fact that those variants are often applied in a non-rigorous manner. To identify positivism as a whole with one or another of its historically specific variants (or rather, a corrupted version thereof) would again be too restrictive, and would also lead to the misrecognition of the full extent of positivism's influence on contemporary social science.

Consequently, the strategy that will be adopted is the following. In the first part of this chapter, I will examine two distinct variants of the positivist tradition: i) *comtean* positivism - the earliest manifestation of the tradition dating from the 19th century, and ii) *logical* positivism - perhaps the most fully developed and influential variant, dating from the first half of the 20th century. What I shall be concerned with is something more probing than a surface-level description of these two variants of positivism. What I shall be attempting to capture are the central tenets common

to these and indeed to all other variants of positivism - the central tenets that together constitute "the positivistic logic of investigation".³

Following the determination of these core tenets, I will proceed to a discussion of their underlying assumptions. The identification of these assumptions is crucial, as it is the task of later chapters to cast doubt on the core tenets of positivism by challenging the validity of the assumptions on which they rest. In a context in which positivism continues to form the unquestioned backdrop of academic discourse, it is only by exposing the limitations of positivism that a space can be created for alternative forms of theorizing about international politics.

Comtean and Logical Positivism:

The positivist approach to the study of society has a long history within the social sciences, spanning almost two centuries. It has its roots in the early part of the nineteenth century in the work of Auguste Comte. Comte envisaged three distinct types of knowledge - theological, metaphysical and "positive" - corresponding to three stages in the evolution of human society: primitive, intermediary, and scientific, respectively. Thus for Comte "positive"

³See Jürgen Habermas, "The Classical Doctrine of Politics," in Habermas, Theory and Practice (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 44.

knowledge - from which the "positivist" tradition takes its name - was seen to correspond in temporal terms to the rise of "scientific" (ie. industrial) society.

According to Comte, the positivist approach would yield a methodologically unified conception of science which would provide true, objective knowledge in the form of causal laws of phenomena, derived from observation.⁴ For our purposes, three aspects of this conceptualization should be noted.

First, positive knowledge would be "true" in that it would correspond to empirical experience (facts). In this Comte's was clearly influenced by seventeenth century empiricists such as David Hume.⁵

Secondly, positive knowledge would be "objective" in that its grasp of the facts would be achieved without reference to (and without being subject to the distorting influence of) normatively-oriented theological and metaphysical ideologies.⁶

And finally, positivism as an approach would be "methodologically unified" in that it is held to be as well-suited to the study of the social world as it is to the natural world. It was Comte's view that each of the individual sciences must progress through a series of stages before

⁴William Outhwaite, New Philosophies of Social Science (London: MacMillan, 1987), p. 5.

⁵William Bechtel, Philosophy of Science (London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1988) p. 18.

⁶Outhwaite, p. 5.

achieving positive, scientific knowledge. And while it was the destiny of the science of society - "sociology" (the term was Comte's) - to be the last to do so, its attainment of the positive knowledge was just as certain as that of the other sciences.

It cannot be denied that Comte's views were very influential in the nineteenth century; his concern with identifying universal laws operating in human society caught the imagination of a number of students of human affairs. Marx and Engels, for example, despite holding grave reservations about Comte's politics, shared his concern with uncovering the "natural" laws of human social development.⁷

Nonetheless, Comte's views suffered from a number of imprecisions and even internal contradictions.⁸ For that reason, they were to give way in the early part of the twentieth century to a new variant of positivism - "logical positivism". Logical positivism arose in the 1920s in Austria (the Vienna Circle), Germany (the Berlin School) and Poland, and quickly became dominant. Many of its principal theorists, however, such as Rudolf Carnap, Herbert Feigl, Hans

⁷Outhwaite, p. 5.

⁸For example, having counterposed the objective knowledge of positivism to the normatively distorted knowledge of theology and metaphysics, Comte began to reintroduce normative elements into positive knowledge by speaking of the development of a positivist morality and politics. Similarly, Comte's teleological philosophy of human history was considered by later positivists to have disturbingly metaphysical overtones. See Outhwaite, pp. 5-6.

Reichenback and Carl Hempel moved to the United States with the rise of Nazism.⁹ And as Bechtel notes, many of the logical positivists were physicists and mathematicians, highly admiring of the new physics (relativity theory and quantum mechanics), who were concerned to explore the nature of science and, above all, to demonstrate what made it a reliable source of knowledge.

The adjectival modifier "logical" in logical positivism indicates how this variant of positivism attempted to overcome the limitations of Comte's approach. What marked the work of the logical positivists was the central role played by symbolic logic, as developed by Russell and Frege.¹⁰ By means of symbolic logic this group of philosophers attempted to purge the last vestiges of metaphysics from the positivist legacy (for which they blamed, in large part, Comte himself)¹¹ by providing a precise, formal rendering of the structure of science.

The emphasis on symbolic logic gave rise to three distinctive aspects of logical positivism: i) the referential

⁹Bechtel, p. 17. Another prominent philosopher of science associated with logical positivism - though in some ways more as a "friendly critic" than a core adherent - was Karl Popper.

¹⁰Symbolic logic, to be distinguished from Aristotelian "syllogistic logic", is composed of "sentential" or "propositional" logic on the one hand and "quantificational logic" (also known as "predicate calculus") on the other. For an extended discussion of the development and characteristics of symbolic logic, see Bechtel, pp. 3-8.

¹¹See above, note #8.

theory of meaning; ii) the deductive-nomological method of explanation and the related hypothetico-deductive model of justification; and iii) the axiomatic view of theories. These three aspects will be treated in turn.¹²

The logical positivists located many of the problems and uncertainties of science, especially those associated with the social sciences, in the unclear use of language.¹³ Scientific language must be governed by strict rules of meaning, argued the logical positivists. In the absence of such rules, confusion reigns and scientists end up producing utterly meaningless statements. In the context of scientific discourse, a meaningless statement was worse than incorrect - it was not understandable.¹⁴

This raises the question of the criteria for meaningful statements. In their discussion of proper rules of meaning, the logical positivists followed Comte (and the classical empiricists) in linking knowledge to the empirical realm. There was an important innovation in their approach, however. Previously, ideas had played a central role in positivist and

¹²This discussion is based heavily on Bechtel, pp. 19-31, and Fred Dallmayr, Language and Politics (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 28-52. For parallel discussions, see Fred Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy, Understanding and Social Inquiry (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), pp. 77-79, as well as Brian Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), chapter two.

¹³See Dallmayr, Language and Politics, p. 29.

¹⁴Bechtel, p. 19.

classical empiricist analysis; ideas were viewed as units of thinking and were considered to be the "causal products of sensory experience".¹⁵ For the logical positivists, in contrast, ideas were "fuzzy entities". And it was for that reason that ideas were replaced by "linguistic entities" - sentences and words - as the basic "vehicles of meaning".¹⁶

To explain how these linguistic entities were related to the empirical realm, the logical positivists advanced the "referential theory of meaning".¹⁷ At the centre of this theory stood the "verifiability principle",¹⁸ according to which "the meaning of a sentence was the set of conditions that would show that the sentence was true".¹⁹ In its simplest terms, the verifiability principle stipulated that "a statement makes sense only if, and to the extent that, its empirical reference can be firmly corroborated".²⁰ Every "meaningful problem", affirmed Vienna Circle member Moritz

¹⁵Bechtel, p. 20.

¹⁶Bechtel, p. 20.

¹⁷Dallmayr, Language and Politics, p. 30. As Dallmayr notes, one of the most committed defenders of the referential theory of meaning was the philosopher Bertrand Russell. See Dallmayr, pp. 29-32.

¹⁸Dallmayr, Language and Politics, p. 36.

¹⁹Bechtel, p. 20.

²⁰Dallmayr, Language and Politics, pp. 36-37. An important exception, of course, are strictly syntactical-analytical propositions. See below.

Schlick, would be solved through the process of verification.

And this process, wrote Schlick,

in which the path to the solution finally ends is always of the same sort: it is the occurrence of a definite fact that is confirmed by observation, by means of immediate experience. In this manner the truth (or falsity) of every statement, of daily life or science, is determined."²¹

The logical positivists argued further that meaningful sentences could be separated into two classes. The first class of sentences - termed synthetic statements - were sentences which could be directly verified through experience. Although there was some disagreement about what kind of sentences belonged in this class, by and large logical positivists accepted sentences which referred to physical states of the world as being synthetic statements.²²

However, there was another class of meaningful sentences - known as analytic statements - which could not be directly verified in terms of the empirical realm. Sentences containing theoretical or definitional terms which referred directly

²¹Schlick quoted in Dallmayr, Language and Politics, pp. 37-38.

²²Bechtel, p. 20. An example is the statement "The sky is blue".

One of the most staunchly argued positions was that of "physicalism" - the position that "basic report sentences can and should be stated in physicalist language, that is, in the form of quantitative descriptions referring to concrete space-time points". A position championed by both Neurath and Carnap, the chief advantage to descriptions formulated in physicalist terms is held to be their "reliance on (presumably) inter-sensual or intersubjective data". See Dallmayr, Language and Politics, p. 34.

neither to empirical data or observable objects, for example, fell into this class. Yet it was also true that such sentences played an important role (ie. had meaning) in scientific discourse. For that reason, the logical positivists tried to determine ways in which the truth or falsity of sentences using theoretical or definitional terms (analytic statements) could be verified indirectly by means of sentences which did refer directly to the empirical realm (synthetic statements).

In sum, it was the self-designated task of logical positivism

to arrange all meaningful problems of cognition under two rubrics: they either concern analytical truths in the sense of a tautological explication of sign rules within a linguistic system; or else they deal with synthetic (aposteriori) statements in which case they must be anchored in extra-linguistic states of affairs denoted by language.²³

The key to linking the two domains was provided by symbolic logic, which was employed to "translate" analytic statements into synthetic statements. These translations generally consisted of "biconditional sentences" in which one statement (the analytic statement) was held to be true if and only if

²³Karl-Otto Apel, Die Idee der Sprache in der Tradition des Humanismus von Dante bis Vico, 3rd ed. (Bonn: Bouvier, 1980), p. 29, quoted in Dallmayr, Language and Politics, p. 29.

the other (synthetic) statement is found to be true (ie. conform to the facts).²⁴

Ultimately, the requirement that theoretical/definitional analytical statements have to be translatable into empirical synthetic statements was found to be too difficult to satisfy completely. Some theoretical terms can be translated in more than one way, and some seem not to be translatable at all.²⁵ Nonetheless, it can be argued that this criterion has remained regulative for individuals working within a positivist framework, premised as that framework is on the referential theory of meaning.

Finally it is important to note the status of those sentences which do not fall into the two aforementioned

²⁴Bechtel, p. 20.

A derivation of symbolic logic holding particular importance for the research design of logical positivism (A is the analytical statement; B is the synthetic statement) is the modus ponens or "affirming the antecedent" :

If A, then B.

A

Therefore, B.

As Bechtel notes, this effort to "explicate the meaning of all scientific discourse in terms of observation conditions is closely related to the very influential doctrine, associated with the American physicist and mathematician Percy Bridgman, of operational definitions. According to this doctrine, in introducing a theoretical concept, it is necessary to specify operations through which one can confirm or disconfirm statements using that term. Bridgman's notion of an operational definition extends the Positivists' conception of an observation term by supplying procedures for producing the requisite observations." p. 21.

²⁵Bechtel, pp. 21-22.

categories. An example of such sentences were statements of a normative nature (e.g., freedom is good). In terms of the referential theory of meaning, such statements were not so much wrong as "meaningless"; not so much incorrect as "empty sounds".²⁶

Of course logical positivists conceded that "meaningless statements" were capable of playing an important role in eliciting emotional responses or provoking human action. But, maintained the logical positivists, that kind of role was possible only outside the realm of scientific discourse. In the realm of scientific discourse the concern is that of truth - of distinguishing between true and false statements - a concern which requires that all statements be meaningful in order to be assessable. Non-meaningful discourse (e.g., normative discourse) might be "effective" in some contexts, but from the perspective of science it could only ever be confused discourse.²⁷

But the logical positivists went beyond simply explicating criteria for making meaningful statements. Their central concern, like Comte before them, was to explain events

²⁶Schlick, quoted in Dallmayr, Language and Politics, p. 38. Typical is Carnap's response to Heidegger's essay "What is Metaphysics?":

... in the domain of metaphysics, including all philosophy of value and normative theory, logical analysis yields the negative result that the alleged statements in this domain are entirely meaningless. Quoted in Dallmayr, p. 36.

²⁷Bechtel, p. 19.

in the empirical realm and to predict their future occurrence.²⁸ This raises the issue of what constitutes an adequate explanation in logical positivist terms, and how accurate predictions were possible. The logical positivist answers to these questions bring us to the second distinctive aspect of their formulation of the positivist approach: the deductive-nomological model of explanation, and the related hypothetico-deductive model of theory development.

In logical positivist terms, events in the empirical realm are held to be instances of observable regularities. These regularities, moreover, are held to be independent of time, place, and the human observer. Thus in answer to the question of the nature of adequate explanation for such an event, logical positivists argued that "explaining an event consisted of deriving a statement describing that event from statements of scientific laws and statements describing antecedently known empirical facts (initial conditions)."²⁹

This view of explanation came to be known as the deductive-nomological or "covering law" form of explanation. In simplest terms, an occurrence in the observable empirical realm is held to have been "explained" once it has been identified as a manifestation of a regularity and has been subsumed under a general "covering law" which specifies the

²⁸Bechtel, p. 22.

²⁹Bechtel, p. 22.

causal determinants of the occurrence in question. In the words of Karl Popper:

To give a causal explanation of an event means to deduce a statement which describes it, using as premises of the deduction one or more universal laws, together with certain singular statements, the initial conditions.... The initial conditions describe what is usually called the "cause" of the event in question.³⁰

The exact nature of these laws is clearly specified by logical positivism. Laws are conditional statements of the form "if 'x' happens, 'y' (will) happen(s)". As to statements describing initial conditions, these statements tell us that "x" has happened.³¹

As noted by Brian Fay, the relationship between the variables specified by the law must satisfy three conditions:

- i) the relationship must be invariable
- ii) one variable must temporally precede, or at least be simultaneous with, the other
- iii) the relationship must be asymmetrical, such that the occurrence of one (the independent) variable induces the occurrence of the other (dependent) variable, while the reverse is not true.³²

In sum, notes Fay, covering laws which are causal in form "state an invariable sequential order of dependence between

³⁰Karl Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery (New York: Harper and Row), pp. 59-60.

³¹Bechtel, p. 23.

³²Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice, pp. 32-33.

kinds of states of affairs.³³ And it should be noted that this form marks a law as positivist whether the law specifies individual variables or whether it is probabilistic in form, specifying the invariant relationships among mass events.³⁴

How then does one go about developing laws to explain instances of empirical regularities? The answer provided by the logical positivists is that of the hypothetico-deductive method. According to this method, the scientist starts with an event that requires explanation. S/he then develops an hypothesis to account for its occurrence which - if true - can be used to derive a general covering law. This hypothesis is then tested against changed initial conditions. If the predictions stemming from the hypothesis are true, the hypothesis is confirmed.³⁵

It should be noted here positivism concerns itself not at all the question of where the hypothesis comes from, or how the individual scientist arrives at the explanatory hypothesis in question. The speculative process which underlies hypothesis formulation belongs, according to the positivist approach, to the "context of discovery" - a context potentially of interest to psychologists, but not really of

³³Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice, p. 33.

³⁴Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice, p. 37. Hempel was particularly concerned to modify the deductive-nomological/ covering law form of explanation to allow for "inductive-statistical" explanations. See Bechtel, p. 24.

³⁵Bechtel, p. 24.

any relevance to science. What is of relevance to science is the "context of justification" - that is, the context in which strict methodological procedures must be followed in order to ensure that the testing of a given hypothesis against the facts is done properly.³⁶

The point can be made clearer with an example from the natural sciences. Suppose that we are interested in explaining the boiling of water. One possible hypothesis to account for that event is one which relates the boiling of water to its temperature. Specifically, one might hypothesize that if water attains a temperature of one hundred degrees Celsius, it will boil.³⁷ We might then test this hypothesis against varying initial conditions (i.e., different temperatures). If we find through such testing that, all things being equal, water boils when the temperature rises to one hundred degrees Celsius, and if, moreover, experimentation indicates it always does so, we can consider the hypothesis to be confirmed.³⁸

³⁶For further discussion of the distinction between the "context of discovery" and the "context of justification", see Frederick Suppe, The Structure of Scientific Theories, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977, p. 125.

³⁷Note that it is of no consequence how we have arrived at this hypothesis - a question relating to the "context of discovery".

³⁸Of course, should we ever notice, all things being equal, that water does not boil at 100°C, we can consider the general proposition relating the boiling of water to its temperature disconfirmed, thereby ensuring that the quest to specify the causal relationship between temperature and boiling (if any) will be reopened.

Now a confirmed hypothesis does more than account for why water has boiled in the past; it also allows us to predict when it will do so in the future. To understand why this is so, it is necessary to appreciate the unique nature of the deductive-nomological form of explanation. In fact, the positivist covering law-centred form of explanation postulates a "structural identity" of explanation and prediction.³⁹ Since an empirical event is held to be explained once it has been identified as a regularity independent of time, place and observer, and can be derived from a general covering law, the same covering law will serve to predict its reoccurrence in the future.

An hypothesis which can be shown to be true through testing satisfies a necessary condition to be considered a "covering law". But while correspondence with the empirical world is a necessary condition for being considered a law, it is not sufficient. Bechtel provides a good example of why this is the case:

... if it were true that I only carried \$1 bills in my wallet, then the following would be a true general statement: for all "x", if "x" is a bill in my wallet, then it is a \$1 bill. But this intuitively is not a law. The reason is that there does not seem to be any reason except chance or my perversity for me to carry only \$1 bills in my wallet. It is commonly thought that laws are more than general statements that happen to be true. We think they

³⁹Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice, p. 31.

tell us something about the limits of how things must be.⁴⁰

This then raises the question of how the logical positivists differentiated between bona fide laws and "accidental generalizations". The answer they provided to this questions brings us to the third distinctive characteristic of logical positivism: the axiomatic account of theories.

Put simply, logical positivists differentiated between laws and accidental generalizations by arguing that laws, unlike accidental generalizations, are grounded in scientific theories. In fact, argue logical positivists, just as events are "explained" in terms of (i.e., derived from) laws, so laws themselves are explained in terms of (i.e., derived from) theories. Indeed, the very definition of a scientific theory offered by logical positivists was that of a "structured network of statements from which one could derive specific laws".⁴¹

An example of the kind of theory favoured by logical positivists is that of Euclidean geometry. At its core is a set of basic terms, and postulates from which axioms can be derived. Drawing on this example, the logical positivists argued that scientific theories should also be conceived as deductive structures built around a core of basic terms and

⁴⁰Bechtel, p. 25.

⁴¹Bechtel, p. 28.

postulates. The axioms which could be derived from this core would be the specific laws.⁴²

In short, argued the logical positivists, scientific theory should be conceptualized as an axiomatic structure. Moreover, to the extent that scientists can be taught to think of theory in these terms, science itself will benefit. Efforts to axiomatize existing theoretical explorations will serve to introduce more rigour and clarity into the theoretical enterprise. Moreover, axiomatization may help scientists to discover implications of their theories of which they were not aware, thus providing new opportunities for hypothesis testing.⁴³

In sum, then, logical positivism distinguished itself as a systematic and extremely elegant scientific project. It is a project which advances a theory of meaning in which scientific discourse is grounded in the empirical realm, and which employs deduction to show how specific events could be explained by scientific laws. It is a project in which the role of confirmation in the verification of laws is specified, and in which scientific laws themselves are shown to be derivable from axiomatic theoretical structures. For all of these reasons, logical positivism became dominant in the first half of the twentieth century, and, with some modifications,

⁴²Bechtel, p. 28.

⁴³Bechtel, p. 28.

remains the standard for the vast majority of working scientists."⁴

Despite these distinctive characteristics, however, it is clear that logical positivism stands firmly within the tradition that began with Auguste Comte. Commonalities between the earlier comtean positivism and logical positivism exist in at least three important respects. First, logical positivists, like comtean positivists, make the empirical, observable realm the focus of investigation. The development of positive knowledge is viewed as a cumulative process in which more and more events are identified as being manifestations of regularities and subsumed under general covering laws. And it is the direct correspondence of positivist theory to the empirical realm which guarantees the truth of that theory.

A second commonality between logical positivists and comtean positivists is the conviction that positivist research methods are as well-suited to the study of the social world as they are to the study of the natural world. Indeed, some logical positivists went beyond a methodological unity to espousing a substantive unity of science in which the laws of specialized disciplines (e.g., psychology, political science)

⁴"One of the more important modifications was the shift in emphasis, stemming from the work of Karl Popper, from confirmation of true hypotheses to the falsification of untrue hypotheses. See the discussion of confirmation versus falsification in the next chapter.

are viewed as "derivative laws which, in principle, can be derived from the most basic laws of physics", thereby opening the possibility that human sciences might one day be "subsumed within physics as a special application of physical laws".⁴⁵ In any case, it is clear that in terms of logical positivism, Comte's original dream of a true "science of society" remains a regulative ideal.

And finally, logical positivists, like the comtean positivists before them, affirmed that the knowledge developed by means of their approach was objective knowledge. It was objective in that it was uninfluenced (i.e., undistorted) by metaphysical concerns and, indeed, occupied a sphere separate and distinct from that inhabited by "nonsensical" normative and value-oriented discourses.

It is these three commonalities which span the history of the positivist tradition that can serve as our guideposts to identifying the basic tenets of the positivistic logic of investigation. It is to a discussion of those tenets - and of the assumptions that underlie them - that we now turn.

The Positivistic Logic of Investigation: Tenets and Assumptions

Based on this, admittedly cursory review of two concrete variants of the positivist tradition, we can now specify more clearly the central tenets which together form the core of the

⁴⁵Bechtel, p. 29.

contemporary "positivistic logic of investigation" in the social sciences. In line with the three commonalities identified above, it will be argued that there are three.⁴⁶ They are i) the tenet of "truth as correspondence"; ii) the tenet of the methodological unity of science; and iii) the tenet of the value-free nature of scientific knowledge. These three tenets are themselves based upon three distinct assumptions. I shall proceed with a discussion of these three tenets - and their underlying assumptions - in turn.

Tenet I: Truth as Correspondence

The first tenet - that of truth as correspondence - is at the very core of the positivistic logic of investigation. According to this tenet, positive knowledge - in contrast to "metaphysical" or "theological" knowledge - is reliable because it corresponds directly to the observable, empirical realm. Moreover, it is that correspondence which guarantees the "truth" of positive knowledge.

Of course, it is important to note that positivists recognize that the knowledge they generate may not now - nor perhaps ever - correspond perfectly to objective reality. Even

⁴⁶For another effort to identify the distinguishing characteristics of the positivist tradition as a whole - one which does so in terms of four "rules" - see Leszek Kolakowski, The Alienation of Reason: A History of Positivist Thought, Norbert Guterman, trans. (New York: Doubleday, 1968).

so, the goal of perfect correspondence remains the regulative ideal.⁴⁷

What then is the assumption underlying this tenet? In short, it is the assumption of the separation of subject and object. This assumption postulates the existence of a "real world" - the "object" - which is separate and distinct from the theoretical constructions of the (social) scientist - the subject. It is held, moreover, that the theoretical constructions of the subject can be formulated in terms of a non-idiosyncratic intersubjectively-valid observation language which captures reality - the facts - in direct terms.⁴⁸ Indeed, it is because of the possibility of methodologically "factoring out" the identities of the individual researcher that "objective knowledge of an intersubjectively

⁴⁷For a discussion of the on-going movement of fallibilistic positivist science toward an ever closer approximation to the truth (understood as correspondence to objective reality) - in Popper's terms, "verisimilitude" - see Karl Popper, Conjectures and Refutations (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, chapter 10.

⁴⁸It should be noted that "facts have a special status in positivism: "Facts" refer "to a class of phenomena which were believed to be in some manner ... 'given' in immediate experience and presented in an indefeasible observation language." Gunnell, "Philosophy and Political Theory", Government and Opposition, 14, No. 2, p. 208. Quoted in Roger Tooze, "International Political Economy," in International Relations: British and American Perspectives, ed. Steve Smith (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1985), p. 113.

transmissible character in the social sciences" is at all possible.⁴⁹

Thus for positivists, true knowledge - Comte's "positive" knowledge - is held to be knowledge which conforms to (and derives its truth-value from) objective reality. And there is no question that this position is shared by positivists working in the social sciences. Empiricism, affirms political scientist Eugene Meehan, "is the only epistemic base for human knowledge".⁵⁰ The task of the political scientist, states David Easton, is the collection of the "objective facts" of political activity, while the validity of observation statements "is determined by the correspondence of a statement to reality".⁵¹ In short, asserts political scientist Robert Dahl, in a particularly straight-forward restatement of the tenet of "truth as correspondence" (and its assumption of the non-relevance of the identity of the observer): "Whether [an

⁴⁹Arnold Brecht, Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth-Century Political Thought (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 481, quoted in Scott Warren, The Emergence of Dialectical Theory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 8.

⁵⁰The Theory and Method of Political Analysis (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1965), p. 12, quoted in Warren, p. 8.

⁵¹The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), pp. 225-226.

empirical] proposition is true or false, depends on the degree to which the proposition and the real world correspond".⁵²

Tenet II: The Methodological Unity of Science

The second tenet of the positivistic logic of investigation is the methodological unity of science. According to this tenet, the research methodology developed for the study of the natural world - a methodology which has proved extremely successful - is equally suited to the study of the social world.

What then is the assumption underlying this second tenet? Here the assumption is that of naturalism. That is, it is assumed that there is no difference between the social world and the natural world so fundamental that the approach developed to conduct a scientific analysis of the natural world is not appropriate to the social world.

It is an integral aspect of the assumption of naturalism that the social world contains the same kind of regularities as one finds in the natural world. In this case, necessitous "behavioural regularities" are independent of time, place, and, consistent with the first assumption of the separation of the subject and object.

Once again, there is no question that this second core tenet of positivism - and the assumption underlying it - are

⁵²Modern Political Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 8.

held by positivists active in the study of human society. In the words of political scientist George Catlin

There can be no science of politics unless there are these political uniformities, these constants of behaviour, which admit of formulation as laws. And [these laws are] as timeless as the laws of mechanics, holding for the human race wherever and whenever it is found. And men in so far as they obey these laws will act in as timeless a fashion as ... atoms act in their chemical combinations according to formula. We are looking for this and nothing else.⁵³

Easton would concur: without the "search for uniformities in political relations," and for "various levels of generalizations," the "development of research towards theory is ... retarded". For, argues Easton, the central task of political science is to develop a "general framework within which ... facts [can] acquire meaning to transcend any particular time and place".⁵⁴

It is the assumption of naturalism which accounts for the extent to which the proponents of the forms of positivism reviewed above - both Comtean positivism and logical positivism - take considerable inspiration from the natural sciences (physics in particular). And it is the assumption of naturalism as well which explains the confidence expressed by adherents of the positivist approach that progress, defined as the gradual accumulation of ever truer hypotheses and

⁵³George E. G. Catlin, Principles of Politics (London: Allen and Unwin, 1930), p. 39.

⁵⁴The Political System, pp. 78, 86, 89, quoted in Warren, p. 9.

theories, will occur in the social sciences as it has in the natural sciences - through hypothesis testing and replication.

Thus it is that Popper notes the tremendous successes attained by modern physics since the time of Galileo. In biology too, notes Popper, since the time of Pasteur - the Galileo of biology - scientific advance has been the norm. Only the social sciences lag behind, observes Popper, for they "do not as yet seem to have found their Galileo".⁵⁵

The reason for Galileo's absence in the social sciences - the explanation for "the disappointing results of a discipline already twenty-five hundred years old" - argues Easton, is the reluctance to emulate the "scientific method" championed by Galileo and his successors.⁵⁶ As a consequence, it is the adoption of that method that will allow the social

⁵⁵The Poverty of Historicism (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 1-2, quoted in Fred Gareau, "The Long, Uncertain Road to Social Science Maturity," International Journal of Cognitive Sociology, 29, No. 3-4, (1988), p. 178.

⁵⁶Easton, The Political System, pp. 3-4, quoted in Warren, p. 7.

sciences to achieve their fullest promise.⁵⁷ And with its adoption in the twentieth century, affirms Kaspar Naegele, "The study of society as a cumulative and, therefore, scientific, enterprise is under way".⁵⁸

Tenet III: The Value-Free Nature of Scientific Knowledge

The third tenet of the positivistic logic of investigation is that of the value-free nature of scientific knowledge. This tenet of the contemporary positivistic logic of investigation is composed of two parts. First, it affirms that knowledge produced through positivist methodology and research design is knowledge restricted to the realm of the

⁵⁷Nor has the adoption of the scientific method, to the degree that it has occurred, been uniform across the social sciences. Notes Easton:

If the condition of political science represented the exhaustion of its present potentialities, then there would be little justification in voicing any concern about it. But comparison with the level of achievement of other social sciences demonstrates what political science could be doing. However much students of political life may seek to escape the taint, if they were to eavesdrop on the whisperings of their fellow social scientists, they would find that they are almost generally stigmatized as the least advanced. They could present society, they would hear, with at least a slice of bread but they offer it only a crumb.

The Political System, p. 40, quoted in Warren, p. 7.

⁵⁸Kaspar D. Naegele, "Some observations on the scope of sociological analysis," in Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory, I, ed. T. Parsons, M. Shils, and E. Naegele (New York: The Free Press, 1961) p. 3.

objective (i.e., empirical) world. Thus scientific knowledge does not pronounce upon disputes in the non-factual realm for the simple reason that resolving normative questions is not within the competence of science.

Secondly, this tenet affirms that the knowledge produced through positivist methodology and research design is knowledge unaffected by the value-commitments of the researchers themselves. As such, positive knowledge is held to be knowledge which can be accepted by scholars with varying value-orientations, thereby providing a "common ground" on which constructive scientific interaction can take place.

What then is the assumption underlying this third tenet? Underlying the tenet of the value-free nature of scientific knowledge is the assumption of the separation of fact and value. In short, positivism assumes that the factual and the normative can be separated into distinct realms, with science concerning itself with the former while judiciously avoiding pronouncing upon or being influenced by the latter. This separation is at the heart of the logical positivist endeavour to separate meaningful statements (relating to the factual) which fall within the purview of science, from "meaningless" statements such as those pertaining to normative issues. It is also at the heart of the considerable efforts made by positivists to devise methodological techniques and research designs which can serve to "filter out" the value-bias of the individual researcher.

Once again, there is no question that this tenet and assumption are shared by positivistically-inclined social scientists. Thus traditional concepts such as freedom, equality, democracy, and the "good and just life" must be purged from the field of political science, for not only are such concepts "vague, ambiguous, difficult or impossible to operationalize, useless as a guide to empirical choice",⁵⁹ but they are "value-laden" and thus "provide the additional difficulty of conveying both factual and distinctly evaluative meanings in research which presumably seeks to be primarily empirical".⁶⁰

Of course it is undeniable that researchers themselves have value commitments which underlie the research in which they engage. Even so, responds Easton,

The mere statement ... that values underlie all research, does not in itself lead to the inevitable conclusion that these values must, by virtue of their presence, influence this research. Conceivably they could be there, but remain quite innocuous and even irrelevant.⁶¹

And, in any case, the goal of a value-free science remains the norm.

⁵⁹Eugene J. Meehan, Value Judgement and Social Science: Structures and Processes (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1969), p. 147, quoted in Warren, p. 9.

⁶⁰Easton, The Political System, p. 45, quoted in Warren, p. 9.

⁶¹The Political System, p. 225, quoted in Warren, p. 11, my emphasis.

But what of the place of values in explaining human behaviour? Is it not important to be able to treat normative concerns insofar as they influence social interaction? Indeed, it is, responds Easton, who holds out the possibility of studying values - insofar as people do "hold values" - as "social facts".⁶² At the same time, it is crucial to recognize that the assumption of the positivist student of social life is that

values can ultimately be reduced to emotional responses conditioned by the individual's total life-experiences. In this interpretation, although in practice no one proposition need express either a pure fact or a pure value, facts and values are logically heterogeneous. The factual aspect of a proposition refers to a part of reality, hence it can be tested by reference to the facts. In this way we check its truth. The moral aspect of a proposition, however, expresses only the emotional response of an individual to a state of real or presumed facts.⁶³

The positivist position is clear. Values as "emotional responses" - as "social facts" - have meaning and can be used to generate knowledge. But what of value questions outside of the realm of facts? Here positivist social scientists fall into two camps. In the first and smaller camp are those who, starting from the premise that "Knowledge is not knowledge until it has been substantiated using the procedures which

⁶²Easton quoted in Warren, p. 10.

⁶³Easton, The Political System, p. 221, quoted in Warren, p. 10, my emphasis.

have been labelled 'scientific method',⁶⁴ argue that value questions debated outside of the realm of facts are meaningless. This position, however, while a popular one during the reign of logical positivism, has more recently fallen into some disrepute.

In the second and numerically larger camp, one finds positivists who, while continuing to affirm that scientific knowledge is value-free knowledge based on facts and validated by means of the "scientific method", nonetheless hold out the possibility that theorizing which does not make a claim to science and which restricts itself to the treatment of normative issues may have something to contribute as well.⁶⁵ Indeed, it is the wide-spread acceptance that this position has achieved in the positivist-dominated era that lends credence to the argument that the very enterprise of "normative theory" - as something distinct from that of "scientific theory" - is a creation of positivism itself.⁶⁶

In sum, the tenet of the value-free nature of scientific knowledge, and the assumption of the separation of fact and

⁶⁴Alan Isaak, Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1969), p. 56, quoted in Warren, p. 11.

⁶⁵Popper, for example, felt that the logical positivists went too far in asserting that value questions were "meaningless".

⁶⁶On this point, see Dante Germino, Beyond Ideology: The Revival of Political Theory (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 83.

value underlying it, insist that the competence of science lies in the analysis of objective reality alone - the "is" and not the "ought". And should one desire to go beyond the realm of facts, even the most generous of positivists will feel obliged to point out that in so doing one moves beyond the realm of science as well. Moreover, even if they are of the opinion that normative issues are worthy of study and analysis, their positivist counsel may well be the following: "These are philosophical questions better left to the philosophers".⁶⁷

This concludes the first part of this chapter. To summarize, we have established that the logic of investigation of present-day positivism comprises three basic tenets: i) truth as correspondence; ii) the methodological unity of science; and iii) the value-free nature of scientific knowledge. These three tenets rest, in turn, upon three basic assumptions: i) the separation of subject and object; ii) naturalism; and iii) the separation of fact and value. Finally, we have established that these three tenets and their underlying assumptions are shared by positivist social scientists.

⁶⁷Heinz Eulau, The Behavioural Persuasion in Politics (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 133, quoted in Warren, p. 10.

It is the objective of later chapters to call the central tenets of the positivistic logic of investigation into question by casting doubt on the validity of the assumptions underlying them. It is to be hoped that this will open a space for a restructuring of international relations theory in a non-positivist critical direction. Before proceeding to that discussion however, it is still necessary to show the predominance of the positivist approach in the discipline of international relations. It is to that task that we now turn.

Part II: Positivism in International Relations Theory

Having reviewed two specific variants of the positivist tradition, we have arrived at a general definition of positivism centred around the three central tenets which comprise the "positivistic logic of investigation". In this process, it should have become clear that positivism as an approach to the study of the social world cannot be equated with "number-crunching".⁶⁸ Nor would it be correct to regard positivism as just a "methodology". In fact, as its core tenets and their underlying assumptions indicate, positivism is an entire Weltanschauung.

In addition, we have showed that contemporary positivists working in the social sciences adhere to the core tenets - and share the underlying assumptions - of the positivistic logic of investigation. We will now proceed to an examination of the predominance of positivism in one particular social science: that of international relations theory. By surveying the writings of prominent theorists within the discipline of international relations - past as well as present - I will show not only that positivism predominates in contemporary international relations theory, but that, in fact, it has been

⁶⁸Indeed, despite the high correlation of quantification and a positivist approach, the presence of "number-crunching" techniques is neither sufficient nor necessary for work to be classified as positivist. That is, one may subscribe to a positivist approach and employ positivist research methodology without quantifying, and at the same time, quantification techniques can be incorporated into a non-positivist research strategy with no inconsistency whatsoever.

the predominant approach to theorizing about international politics throughout much of the present century. If true, this would explain much concerning the dearth of theorizing within the discipline which is oriented toward working in terms of the Aristotelian project.

Positivism and Contemporary International Relations Theory

i) Positivism in Mainstream International Relations Theory

The most logical place to begin our exploration of positivism's place in international relations theory is in the writings of contemporary theorists. It is the most logical place because it is in contemporary theory that one can see the clearest impact of the "behavioural revolution" of the 1950s. It will be remembered that it was the behavioural revolution in social science that gave rise to the "great debate" between the "classical" approach to international relations theorizing and the more methodologically self-conscious - and ultimately triumphant - "scientific" approach.

Within the mainstream of international relations theory the vast majority of scholars have identified themselves with and promoted the scientific approach to international relations theorizing. Included in this group are well-known individuals such as Kenneth Waltz, Morton Kaplan, Richard Rosecrance, Klaus Knorr, Sydney Verba, Karl Deutsch, James Rosenau, J. W. Burton, Stanley Hoffmann, Charles Kindleberger,

Charles McClelland, Robert Keohane, Robert Gilpin and J. D. Singer.⁶⁹

Although space prohibits us from examining the writings of all of these individuals in detail, it is worth spending some time surveying some of the more telling pronouncements found in their work. To that end, I will begin with a focus on the work of Kenneth Waltz, the author of one of the most influential texts in international relations theory in the post-war era: Theory of International Politics.⁷⁰

Waltz is clearly committed to a "scientific" approach to the study of international politics, and he spends considerable effort at the beginning of his book detailing the core elements in such an approach. One of his first concerns is to define the concepts "theory" and "law", and to detail the relationship between them. Waltz defines a law in positivistic terms, as a statement which establishes

relations between variables, variables being concepts that can take different values. If "a" then "b", where "a" stands for one or more independent variables, and "b" stands for the dependent variable: In form this is the statement of a law. If the relationship between "a" and "b" is invariant, the way is absolute. If the relation is highly constant, though not invariant, the law

⁶⁹Mervyn Frost, Towards a Normative Theory of International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 13.

⁷⁰Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (New York: Random House, 1979).

would read like this: If "a" then "b" with probability "x".⁷¹

Waltz notes that in order for a statement which establishes relations between variables to be considered a law, it must satisfy the criteria related to empirical testing. Argues Waltz

A law is based not simply on a relation that has been found, but on one that has been found repeatedly. Repetition gives rise to the expectation that if I find "a" in the future, then with specified probability I will also find "b".... [T]he statement would not be at all like a law unless the relation had so often and so reliably been found in the past that the expectation of its holding in the future with comparable probability is high.⁷²

It will be remembered from our review of logical positivism, however, that conformity with empirical evidence satisfies only part of the requirement for an hypothesis to be a law. For laws, as opposed to accidental generalizations, say something not only about how things are, but how they must be. Notes Waltz, "Everyone knows, that a coefficient of correlation, even a high one, does not warrant saying that a

⁷¹Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p.1.

⁷²Waltz, Theory of International Politics, pp. 1-2.

causal relation exists".⁷³ A true law, observes Waltz, must imply a "sense of necessity".⁷⁴

How is that "sense of necessity" to be substantiated? Waltz answers that question by detailing the relation of a law to a theory. And he does so by distinguishing his view from a conception of theory which is prevalent in the discipline. The conception of theory which Waltz rejects is one which asserts that "theories are collections or sets of laws pertaining to a particular behaviour or phenomenon". According to this view, theories are "more complete than laws, but only quantitatively so. Between laws and theories," observes Waltz, "no difference of kind appears."⁷⁵

The problem with this approach, according to Waltz, is that the resulting laws and theories remain

⁷³Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 2.

It should be noted that Waltz is not completely consistent on this issue. At a later point he seems willing to accept that a generalization can be considered a law simply on the basis of capturing a relationship with a high coefficient of correlation, and without being derived from a theory:

Hypotheses may also be arrived at inductively. Again, if they are confirmed quite conclusively, they are called laws. Ebb and flow tides were predicted by ancient Babylonians with an accuracy unsurpassed until the end of the nineteenth century. Highly reliable knowledge of the law-like movement of the tides did not enable one to explain them. (p. 8)

⁷⁴Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 1.

⁷⁵Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 2

a description of some part of the world and not an explanation of it. Statistical operations cannot bridge the gap that lies between description and explanation.⁷⁶

Moreover, continues Waltz, this view of laws and theory has deleterious effects for international relations theorizing. Focusing his criticism on fellow "scientific" theorist, Karl Deutsch, Waltz argues as follows:

Karl Deutsch advises us "to formulate, or reformulate, a proposition in terms of probability and to say how much of the outcome could be accounted for by one element and how much of the outcome could be accounted for from other elements or is autonomous and free". If we follow that advice, we will behave like Aristotelian physicists. We will treat a problem as though it were like the one of trying to say to what extent a cart's movement results from push and slope and to what extent its movement is impeded by frictions. We will continue to think in sequential and correlational terms. By doing so, results that are practically useful may be achieved, although students of international politics have disappointingly little to show for such efforts, even in practical terms. And if useful information were uncovered, the more difficult task of figuring out its theoretical meaning would remain.⁷⁷

Ultimately, concludes Waltz, this approach suffers from the "inductivist illusion": that is

...the belief that truth is won and explanation achieved through the accumulation of more and more data and the examination of more and more cases. If we gather more and more data and establish more and more associations, however, we will not finally find that we know something. We will simply end up having more and more data and larger sets of correlations. Data never speak for themselves. Observation and experience never lead directly to knowledge of causes.... Data, seeming facts, apparent

⁷⁶Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 3.

⁷⁷Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 3.

associations - these are not certain knowledge of something. They may be puzzles that can one day be explained; they may be trivia that need not be explained at all.⁷⁸

Waltz asserts that the "inductivist illusion" is exactly that - an illusion - because it assumes that we can understand the world without the need for theorizing, conceived as an activity distinct from observation and correlation. In fact, contends Waltz, we require the guidance of theory as a distinct entity to explain what we observe.

Waltz's alternative definition of explanatory theory - and its relation to laws - reads as follows:

Rather than being mere collections of laws, theories are statements that explain them. Theories are qualitatively different from laws. Laws identify invariant or probable associations. Theories show why those associations obtain. Each descriptive term in a law is directly tied to observational or laboratory procedure, and laws are established only if they pass observational or experimental tests. In addition to descriptive terms, theories contain theoretical notions. Theories cannot be constructed through induction alone, for theoretical notions can only be invented, not discovered.⁷⁹

In short, theories are not "collections or sets of laws"; rather, "Theories explain laws".⁸⁰ And laws are not simply high coefficients of correlation; they are also relations which can be derived from theory.

⁷⁸Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 4.

⁷⁹Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 5.

⁸⁰Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 6.

Now this view of theory as an axiomatic structure allows the researcher not only to explain laws but also to generate hypotheses. As such, it forms a central pillar of Waltz's concept of research design, as is evidenced by the seven steps he proposes for testing theories:

1. State the theory being tested.
2. Infer hypotheses from it.
3. Subject the hypotheses to experimental or observational tests.
4. In taking steps two and three, use the definitions of terms found in the theory being tested.
5. Eliminate or control perturbing variables not included in the theory under test.
6. Devise a number of distinct and demanding tests.
7. If a test is not passed, ask whether the theory flunks completely, needs repair and restatement, or requires a narrowing of the scope of its explanatory claims.⁸¹

The source of Waltz's conception of theory, law, and explanation - given our discussion of the distinguishing characteristics of logical positivism in the first part of this chapter - should be immediately apparent. Indeed, regardless of whether one is persuaded by his theoretical explanations of international politics (structural neo-realism), from a meta-theoretical perspective it must be recognized that Waltz's Theory of International Politics represents one of the most rigorous attempts within international relations theory to apply the programme of logical positivism.

⁸¹Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 13.

Although Waltz's Theory of International Politics stands out in its incorporation of the distinguishing characteristics of logical positivism, by focussing on the more general definition of positivism centred around the core tenets which make up the "positivistic logic of investigation" it soon becomes clear that this work is not alone in incorporating a positivist approach to the study of international politics.⁸² For if not all theorists committed to the positivist approach are as careful as Waltz in conforming to the research programme proposed by the logical positivists, there is nonetheless considerable evidence of their acceptance of the three fundamental tenets of the positivistic logic of investigation.

To begin, John Burton, in many respects a harsh critic of Waltz's neorealism at the theoretical level, nonetheless shares Waltz's general positivist orientation to the study of international politics. Their meta-theoretical compatibility is clearly evidenced by Burton's statement that the concern of the discipline is "with observation and analysis and with

⁸²Indeed, were we to limit our discussion of positivism in international relations theory to works bearing evidence of a commitment to the consistent application of the methodology and research design of logical positivism, our appreciation of the extent to which positivist-inspired analysis predominates at a more general level would be seriously hampered. It is for this reason that the more general definition of positivism centred around the core tenets of the "positivistic logic of investigation" - a definition derived from an analysis of logical positivism but not limited to it - is the main focus here.

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theorizing in order to explain and predict the operations and processes of relations between states, and of the world system as a whole".⁸³

David Singer, as well, leaves little doubt of his commitment to the tenet of "truth as correspondence" when he states that "knowledge cannot be said to exist - and certainly cannot be codified or accumulated - without data". Similarly, and this time together with Jones, Singer notes

Whether we seek to understand the past or anticipate the future, we need something more than vague recollections or a vivid imagination. We need evidence. Without evidence, there is little basis for selecting among the contending (and often equally plausible) models and explanations of the international politics we have experienced, and until we can adequately account for the past and present, our predictions of the future will remain mere conjecture.⁸⁴

Similar evidence exists for the wide-spread acceptance of the second tenet: that of the methodological unity of science. One of the most articulate in defence of this tenet is James Rosenau, who affirms that "the same methods that unravelled the mysteries of atomic structure can reveal the

⁸³International Relations: A General Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) p. 5.

⁸⁴J. D. Singer, "The Behavioural Science Approach to International Relations: Payoff and Prospects", in International Politics and Foreign Policy, ed. James N. Rosenau (New York: Free Press, 1969), p. 65, and S. Jones and J. D. Singer, Beyond Conjecture in International Politics: Abstracts of Data-Based Research (Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock, 1972), pp. 3-4. As quoted in Richard Ashley, "At the Impasse: Epistemology and the Scientific Evaluation of Foreign Policy," in Evaluating US Foreign Policy, ed. John Vasquez (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986) p. 178.

dynamics of societal behaviour".⁸⁵ More recently, Rosenau reiterated this conviction:

As a focus of study, the nation-state is no different from the atom or the single cell organism. Its patterns of behaviour, idiosyncratic traits, and internal structure are as amenable to the process of formulating and testing hypotheses as are the characteristics of the electron or the molecule.

To be sure, the behaviour of atoms may be more easily assessed than that of nation-states, with the result that an enormous discrepancy exists between physics and foreign policy from a science-as-subject perspective. In terms of science-as method, however, the two are essentially the same. Both require the analyst to specify units of analysis, to identify relevant variables, to operationalize key concepts, to frame testable propositions, to gather quantified data, to evaluate the patterns formed by the data, and to revise the propositions in light of the findings.⁸⁶

And while modest about what can reasonably be achieved in the social sciences, Morton A. Kaplan clearly agrees:

[O]ur explanations or theories can never have the authority of theory in physics, or its explanatory or predictive power. The important problem is whether they can be stated in ways that permit additional analysis and investigation. Whether they are tautological dead ends or fruitful aids to historical scientific imagination, whether the statements in them permit at least reasonable analysis and investigation or whether they are dogmatic fiats, the science of the discipline does not lie in absolute certainty but in reasonable belief, in definite canons of procedure and investigation, and in the attempt to permit confirmation or falsification even though of an imprecise order. The object is not to seek a certainty or precision that the subject matter does

⁸⁵The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy (New York: Free Press, 1971), vii.

⁸⁶Rosenau, The Science. Introduction to Part 2 of J. Rosenau, The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy (London: Frances Pinter, New York, 1980) p. 32, as quoted in Ashley, "At the Impasse", pp. 174-175.

not allow, but to reject a dogmatism that the subject matter does not make necessary. The very difficulties of theory building and confirmation in international politics demand sincere dedication to scientific canons of procedure.⁸⁷

And finally, there is a clear commitment by those adopting a positivist approach to the tenet of value-freedom in theory and knowledge production. As Olson and Onuf note in their review of the discipline, the behavioural revolution brought a concern with value neutrality to international relations theory. Value neutrality could be achieved, it was argued,

if the underlying concepts of International Relations could be rendered in a purely abstract form, if these abstractions were assembled into generalizations possessing the explanatory and predictive characteristics of powerful theories in natural science, and if suitable tests employing quantitative methods could be derived from the logical entailments of posited theoretical relationships.⁸⁸

The commitment to the production of factually-based and thus inherently value-neutral knowledge was deeply internalized by those committed to the "scientific approach". As an example, the distinction between fact and value is clearly in evidence in these words, written by Karl Deutsch:

Knowledge is different from values. Values motivate the search for knowledge and make some of its results more salient to us than others.

⁸⁷Kaplan, "Problems of Theory Building and Theory Confirmation in International Politics," World Politics, 14, No. 1 (1961), pp. 23-24.

⁸⁸"The Growth of a Discipline: Reviewed," in International Relations: British and American Perspectives, ed. Steve Smith (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1985), p. 7.

Knowledge tells us which of our values may conflict, and where and when our means begin to injure and destroy our ends instead of serving them.⁸⁹

Similarly, the following comments by Patrick McGowan on the scientific study of foreign policy are clear evidence of the concern with "filtering out" the value-preferences of individual researchers in the quest for value-free knowledge which can be accepted by all:

The private values of the researcher or the public values of his employer invariably influence his choice of problems to research. To the extent that his empirical findings relate to policy issues, they can have an impact on public values. If the student of foreign policy has a scientific orientation to his subject, he is aware of this role of values in research. Just because of this he adopts scientific procedures in order to reduce as far as possible the chance that his or anyone else's values will influence his findings. That this can or should be done is open to some dispute, but responsible scholarship which aims at establishing reliable knowledge must eschew the clamour for relevancy if this means allowing personal or public values to predetermine research results. Students of the problems involved also conclude that a scientific approach to human behaviour can reduce to negligible

⁸⁹Deutsch, The Analysis of International Relations, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1988), p. x.

levels the role of preferences and values in determining findings.⁹⁰

Given the earlier confidence expressed in the potential of the positivistically-inspired behavioural revolution for transforming international relations theory into a scientific enterprise, it comes as no surprise that more recent assessments of the lack of progress in the discipline should point to inadequacies in the application of positivist methodology and research design. In short, if international relations theory's Galileo has failed to appear,⁹¹ the fault must lie with an inadequate attention to the principles of scientific theorizing.

Thus Mansbach and Ferguson affirm in a recent review of contemporary international relations theory that it is the paucity of exactly Waltz's (i.e., self-consciously and

⁹⁰Patrick McGowan, "Meaningful Comparisons in the Study of Foreign Policy: A Methodological Discussion of Objectives, Techniques, and Research Designs", in International Events and the Comparative Analysis of Foreign Policy (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1975), p. 74, my emphasis, as quoted in Ashley, "At the Impasse".

It should come as no surprise that the domain of foreign policy analysis should furnish some of the clearest evidence of positivism's predominance in the discipline of international relations. Indeed, in the opinion of two authorities in the area, the comparative study of foreign policy (CFP) approach was informed by a positivist orientation from the beginning. See Charles F. Hermann and Gregory Peacock, "The Evolution and Future of Theoretical Research in the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy," in New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy, ed. Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and James N. Rosenau (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), esp. pp. 18-22.

⁹¹The image was Morton Kaplan's. See his "Problems of Theory Building," p. 6.

consistently positivist) kind of theorizing which is at the root of the lack of progress in the discipline.⁹² Similarly, McGowan and Shapiro stress the absence of theory - positivistically conceived - in their discussion of the limits of foreign policy analysis:

Without theory we cannot explain the relationships we "discover" and we can only make predictions of the crudest sorts based upon projections from empirical trends, not upon a profound understanding of foreign policy behaviour. Without theory to guide our research we must depend upon luck and educated guesses to come up with worthwhile research hypotheses. Without theory research becomes ad hoc in the extreme, with no justification provided for the selections of cases, with no system to the definition and measurement of concepts, and with no consistency in the use of research techniques and data-processing routines. In brief, a field without theory is hardly an area of disciplined scientific inquiry. Since the comparative study of foreign policy lacks both middle-range and general theories of foreign policy behaviour it fails to meet the basic objective of any science: a body of theoretically organized knowledge that is based on cumulative empirical research.⁹³

In short, argues Singer, the problem underlying the lack of progress in international relations theory is "an excess of tolerance" in regard to methodology and research design:

As scholars, too many of us have over-interpreted the doctrine of tolerance. In our reluctance to impose our own standards (a commendable characteristic if not carried to excess) we accept

⁹²The Elusive Quest: Theory and International Politics (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 26.

⁹³Patrick J. McGowan and Howard B. Shapiro, The Comparative Study of Foreign Policy: A Survey of Scientific Findings, vol. 4, Sage Library of Social Research (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1973), p. 214. Quoted in Ferguson and Mansbach, The Elusive Quest, p. 213.

research that is conceptually imprecise, methods far inferior to those available, empirical premises (implicit as well as explicit) that fly in the face of existing evidence, and ideological predispositions so shortsighted and self-centred as to discredit all but the most parochial.⁹⁴

Clearly, conclude these theorists, the situation will not change until greater attention is paid to the positivist research programme, and greater respect shown for positivism's central tenets.

ii) Positivism in Non-traditional International Relations Theory

To this point we have concerned ourselves primarily with the mainstream of contemporary international relations theory. Before moving to the pre-behavioural revolution period, it might be useful to note the presence of the positivist approach in non-traditional contemporary theory. To that end I will focus briefly on two kinds of non-traditional theorizing: international political economy and peace research.

⁹⁴J. David Singer, "The Responsibilities of Competence in the Global Village," International Studies Quarterly, 29 (1985), pp. 259-260.

Similarly, Ernst-Otto Czempiel affirms that the problem with the discipline is the presence of "prescientific attitudes and political preferences". The solution advocated is a positivist (Popperian) one involving "scientific hypotheses that can be tested against empirical reality". See Czempiel, "Internationalizing Politics: Some Answers to the Question of Who Does What to Whom," in Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges, ed. Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James N. Rosenau (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1989), pp. 117-18.

I will begin with international political economy. The question of the place of positivism in the field of international political economy can be answered quickly and simply. As in the case of mainstream contemporary theory, it predominates. In his reviews of the development of international political economy, Roger Tooze has clearly demonstrated the predominance of the positivist approach and the influence that approach has had in formulating research questions and directing academic inquiry.⁹⁵

A good example of the positivist approach to theorizing about International Political Economy is to be found in the work of Susan Strange. In a recent article, Strange goes to some length to outline her view of what does and does not constitute good theory. What is not required, she argues, are "quantitative techniques", the development of which, in

⁹⁵See Tooze, "Economics, International Political Economy and Change in the International System," in Change and the Study of International Relations, ed. B. Buzan and B. Jones (London: Frances Pinter, 1981); Tooze, "International Political Economy," in International Relations: British and American Perspectives, ed. S. Smith (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1985); and Tooze, "The Unwritten Preface: 'International Political Economy' and Epistemology," Millennium, 17, No. 2 (1988).

Strange's opinion, "have not advanced theory" in international relations.⁹⁶

A second point is that good theory does not aspire to prescribe policy. The reason, according to Strange, is that prescription in matters of policy "is a matter of choice" which "necessarily involves value judgements and risk assessments that are exogenous to theory". Here one can identify clearly the positivist tenet of the value-free nature of knowledge derived from scientific theorizing.⁹⁷

Finally, affirms Strange, in her clearest expression of the positivist orientation, theory should be "scientific" in the sense that "the theorist respects the scientific virtues of rationality and impartiality and aspires to the systematic formulation of explanatory propositions". Of course, preserving a scientific attitude may be difficult, notes Strange, in that "our subject lies [close] to our emotions" and because "it has to do with subjectively important

⁹⁶Susan Strange, "Toward a Theory of Transnational Empire," in Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s, ed. Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James N. Rosenau (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1989), p. 162.

It should be stressed again, that there is no contradiction between this position and one advocating a positivist approach, recognizing that positivism is not to be confused with "number crunching".

⁹⁷As a consequence, concludes Strange, value-informed policy-making decisions "are better made by practical policymakers than by irresponsible academic theorists". Strange, "Toward a Theory of Transnational Empire," pp. 163-164.

questions concerning power and wealth".⁹⁸ Nonetheless, it is this "attitude" - an attitude clearly reflective of the positivist assumptions of the separation of subject and object, and of fact and value - to which theorists in international political economy are to aspire.⁹⁹

Indeed, the fact that the positivist approach predominates in International Political Economy as well should not surprise us. As Tooze notes, the positivistic consensus

which identifies the form, structure and methodology of International Relations inquiry ... provides a demonstrable criteria against which "new" fields, such as international political economy, are evaluated. Even if the "new" knowledge does not claim, or desire, to fit these criteria its status and acceptability are still defined by the prevailing mode.¹⁰⁰

In short, it is no wonder that the emerging field of international political economy has adapted itself to the

⁹⁸Strange, "Toward a Theory of Transnational Empire," p. 164.

⁹⁹It should be noted that Strange's view of good theory does deviate somewhat from the positivist orthodoxy, particularly in her apparent rejection of the positivist assumption of naturalism and of the positivist goal of prediction:

...theory need not necessarily aspire to predict ... This is where social science differs from natural science ... Social science can never confidently predict because the irrational factors involved in human relations are too numerous, and the permutation and combinations of them are probably countless.

Strange, "Toward a Theory of Transnational Empire," p. 163.

¹⁰⁰"International Political Economy," pp. 109-110.

positivistic consensus, given that in the eyes of the international relations community, "knowledge not conforming to 'scientific' norms is of a different and less worthy form".¹⁰¹

The field of peace research, a second non-traditional approach to the study of international politics, is much the same. As Richard Falk notes in his review of international relations theory, the scientific approach to the study of international politics is manifest in "much of the work done under the rubric of 'peace research' in Western Europe and Japan".¹⁰² A good example of the influence of positivism in peace research is the work of Johan Galtung. Galtung is an interesting case, in that he is a theorist who has been designated as a representative of the "radical" wing of peace research.¹⁰³ In general, radical theorists have proven

¹⁰¹Tooze, "International Political Economy," p. 110.

¹⁰²Richard Falk, The End of World Order (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), p. 3.

¹⁰³A recent designation of Galtung as an ideologically-motivated "radical" peace researcher - along with others such as Anatol Rapoport - can be found in Michel Fortmann, "Les études stratégiques, défense d'une discipline," Etudes internationales, 17, No. 4 (1986), p. 775.

It is interesting to note that approximately twenty years ago, Galtung was classed not with the "radical" peace researchers, but with the more moderate "broad school" of peace research. (see Kenneth E. Boulding, "Limits or Boundaries of Peace Research," Proceedings of the International Peace Research Association, I, Third General Conference (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co., 1970), pp. 5-19; reprinted in Contemporary Peace Research, ed. Ghanshyam Pardesi (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982)). This raises the question of how Galtung's designation could have
(continued...)

themselves to be less reluctant than mainstream academics to explore alternatives to the positivist approach to the study of the social world. Galtung is no exception.

Specifically, Galtung argues that an alternative approach to positivism - that of "dialectics" - has much to offer students of international politics.¹⁰⁴ In contrast to positivism, dialectics concerns itself primarily with the "essence" behind appearances. This "essence" expresses itself in relational contradictions - processes which are both "life-giving" and "life-taking" - and which explain qualitative historical discontinuities (change). The strength of dialectics, argues Galtung, is its ability to perceive the nature of objects, and to suggest interesting hypotheses about their development.¹⁰⁵

However, continues Galtung, there is a weakness with the dialectical approach. While strong on generating interesting

¹⁰³(...continued)

changed in the intervening years. Two possibilities present themselves: either Galtung has become more radical (a conclusion for which there is little evidence), or, as is more likely, the truly radical peace researchers having been driven out of the discipline in its shift to the right, the formerly middle-of-the-road "broad school" adherents now occupy the "radical" position on the peace research ideological spectrum by default.

¹⁰⁴Johan Galtung, "Positivism and Dialectics: A Comparison," in his Methodology and Ideology: Essays in Methodology, I (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlertsen, 1977), p. 214.

¹⁰⁵For a fuller discussion of the nature of dialectics and how it differs from positivism, see Robert L. Heilbroner, Marxism: For and Against (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1980), chapter two.

hypotheses about the world around us, dialectics suffers in being "weak on methodology". But it so happens, argues Galtung, that dialectics' weakness is positivism's strength. Thus, proposes Galtung, there may be hope for a "mariage de convenance" between the two approaches, with dialectics generating interesting hypotheses and positivism testing them.

Galtung's openness to alternative approaches notwithstanding, it should be noted that his match-making is not at all incompatible with a full-fledged commitment to positivism. It will be remembered that positivism concerns itself only with the testing of hypotheses - the context of justification - while saying little (and indeed caring little) about the context of discovery. If Galtung finds "dialectics" useful in generating hypotheses as part of the process of discovery, positivists might argue, that is no affair of ours; our only concern, assert positivists, is that hypotheses generated by whatever means be tested in accordance with positivistic canons of procedure, respecting the core tenets of the positivistic logic of investigation.

In conclusion, then, even in the case of non-traditional fields of contemporary international relations theory, positivism's influence is present. But what of non-contemporary theory which predates the behavioural revolution? Can evidence of a commitment to a positivist approach to the study of international politics be found even there?

Positivism in Non-Contemporary International Relations Theory

I will begin my discussion of positivism in non-contemporary international relations theory by examining the case of classical realism. It is, of course, true that some of the most vehement opponents to the introduction of the "scientific approach" during the behavioural revolution were classical realists such as E. H. Carr, Hedley Bull, Martin Wight, and, Hans J. Morgenthau.¹⁰⁶ Thus it might seem strange to presume to examine their work for signs of the positivist approach. In fact, as an examination of the work of two of these classical theorists will show, there are strong positivist elements in their work; consequently, less separates the classical realists from contemporary adherents of the "scientific approach" than is often realized.

I will begin with the most prominent representative of classical realism: Hans J. Morgenthau. In keeping with the image of the classical realists as ardent opponents of positivist-inspired research strategies, Morgenthau was in many respects an ardent critic of the "scientific approach" to the study of international politics. In his first major work, Scientific Man vs. Power Politics, he concluded that the problems besetting human civilization in the twentieth

¹⁰⁶For Bull's defence of the classical approach, "International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach," as well as responses to it by scholars committed to "scientific" analysis, see Klaus Knorr and James Rosenau, eds., Contending Approaches to International Politics (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969).

century as well as the decline in the quality of political thought could be traced to "the belief in the power of science to solve all problems and, more particularly, all political problems".¹⁰⁷ As Thompson notes

At Chicago, Morgenthau contended with an intellectual atmosphere in political science that was hostile to philosophy (the dominant interest of the Chicago department was public administration and international law). His main encouragement came from the university's top leadership, particularly Robert M. Hutchins; a few of his younger colleagues; and most of all from his students, who entered his classes with scepticism and generally left with enduring respect for his approach. The empiricists and behaviourists saw in him a threat to their generously endowed research, and the severest critics of President Hutchins (whose own neo-Thomism and world government crusade later caused a breach with Morgenthau) opposed Morgenthau's devotion to philosophy.¹⁰⁸

Even so, it must also be recognized that it is the same Morgenthau who is the author of the quote which stands at the beginning of this chapter. The quote bears repeating as ample proof of the influence of positivism - and in particular, the tenet of "truth as correspondence" to objective reality - in Morgenthau's thinking:

It is the task of theory to detect in the welter of the unique facts of experience that which is uniform, similar, and typical. It is its task to reduce the facts of experience to mere specific instances of general propositions, to detect behind

¹⁰⁷(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), vi. Quoted in Kenneth W. Thompson, Masters of International Thought (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), p. 84.

¹⁰⁸Thompson, Masters of International Politics, p. 84.

them the general laws to which they owe their existence and which determine their development.¹⁰⁹

In fact, a positivistic view of international relations theory is already evident in Morgenthau's classic, Politics Among Nations, where we read that realists understand that "... politics is governed by objective laws", the operation of which are "...impervious to our preferences".¹¹⁰

The writings of Martin Wight, another prominent classical realist, lend support to Morgenthau's view of the regular, unchanging nature of international politics.

If Sir Thomas More or Henry IV, let us say, were to return to England and France in 1960, it is not beyond plausibility that they would admit that their countries had moved domestically towards goals and along paths which they could approve. But if they contemplated the international scene, it is more likely that they would be struck by resemblances to what they remembered: a state-system apportioned between two Great Powers each with its associates and satellites, smaller Powers improving their position by playing off one side against the other, universal doctrines contending against local patriotism, the duty of intervention overriding the right of independence, the empty professions of peaceful purpose and common interest, the general preference for going down to defeat fighting rather than consenting to unresisted subjugation. The stage would have become much wider, the actors fewer, their weapons more alarming, but the play would be the same old melodrama. International politics is the realm of recurrence and repetition: it is the

¹⁰⁹"The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations", pp. 19, 20.

¹¹⁰Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 6th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. 4.

field in which political action is most regularly necessitous.¹¹¹

In both cases, the affinity with the positivist assumption of naturalism is, of course, striking.

One also finds evidence of a commitment to the third positivist tenet - that of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge. According to Morgenthau, it is the task of international relations scholars to identify that which is "... true objectively and rationally" and to distinguish it from "what is only a subjective judgement divorced from the facts as they are and informed by prejudice and wishful thinking".¹¹² Theory must be "consistent with the facts", argues Morgenthau, and the question every (realist) scholar must ask is whether "the facts as they actually are lend themselves to the interpretation the theory has put on them".¹¹³

E. H. Carr, another classical realist (and fellow critic of the "scientific approach) would not have disagreed. In his

¹¹¹Martin Wight, "Why is there no international theory," in Diplomatic Investigations, eds. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 26, (my emphasis).

¹¹²Politics Among Nations, pp. 4-5.

¹¹³Politics Among Nations, pp. 3-4. In discussing international theory as a subfield of political science, Morgenthau notes that: "Political science, like any science, presupposes the existence and accessibility of objective, general truth. If nothing that is true regardless of time and place could be said about matters political, political science itself would be impossible" (my emphasis). In "The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations", p. 19.

attack on "utopian thinking" in the analysis of international politics, Carr provides ample evidence for the pervasiveness of the core tenets of the positivistic logic of investigation in international relations theory, long before the behavioural revolution.¹¹⁴ Again, in accordance with the positivist tenet of value-freedom, Carr argues that the problem with utopian thinking is "its inability to provide any absolute and disinterested standard for the conduct of international affairs". Realism, in contrast

...places its emphasis on the acceptance of facts and the analysis of their causes and consequences. It tends to depreciate the role of purpose [value based theory] ...¹¹⁵

In this, notes Carr, the realist is like the natural scientist, whose "conclusion can be nothing more than a true report on facts. It cannot help to make the facts other than they are; for the facts exist independently of what anyone thinks about them".¹¹⁶

In light of the positivist elements identified, it can be argued that the battle between the advocates of the traditional approach and the proponents of the scientific method, while involving real disagreements about the value of specific methodological techniques (e.g., quantification) in

¹¹⁴E. H. Carr, The Twenty Years Crisis (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

¹¹⁵Carr, The Twenty Years Crisis, p. 10

¹¹⁶Carr, The Twenty Years Crisis, p. 3

fact overshadowed a shared commitment to the core tenets of the positivistic logic of investigation. And in that sense, the "great debate" of the 1960s, which coincided with the behavioural revolution, was less profound than has often been supposed.

It is interesting to note that the recognition of classical realism's positivist content not only serves to recast the second "great debate" on the issue of the traditional approach (i.e., history) versus science, it casts the first "great debate" which peaked during the 1950s - that between (classical) realism and idealism - in a new light as well.

It should be remembered that idealism, which was rooted in a dissatisfaction with the results of power politics - and in particular, the outbreak of the first world war - was an early attempt to restructure the global order in a way more conducive to human welfare. It also was born of the need to develop a theoretical approach i) as competent and comfortable in theorizing change in the world order as it is in analyzing continuity, and ii) to guide practice which can address normative concerns as well as questions of practical efficacy. In short, in its overt commitment to the "Aristotelian project", early idealism shared much with the orientation of this study.

As the first world war provided an impetus to the idealist approach, however, the second world war served to

undermine its credibility. For many students of international politics, the idealist assumptions i) of an inherent harmony in human affairs - that "there are no major conflicts of interest between states or within human society"¹¹⁷ - and ii) of the basic decency of human beings - that "people are basically rational, intelligent creatures, creating their own destiny, capable of evil and foolishness but fundamentally good"¹¹⁸ - no longer seemed tenable in the face of the aggression displayed by Nazi Germany. As a consequence, idealism was increasingly marginalized as realism came to occupy a privileged position in the discipline.

However the outcome of the first "great debate" can be - and indeed, should be - understood as much in meta-theoretical terms as in purely historical ones. For what realism directed at idealism was not only arguments rooted in empirical evidence designed to undermine idealism's fundamental assumptions, but an entire positivistically-derived meta-theoretical critique as well. It was a hallmark of the idealist tradition, argued realists, that one put subjectively-based wishful thinking ahead of analysis of objective reality of international politics. It was typical of idealists, argued realists, that they exaggerated the scope

¹¹⁷Trevor Taylor, "Utopianism," in International Relations: British and American Perspectives, ed. Steve Smith, p. 93.

¹¹⁸Taylor, "Utopianism," p. 94.

for change in the conduct of international relations in flagrant disregard of the continuity evident in the behavioural regularities independent of time and place. And it was characteristic of idealists that they confused the normative "ought" with the factual "what is".

The response of idealists to this meta-theoretical critique was understandable, if regrettable. The response, quite simply, was to deny the specific charges of the realists while accepting the positivist categories in which that critique was framed. As a consequence, the marginalized idealism which survived the realist attack took one of two positivistically-inspired forms. Either it incorporated the core tenets of the positivist approach with the intent of becoming as "scientific" as realism in its analysis of the objective reality/ behavioural regularities/ facts of international relations,¹¹⁹ or it accommodated itself to the positivistically-derived designation of philosophically-based "normative theory", distinct from "practically-oriented" "empirical theory".¹²⁰ In short, the outcome of the first debate was not only the triumph of realism over idealism, but

¹¹⁹As in the pluralist paradigm of John Burton.

¹²⁰As in the case of much of the theorizing associated with the World Order Models Project (WOMP) such as that of Richard Falk. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Falk's book The End of World Order (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983) is subtitled "Essays on Normative International Relations" (emphasis added).

the simultaneous triumph of positivist conceptual categories in virtually all mainstream variants - idealist as well as realist - of the discipline of international relations.

Conclusion:

In this chapter we have accomplished two things. First, we have achieved a clearer understanding of what is meant by the positivist approach to the study of human society. Specifically, we have reviewed the distinguishing characteristics of two distinct variants of positivism - comtean and logical positivism, and by means of this review we have identified the core tenets of the positivistic logic of investigation common to all variants of positivism. Furthermore, we have also taken note of the assumptions which underlie these core tenets.

Secondly, we have established the presence and influence of the positivist approach in international relations theory, whether mainstream or non-traditional, contemporary or classical. While it is true that relatively few theorists consistently reproduce all of the distinguishing characteristics of a specific variant of positivism in their work, it is also true that a commitment to and/ or acceptance of the core tenets of positivism is manifest in the writings of a wide range of authors of international relations theory.

With this as background, we are now in a position to understand how the predominance of positivism in the

discipline of international relations has inhibited international relations theory from developing as critical theory. The exact nature of the relationship between the dominance of positivism in international relations theory and the absence of the defining characteristics of critical theory noted in the preceding chapter will be explored in the chapters which follow.

To the extent that this study is successful in demonstrating that a link exists between the dominance of positivism and the absence of critical theorizing, it is clear that if a "space" is to be created for a more critical approach to the study of international relations - if international relations theory is to be "restructured" in a more critical fashion - then positivism itself will have to be challenged. It is thus the task of the next three chapters to show not only how the predominance of positivism in the discipline of international relations has impeded the development of critical forms of theorizing, but also to detail how the challenging of positivism and the restructuring of international relations theory has already begun.

Chapter Four:

Reflexivity and International Relations Theory

The "personal equation" of the political scientist both limits and directs his scholarly pursuits. The truth which a mind thus socially conditioned is able to grasp is likewise socially conditioned. The perspective of the observer determines what can be known and how it is to be understood.

Hans J. Morgenthau¹

"That we disavow reflection is positivism."

Jürgen Habermas²

Introduction:

At this point, it may be useful to review what has been accomplished. First, by tracing the development of the tradition of theorizing associated with "critique", we identified the three elements which characterize emancipatory theory. Secondly, by reviewing the evolution of positivism, we identified the three fundamental tenets of the positivist approach, as well as the assumptions underlying those tenets. And finally, we have established that the positivist approach is the dominant approach to the study of international relations.

¹"The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations," in Theoretical Aspects of International Relations, ed. William T. R. Fox (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), p. 21.

²Knowledge and Human Interests, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. vii.

We are now in a position to address the central contentions of this study. Specifically, at several points in this paper, the following two arguments have been advanced (though not developed). First, it has been suggested that the absence of the "critical" elements which constitute emancipatory theory from the discipline of international relations can be explained in terms of the predominance of positivism in international relations theory. Secondly, it has been suggested that the predominance of positivism in international relations theory is no longer unchallenged; that the prospects for incorporating the elements which distinguish emancipatory theory are improving. In sum, it is being suggested that international relations theory is in the process of being "restructured" in a fundamental - and "critical" - fashion, and that as a consequence, the potential for the discipline of international relations to make a meaningful contribution in terms of the contemporary requirements of the Aristotelian project - a contribution to human emancipation - are better now than they have been for some time.

It is the task of this chapter and the two which follow to develop and substantiate these arguments. This chapter will focus on the question of "theoretical reflexivity" - one of three "critical" elements which constitute emancipatory theory. To that end, we shall proceed as follows. In the first part of this chapter, I will explain the traditional absence

of theoretical reflexivity from positivist social science - including positivist international relations theory - with reference to the first of the three central tenets of the positivist approach: that of "truth as correspondence". I will then review recent developments in the philosophy of science which have served not only to effect a reformulation of contemporary positivism, but which have led to a rejection of the positivist approach as a whole - a rejection which opens a space for theoretical reflexivity.

Then, in the second part of this chapter, I will explore the question of theoretical reflexivity in terms of international relations theory. I will show that recent developments in positivist international relations theory parallel developments in the philosophy of science in general. Most importantly, however, I will show that developments in the philosophy of science which have led to a questioning of positivism and a simultaneous opening to theoretical reflexivity also have their parallel in international relations theory. As a consequence, it is concluded that notwithstanding the fact that "[f]or many years the international relations discipline has had the dubious honour of being among the least self-reflexive of the Western social sciences",³ the prospects for the development of theoretically

³Yosef Lapid, "Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," International Studies Quarterly, 33, No. 3 (1989), pp. 249-250.

reflexive international relations theory are better now than they have been for some time.

Part I: Philosophy of Science and Theoretical Reflexivity

Truth as Correspondence and Theoretical Reflexivity:

As will be recalled from our discussion in the last chapter, "truth as correspondence" is one of three core tenets of positivism. It will also be recalled that this tenet rests upon a particular assumption: that of the separation of subject and object, of observer and observed. In other words, the tenet of "truth as correspondence" assumes that through the proper application of research design and techniques, the researcher(s) can be "factored out", leaving behind an intersubjectively valid description of the world "as it truly is". In short, the tenet of "truth as correspondence" is the expression of the goal of rendering science a "process without a subject".

The consequence of this tenet and of this assumption is that a number of problematic issues are swept aside. For, in making the separation of subject and object a defining condition of science, the positivist approach ignores the active and vital role played by the community of researchers in the production and validation of knowledge. It ignores the fact that the standards which define "reliable knowledge" are

dependent upon their acceptance and application by a research community.

As a result, a number of important questions not only go unanswered - they are never raised. They include questions of the historical origin and nature of the community-based standards which define what counts as reliable knowledge, as well as the question of the merits of those standards in the light of possible alternatives. These questions do not arise in positivist-inspired theorizing because the central standard of scientific truth - that of truth as correspondence - is seen to belong not to a time-bound human community of scientific investigators, but to an extra-historical natural realm. In short, the knowledge-defining standard of positivism is understood to be "Nature's own".⁴

It will be remembered that the question of the origin, nature, and merits of (what counts as) reliable knowledge in a given context and for a given researcher/ research community is central to the agenda of theoretical reflexivity. It is these issues which serve as the focal point of the on-going process of "theoretical reflection on the process of theorizing itself" which defines theoretical reflexivity.

Thus it is clear how the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence", based as it is on the assumption of the separation of subject and object, effectively forecloses

⁴The expression is Richard Rorty's. See his Consequences of Pragmatism (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), p. xxvi.

theoretical reflexivity. For in conceptualizing science as a "process without a subject", in viewing the standards for assessing truth claims as those of nature itself, it becomes virtually impossible to reflect either upon the role of the scientific community in adopting and reproducing the standards which define reliable knowledge, or on the merits of those knowledge-defining standards.

It follows then, that if an element of theoretical reflexivity is to be incorporated into social science, the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" must be challenged. And it is precisely such a challenge that has been raised by recent scholarship within the philosophy of science by way of a re-examination of the underlying assumption of the separation of subject and object. It is to a review of that scholarship that we now turn.

Thomas Kuhn and The Structure of Scientific Revolutions:

Our entry point into the literature on theoretical reflexivity is the work of Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions first appeared in 1962 and there is

no shortage of treatments of his philosophical contribution.⁵ A brief review of Kuhn's key arguments should, therefore, suffice. It should be noted that Kuhn is first, and foremost, an historian of science. It follows quite logically that his main concern has been with the natural sciences, primarily physics. And it is on the basis of historical study of the development of natural sciences that Kuhn has developed his position.

Kuhn's argument runs as follows. An examination of the history of any well-established natural science (e.g., physics) will show that there exists a period in which scientific activity is characterized by competing schools and sub-schools. In this period of "immaturity", no common view of how to approach subject matter and of what constitutes valid scientific inquiry exists among the members of the scientific community.

As a science "matures" however, it comes to be distinguished by the existence of a "paradigm". A paradigm can be defined as a set of "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and

⁵2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). For a good introduction to Kuhn, see Barry Barnes, "Thomas Kuhn," in The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences, ed. Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). For an excellent overview and discussion of the "uses and misuses" of Kuhn's arguments in the social sciences, see Richard Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), Part II. The following overview of Kuhn's central arguments draws heavily upon Bernstein's discussion.

solutions to a community of practitioners".⁶ Model problems and model solutions might include established laws, accepted methodology, and recognized theories. It is particularly important to note that along with determining what constitutes both an acceptable problem as well as an acceptable solution, the paradigm also determines what is to count as "valid" evidence.⁷

The paradigm which distinguishes a mature science guides and regulates what Kuhn calls "normal science" - that is, "research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements that some particular scientific community

⁶Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. viii. In addition to this notion of paradigm as shared "puzzle-solution", Kuhn also used the term initially in a more general sense to refer to the "entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community" - something he now terms a "disciplinary matrix". (see The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, "Postscript-1969" for Kuhn's discussion on the ambiguities in his earlier use of the term paradigm). Here it is the narrower notion of paradigm as shared "puzzle-solution" that is most relevant.

⁷As an example of this, Kuhn discusses the case of pre-Copernican astronomy. Medieval astronomers, working within the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic paradigm, held the heavens to be unchanging. As a consequence, visual observations which seemed to contradict that assumption - evidence of change in the night sky - were for the most part ignored while the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic paradigm remained dominant. In contrast, Chinese astronomers working in the same period, whose cosmological beliefs were not the product of the Aristotelian paradigm - and thus did not operate in terms of the assumption of an "immutable heaven" - recorded numerous changes, including the appearance of new stars, comets, and even sun spots. European astronomers were not to record similar observations until the advent of the Copernican paradigm, with its re-definition of what constituted acceptable evidence for the scientific community. See The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, pp. 116-117.

acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundations for its further practice".⁸ Normal science, in Kuhn's definition, is characterized by "puzzle-solving" activities. These puzzles are themselves suggested by the paradigm; they conform to and never question the basic assumptions of the paradigm. Solving the puzzles thrown up by the paradigm serves to extend the reach of the paradigm and establishes it even more solidly. It is this puzzle-solving activity, argues Kuhn, which constitutes the enterprise of gradual knowledge cumulation which we normally think of when we think of scientific research.⁹

For the purposes of this study two aspects of Kuhn's work are particularly worth noting. The first concerns how the scientist relates to "anomalies" - that is, to puzzles which resist solution. In other words, how do scientists deal with findings which are both consistent with the paradigm's definition of valid evidence and which contradict the expectations of the paradigm?

⁸Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 10.

⁹Now it should be noted that the role played by the paradigm in guiding and regulating "normal science" is only possible to the extent that the paradigm is accepted, defended and passed on by the community of scientific practitioners. Hence the important role in contemporary science played by standardized texts, exams, and teaching methods in socializing the next generation to accept the paradigm as authoritative, as well as that of peer review in hirings, publishing, and the bestowing of research grants in ensuring that most scholars will work in terms of the dominant paradigm's core assumptions.

Kuhn's argument is that scientists confronted with anomalies do not respond by questioning the assumptions of the paradigm itself - at least not initially. Rather anomalies are explained away as "measurement errors", "research design errors", or by means of any number of ad hoc explanations. Simultaneously, further efforts are made within the basic parameters of the paradigm to assimilate the anomaly.

The second noteworthy aspect of Kuhn's work for the purposes of this study is what happens when anomalies continue to build up and resist solution and assimilation. The consequence of this development, notes Kuhn, is the coming of a period of "pronounced professional insecurity".¹⁰ At this point, argues Kuhn, the internal policing mechanisms of the scientific community dissolve; the paradigm breaks down and goes into crisis. In this context of "extraordinary science" the regulative power of the paradigm is reduced considerably. There is a proliferation of viewpoints, of contending analytical frameworks with incompatible theoretical contents, epistemologies, and ontologies. Different notions contend as to what are the "right" problems, solutions, and, perhaps most importantly, what constitutes "valid" evidence. Notes Kuhn:

The proliferation of competing articulations, the willingness to try anything, the expression of explicit discontent, the recourse to philosophy and to debate over fundamentals, all of these are

¹⁰Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, pp. 67-68.

symptoms of a transition from normal to extraordinary research.¹¹

Because the notions of what constitutes the "right" problems and solutions, and what constitutes "valid" evidence, differ so radically across paradigms, Kuhn argues that rival paradigms are more than incompatible. Borrowing a term from geometry, Kuhn argues that contending paradigms are, in fact, "incommensurable" - that is, "without a common measure".¹²

It is important to be clear about the implications of Kuhn's historical review. For what Kuhn's work suggests is that the conventional notion that there exists a realm of neutral, objective evidence, which can be used to assess contending paradigms - which can serve as a "common measure" - is highly questionable. It is highly questionable because one of the key functions of paradigms is to determine what is to be considered "valid" evidence (as well as the proper standards for the use of that evidence) in the first place. As a consequence, standards and evidence particular to one paradigm cannot be used to "test" another. Indeed, communication of any kind between adherents of rival paradigms becomes difficult.¹³ This is not at all surprising, according

¹¹Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 91.

¹²Javier Elguea, "Paradigms and Scientific Revolutions," Development and Change, 16 (1985), p. 223.

¹³Though, as will be argued later in this chapter, not impossible.

to Kuhn, since adherents of rival paradigms can be said to be living in "different worlds".¹⁴

¹⁴An example from the history of physics will clarify this point. In the early seventeenth century, Galileo, an advocate of the then unorthodox Copernican theory of the heavens came into conflict with the established Aristotelian-Ptolemaic view affirmed by the Church. One of the basic tenets of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic paradigm was that the "corruptible" earth was paralleled by the "incorruptible" heavens. As part of this distinction the surface of the moon, a part of the incorruptible heavens, was held to be perfectly smooth and round, in contrast to the rough surface of the corruptible earth.

Upon constructing his first telescope in 1609, Galileo made what he considered to be a rather dramatic discovery. In observing the moon, Galileo noted that its surface appeared to be anything but smooth and round - indeed, it appeared to be characterized by mountains and craters not unlike the earth itself. And it was on the basis of this "fact" (among others) that Galileo tried to convince the representative of the Church, Cardinal Bellarmine, that the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic paradigm should be abandoned.

What is important to note is that in Kuhnian terms it was not at all unreasonable on the part of the adherents of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic paradigm to reject Galileo's conclusion that the "fact" of the moon's imperfect surface proved that their views were incorrect. For what Galileo was counterposing to their theory of the "incorruptible" heavens was not a "fact", but another theory: in this case, the optical theory of the telescope. It is the theory of optics which reassures users of the telescope that the magnified image that they see through the telescope is accurate and reliable.

Furthermore, the theory of optics is itself grounded in and a product of the paradigm of classical mechanics - the very paradigm which Galileo was promoting and which the established scientific community of the time rejected. It is clear, then, that in that the validity of the "fact" of the imperfection of the moon's surface as seen through a telescope is itself dependent on a prior acceptance of the paradigm-determined definition of valid evidence. And since Church representatives adhered to a paradigm with radically different standards for what constitutes valid evidence (i.e., scriptural standards), it can be argued that they were quite rational in rejecting Galileo's assertions that his "fact" was sufficient to disprove their paradigm.

For a good presentation of the admittedly provocative argument that the Church representatives were quite reasonable

(continued...)

If it is true that paradigms determine what the scientific community "perceives" and if different paradigms have radically different - and indeed, incommensurable - internal standards such that the standards of one paradigm cannot be used to assess another, then how does one paradigm ever succeed another? The answer Kuhn provides on the basis of his historical explorations is an unnerving one.

According to Kuhn, the dominant paradigm becomes increasingly unwieldy due to anomalies which resist assimilation, and the increasing number of ad hoc hypotheses required to account for those anomalies. Meanwhile, rival paradigms offer redefinitions of concepts and reformulations of basic assumptions such that the anomalies of the dominant paradigm do not arise. And to the degree that the rival paradigm succeeds in gaining the assent of the scientific community, observes Kuhn, a "scientific revolution" occurs in which the rival paradigm becomes regulative.¹⁵ It is important to note that a paradigm is never abandoned without being replaced by a successor, for the presence of a paradigm is

¹⁴(...continued)
in rejecting Galileo's assertions, see Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 228-230.

¹⁵It should be noted that there is nothing inevitable in the process of uncovering anomalies which will drive a paradigm into crisis or lead to its replacement with a new paradigm. All paradigms confront anomalies of one kind or another, and the number of anomalies required to "destabilize" a paradigm varies from context to context.

indispensable for members of the scientific community to practice their craft. And it is for this reason, notes Kuhn, that "The decision to reject one paradigm is always simultaneously the decision to accept another".¹⁶

At the risk of over-emphasizing the point, let it be made clear once again that the relationship between a once-dominant paradigm and the one that replaces it is not the relationship between a specific theory and a more general theory of which the former is a special case of the latter. It is not because, as was noted above, "the normal-scientific tradition that emerges from a scientific revolution is not only incompatible but often incommensurable with that which has gone before".¹⁷

Moreover, it is the fact of incommensurability that determines that the members of the scientific community do not shift paradigmatic allegiance on the basis of a definitive judgement in terms of a neutral and common standard applicable to all paradigms. Rather, notes Kuhn, the process of shifting allegiance involves not definitive tests, but "persuasion". Kuhn characterizes the "battles" fought between rival paradigms as follows:

Though each may hope to convert the other to his way of seeing his science and its problems, neither may hope to prove his case. The competition between

¹⁶Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 77.

¹⁷Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 103.

paradigms is not the sort of battle that can be resolved by proofs.¹⁸

Concludes Kuhn, "the transfer of allegiance from paradigm to paradigm is a conversion experience that cannot be forced".¹⁹

It is the shift of allegiance in paradigms which lies at the core of a "scientific revolution". For "as in political revolutions, so in paradigm choice - there is no standard higher than the assent of the relevant community".²⁰ Of course not all members of the scientific community shift their allegiance simultaneously. Kuhn notes that "Rather than a single group conversion, what occurs is an increasing shift in the distribution of professional allegiances".²¹ Moreover, it is also possible that some will never shift their allegiance. Though most scientists "can be reached in one way or another", Kuhn observes that "particularly the older and more experienced ones may resist indefinitely". Thus,

Conversions will occur a few at a time until, after the last holdouts have died, the whole profession will again be practising under a single, but now a different, [and incommensurable] paradigm.²²

¹⁸Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 148. Also quoted in Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 52.

¹⁹Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 151, (my emphasis).

²⁰Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 94.

²¹Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 158.

²²Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 152.

It is not difficult to see why Kuhn's work has provoked such a vigorous and often hostile reaction. As Bernstein notes,

...Kuhn cuts across lines which many have thought fixed and sacred, to use a variety of psychological, sociological, historical and logical arguments in order to support his claims. He sees the scientific community less as one with an impartial interest in the quest for truth than as a political community where authority is imposed, and novelty and deviance suppressed. As in the case of political communities, there can be a breakdown in authority leading to a period of crisis. In the crisis new paradigms are proposed, and defenders of the old order and champions of the new order frequently argue at cross purposes. But in the case of a successful scientific revolution, a new paradigm emerges to set new directions for normal science. And while Kuhn at times draws back from the claim that the world itself is different after a scientific revolution, he does say that after a revolution "scientists are responding to a different world", for what we take to be the world is shaped by the paradigms we employ in understanding it.²³

The reception of Kuhn's arguments regarding the movement of mature sciences through a cycle of

normal science ->
 crisis ->
 revolution ->
 new normal science ->

have been highly varied. Some have found in him a noble ally in the battle against the stultifying orthodoxy of normal science, while others have viewed him as the very apostle of irrationality. Nor have Kuhn's arguments remained unchanged

²³Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory, p. 88, (my emphasis).

since he first presented them almost thirty years ago.²⁴ The core elements have remained, however. Here we will focus on the implications of his arguments for the positivist philosophy of science.

i) Kuhn and the Reformulation of Positivist Philosophy of Science

One of the most important effects of Kuhn's arguments was to aid in the reformulation of the positivist approach itself. In order to understand why, and to see how Kuhn's thesis was used to re-invigorate the positivist tradition, it is necessary to return briefly to the development of positivism over the past fifty years.

It will be remembered in our discussion of logical positivism in the last chapter that the early logical positivists placed great importance on the confirmation of hypotheses in terms of empirical evidence. Of course, the philosopher Hume had demonstrated that it was never possible to prove that a statement describing a causal relationship was true. It is was never possible, argued Hume, because the truth of a statement depended on it being valid in the future as well as the past. And establishing a statement's validity

²⁴See, for example, Kuhn's "Reflection on my Critics," in Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, eds. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 232-273.

in the future was something which could not be accomplished either experimentally or in terms of a priori reasoning.²⁵

In spite of Hume's arguments, the logical positivist clung to the hope that repeated confirmation of causal statements would at least provide support for those statements and thereby increase confidence in their validity.²⁶ It was the place of Karl Popper, a friendly critic of logical positivism, to suggest that even this strategy was poorly conceived. As Bechtel notes:

Just as Hume had shown that it was never possible to prove that a general statement was true, Popper maintained that one could not even show that it was likely to be true. The degree of support we could offer to a general statement was always dependent on the few cases we could examine. If we treat our degree of confirmation of a general claim as a probability measured by the proportion of all cases that we have actually examined and that have turned out to be positive, we could never establish that a general hypothesis had greater than a very small probability of being universally true.²⁷

Popper's solution to the problem of confirmation was elegant and creative. It was based on the understanding that the falsity of a universal statement can be established on the basis of a suitable singular statement. This being true, argued Popper, it can be concluded that logic permits the

²⁵For a good discussion of Hume's demonstration of the impossibility of proving any causal statement to be true, see Bruce Aune, Rationalism, Empiricism, and Pragmatism (New York, Random House, 1970), chapter two.

²⁶William Bechtel, Philosophy of Science (London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1988), p. 32.

²⁷Bechtel, p. 33.

establishment of the falsity - if not the truth - of theoretical statements on the basis of empirical evidence. Therefore, argued Popper, rather than attempting to confirm true statements, scientists should attempt to falsify (disprove) statements that are untrue.²⁸ Popper termed the approach of proposing hypotheses in falsifiable form and then attempting to falsify them on the basis of empirical evidence "conjecture and refutation". "Bold" and "risky" hypotheses which are "falsifiable" but which, despite the best efforts of scientists, have not been "falsified", form the basis of scientific knowledge.²⁹

Its elegance and creativity notwithstanding, Popper's reformulation of the positivist philosophy of science was not without its own problems, however. One of the most worrisome

²⁸The derivation of symbolic logic suited to the task of falsification is the modus tollens or "denying the consequent":

If A, then B.
Not B.
 Therefore, not A.

²⁹ Popper held such falsifiable but unfalsified hypotheses to have been "corroborated" (not confirmed).

Despite this change of emphasis, however, the basic structure of logical positivism remains intact. Like the original logical positivists, Popper still contends that symbolic logic can guide scientific investigation, that scientific investigation must be grounded in empirical inquiry, that it is the context of justification, not the context of discovery, which must be our central concern, and that explanation involves deriving a fact from a law and a set of initial conditions. For a more detailed discussion of Popper's contribution to the evolution of logical positivism, see Bechtel, pp. 32-37.

was that if Popper's notion of falsification had been strictly applied in the past, it would almost certainly have led to the premature rejection of theoretical approaches which ultimately proved themselves very fruitful. As Chalmers notes,

An embarrassing historical fact for [Popperian] falsificationists is that if their methodology had been strictly adhered to by scientists then those theories generally regarded as being among the best examples of scientific theories would never have been developed because they would have been rejected in their infancy.³⁰

They would have been rejected because, as the historical record shows,

Given any example of a classic scientific theory, whether at the time of its first proposal or at a later date, it is possible to find observational claims that were generally accepted at the time and were considered to be inconsistent with the theory.³¹

It was to a great degree as a result of this problem that a student of Popper's - Imre Lakatos - attempted to reformulate the notion of the proper strategy for the development of scientific knowledge.

It should also be noted that at the same time as Lakatos's contribution was an extension of the work of Popper, it was also a response to the arguments of Kuhn.³² It will be remembered that Kuhn's reconstruction of the historical record

³⁰What is This Thing Called Science?, 2nd. ed. (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1982), p. 66.

³¹Chalmers, p. 66.

³²Bechtel, p. 60.

demonstrated clearly that apparent falsifications of a paradigm - "puzzles" which resisted solution within the context of normal science - did not automatically spell the death of a paradigm. On the contrary, argued Kuhn, a successful paradigm was one which was able to provide model solutions to at least some important "puzzles", even while being incapable of solving all. In other words, Kuhn's historical work demonstrated that even the most successful of paradigms existed in a virtual "ocean of 'anomalies'".³³

Moreover, Kuhn's historical explorations showed that even in those cases where the "ocean of anomalies" did finally overwhelm a paradigm, one paradigm was never abandoned without the simultaneous adoption of another. In short, argued Kuhn, the historical record demonstrated clearly that the existence of shared theoretical and methodological constructs - whose legitimacy rested on the ability to provide (model) solutions to at least some "puzzles" - was absolutely essential to the activity of scientific research.

Inspired by Kuhn's arguments, Lakatos went on to revise the Popperian formulation - a formulation Lakatos termed "methodological falsificationism" - of the positivist philosophy of science in an attempt to accommodate i) the historical resistance of paradigms to straightforward

³³Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, eds. Lakatos and Musgrave, p. 133.

falsification, ii) the undeniable importance of "confirmation" in the evaluation of paradigms (i.e., the ability to solve at least some "puzzles")³⁴, and iii) the indispensability of a shared research agenda for the activity of scientific investigation. To distinguish his position from that of Popper's (while acknowledging the lineage), Lakatos termed his own position "sophisticated methodological falsificationism".

Lakatos' "sophisticated methodological falsificationism" took the following form. First, in contradistinction to Kuhn's emphasis on the existence of one dominant paradigm as the defining characteristics of normal science, Lakatos argued that science should be understood as an on-going competition between paradigms - "research programmes", in Lakatosian terms - each with its own advocates.

Scientific advance, argued Lakatos, takes place within the respective research programmes as well as between them. The distinctiveness of Lakatos's formulation relates to the nature of that advance. According to Lakatos, successful research programmes are distinguished by a succession of theories, in which new theories replace old ones while preserving important features of the older theories. Specifically, succeeding theories in a research programme preserve a set of unchanging, basic assumptions, or what Lakatos refers to as the "hard core" of a research programme.

³⁴ie. the ability of a given paradigm to solve at least some "puzzles".

The "hardness" of the core is ensured by the programme's "negative heuristic": that is, the methodological rule that criticism be directed away from its basic assumptions. It is this inviolable "hard core" which provides continuity within a research programme.

If the "hard core" of basic assumptions provides continuity, it is the "protective belt" of auxiliary assumptions and hypotheses which allows for theoretical flexibility in the face of new evidence and theoretical elaboration. It is the "protective belt" which is the expression of the "positive heuristic" of the research programme. Notes Lakatos, "It is this protective belt which has to bear the brunt of tests and get adjusted and readjusted, or even completely replaced, to defend the [hard] core".³⁵

Lakatos thereby significantly reformulates the notion of what constitutes a "falsification" of a given theory. Notes Lakatos, "We regard a theory [in a given research programme] ... "falsified" when it is superseded by a theory with higher corroborated content". More specifically,

For the sophisticated [methodological] falsificationist a scientific theory T is falsified if and only if another theory T' has been proposed with the following characteristics: (1) T' has excess empirical content of T : that is, it predicts novel facts, that is, facts improbable in the light of, or even forbidden by, T ; (2) T' explains the previous success of T , that is, all the unrefuted

³⁵Lakatos in Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, p. 133.

content of T is included (within the limits of observational error) in the content of T' ; and (3) some of the excess content of T' is corroborated.³⁶

In short, the role of confirmation has been given a central place in the assessment of competing theories, as has the position that one theory is not abandoned until a more adequate one exists to take its place.

Thus Lakatos' reformulation of the notion of falsification in the case of individual theories served to make room for "confirmation", as well as to show recognition of the importance of a shared theoretical framework for conducting scientific inquiry. Furthermore, his notion of an inviolable hard core surrounded by a changeable protective belt served to render research programmes invulnerable to straight-forward falsification.

This does not mean that research programmes cannot be assessed, however. The central question in assessing the merits of a research programme is whether it involves a "progressive problem-shift" or a "degenerating problem-shift". Lakatos explains the distinction in the following way:

Let us take a series of theories $T_1, T_2, T_3, \dots$ where each subsequent theory results from adding auxiliary clauses to (or from semantical reinterpretations of) the previous theory in order to accommodate some anomaly, each theory having at least as much content as the unrefuted content of its predecessor ... [A] Series of theories is theoretically progressive (or "constitutes a theoretically progressive problem-shift") if each new theory has some excess empirical content over

³⁶"Falsification and the Methodology," p. 116, emphasis in the original.

its predecessor, that is if it predicts some novel, hitherto unexpected fact ... [A] theoretically progressive series of theories is also empirically progressive (or "constitutes an empirically progressive problem-shift") if some of this excess empirical content is also corroborated, that is, if each new theory leads us to the actual discovery of some new fact. Finally, ... a problem-shift [is] progressive if it is both theoretically and empirically progressive, and degenerating if it is not. We "accept" problem-shifts as "scientific" only if they are at least theoretically progressive; if they are not, we "reject" them as "pseudoscientific". Progress is measured by the degree to which a problem-shift is progressive, [i.e.] by the degree to which the series of theories leads us to the discovery of novel facts.³⁷

With this overview of Lakatos's arguments, the nature of his contribution to the reformulation of the positivist philosophy of science can be identified. First, the significance of Lakatos's innovation - specifically, the shift of emphasis from falsification of individual hypotheses to the comparative evaluation (including the role of confirmation) of larger, evolving meta-scientific units - should not be missed. It can be understood as a part of a greater movement within contemporary philosophy of science from a

preoccupation (virtually an obsession) with the isolated individual term, to the sentence or proposition, to the conceptual scheme or framework, to an ongoing historical tradition constituted by social practices - a movement from logical atomist to historical dynamic continuity.³⁸

³⁷"Falsification and the Methodology," p. 118, emphasis in the original. Also quoted in Terence Ball, "Is There Progress in Political Science?" in Idioms of Inquiry: Critique and Renewal in Political Science, ed. T. Ball (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 24.

³⁸Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 24.

At the same time it must be recognized that his reformulation remained firmly within the positivist tradition. It did so in that it implicitly accepted - and in no way challenged - the three central tenets (and their underlying assumptions) of the positivistic logic of investigation identified in the previous chapter.³⁹ Particularly worth noting, in terms of the concerns of this chapter, is that Lakatos' reformulation remained consistent with the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence".

The latter point bears some elaboration. It is clear from Lakatos' discussion of the falsification of theories within a research programme that the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" continues to play a central role. It is, after all, the fact that theory T^1 accounts for as many "facts" as does theory T , as well as leading to the discovery of new "facts" that results in the falsification of theory T . In other words, the Lakatosian notion of falsification is based on the understanding that "facts" express objective realities of the world around us, are sufficiently independent of the theories in question, and, therefore, can be used to assess the truth-content of those theories.

Furthermore, and though not as explicitly, the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" is also present in the

³⁹i.e., i) "truth as correspondence", ii) the methodological unity of science, and iii) the value-free nature of scientific knowledge.

assessment of different research programmes. First, it is important to understand that Lakatos' reformulation lends itself to an assessment of rival research programmes in retrospect only. For while it is undoubtedly true that Lakatos' original intent was to provide a standard by which practising scientists could exercise judgments about rival research programmes in the present, it is also true that Lakatos has had difficulty in justifying his reformulation as a guide for practising scientists facing decisions about which research programme to adopt. The weakness in Lakatos' reformulation for prescription lies in the fact that his methodology allows that a scientist "may rationally stick to a degenerating programme until it is overtaken by a rival and even after".⁴⁰ It is rational to do so for it is always possible that a degenerating research programme may "stage a come-back", once again become progressive and overtake its rivals. Thus Lakatos provides no guide in the present for deciding how long one should stick with a degenerating research programme before abandoning it for its rival.

More recently, Lakatos has conceded as much:

My "methodology," older connotations of the term notwithstanding, only **appraises** fully articulated theories (or research programmes) but it presumes to give advice to the scientist neither about how to arrive at good theories nor even about which of two rival programmes he should work on.

⁴⁰Lakatos, quoted in Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 64, emphasis in the original.

Also when it turns out that, on my criteria, one research programme is "progressing" and its rival "degenerating", this tells us only that the two programmes possess objective features but does not tell us that scientists must work only in the progressive one.⁴¹

It is important to note, of course, that not all theorists are willing to relinquish the idea that Lakatos' methodology can serve as a guide in the present. Thus Terence Ball affirms that although "Lakatos does not supply us with a wholly rational method for choosing a research programme... he provides a means of 'keeping score' in the contest between rival research programmes".⁴² Nonetheless, Lakatos himself now speaks of his methodology of scientific research programmes more in terms of a rational reconstruction of history than a prescriptive philosophy; "more of a guide to the historian of science than the scientist".⁴³

Despite this self-acknowledged limitation, however, the Lakatosian reformulation does claim the ability to assess rival research programmes "with hindsight", and it is here that the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" is clearly identifiable. For although Lakatos cannot tell

⁴¹Lakatos, quoted in Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 65.

⁴²"Is There Progress in Political Science?", p. 37, note #11. The means of keeping score, it will remembered, is based on the notion that progressive research programmes are successful in the discovery of new "facts" where degenerating ones are not.

⁴³Quoted in Chalmers, p. 106.

scientific investigators working in the present when the decision to abandon one research programme for another is justified, as a rational reconstruction, his methodology is held to be capable of explaining the victory of one research programme over its rivals. Just as it is the ability of theory T^1 both to account for the empirical content of Theory T and to surpass it that leads to its victory within a given research programme, so it is the ability of a given research programme to account for the "facts" explained by its degenerating rival, as well as to lead to the discovery of new facts, that accounts for its victory over time. Once again, it is "facts", understood as an expression of the true nature of the world around us, which are determinant. In short, it is the higher degree of correspondence of a given research programme with the real world which, in retrospect, can be seen to have ensured its victory in the contest with its rivals.⁴ And it is as a consequence of this view that Lakatos feels confident in asserting that "the methodology of scientific research programmes is better suited for

⁴As Chalmers notes in his discussion of Lakatos as a "rationalist", for Lakatos

The aim of science is truth, and, according to Lakatos, the methodology of research programmes provides the best means of assessing the extent to which we have succeeded in approaching it.

What is This Thing Called Science?, p. 104.

approximating the truth in our actual universe than any other methodology".⁴⁵

Lakatos' reformulation has had a major impact on the positivist approach to the study of human society. His insistence that even mature sciences exhibit an on-going plurality of research programmes has given hope to social scientists, whose own disciplines were always marked by such plurality. While under Kuhn's formulation, the social sciences would qualify only as immature sciences (no single dominant paradigm), Lakatos' formulation has allowed social scientists to temper their traditional sense of inferiority with regard to the natural sciences.

A second consequence of Lakatos' reformulation - in this case, his insistence that even initially unsuccessful research programmes can become successful and progressive with time - has been the growth of calls for increased tolerance of theoretical and methodological diversity in social science. As a consequence of Lakatos' support for attempts to save theories from refutation, very un-Popperian pleas for tolerance for new, undeveloped, and yet promising research programmes have found their way into mainstream positivist social science literature.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Quoted in Chalmers, p. 104.

⁴⁶See Ball, "Is There Progress in Political Science?", pp. 34-36. Ball suggests marxism and functional analysis as examples of late arrivals with theoretical potential worthy of tolerance.

Nonetheless, not all social theorists have found Lakatos' reformulation of the positivist tradition convincing. It is to their attempt to move beyond that tradition in a conclusive fashion - and the opening to a theoretically reflexive disposition which such a move involves - that we now turn.

Post-Positivist Philosophy of Science and the Opening to Theoretical Reflexivity

As was noted earlier, Lakatos abandoned the Kuhnian term "paradigm" for that of "research programme". It should have become clear that this was more than just a change of label. For Lakatos' abandonment of the Kuhnian label was the sign of a deeper rejection of one of Kuhn's basic theses on the nature of paradigms: specifically, that contending paradigms are not only incompatible ways of doing science, they are incommensurable as well. Because it is on the understanding of the notion of incommensurability that so much disagreement rests, and because of its centrality for theoretical reflexivity, let us review in more detail the exact meaning of the term.

Incommensurability, it will be remembered, is a defining feature of paradigmatically-defined normal science. To quote Kuhn once again, "The normal-scientific tradition that emerges from a scientific revolution is not only incompatible but often actually incommensurable with that which has gone

before".⁴⁷ As Bernstein notes, the best way to understand what is meant by incommensurability is to compare it to the positivist understanding of the structure of scientific explanation and theory. Within this understanding, there is the assumption of a "permanent neutral observation language" by which we can evaluate rival theories/ research programmes. It is through this permanent neutral observation language that one can determine the truth content of a given theory/ research programme understood in terms of the degree of correspondence to the "real world"; it is because of the permanent neutral observation language that one can know that the standards applied are more than conventions - that the standards applied are "Nature's own".

It is this assumption of a neutral observation language that Kuhn's notion of incommensurability is meant to challenge. For it is Kuhn's argument that paradigms are not derived from empirical evidence; rather, paradigms are social conventions whose function it is to determine what is to count as evidence. Paradigms do not just provide model solutions to significant problems: they define what are to count as significant problems in the first place. The incommensurability of paradigms - the absence of a common measure - is an incommensurability of meanings, problems and standards. And it is for this reason that scientists working

⁴⁷The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 103, emphasis added.

within rival paradigms "practice their trades in different worlds" and, in some areas, even "see different things".⁴⁸ As a consequence, no straight-forward appeal to evidence can be used either to support one theory over another in the present (à la Popper) or even to explain the superiority of one research programme over another in retrospect (à la Lakatos).

It is important to note that Kuhn was not the first to recognize the "theory-laden" nature of all empirical evidence. Indeed, it was as a consequence of this recognition (and in response to the difficulties it posed for the regulative ideal of "truth as correspondence") that considerable effort was expended by logical positivists in spelling out and justifying the "correspondence rules" which linked - albeit in an increasingly "partial" manner - theoretical and observational terms.⁴⁹ Moreover, it was also in response to this recognition, and the problems it posed for methodological falsificationism, that Popper reformulated the question of the reliability of empirical evidence in terms of public observation statements (a reformulation which Lakatos adopted in his own work). Public observation statements, or "basic statements", argued Popper, "are accepted as the result of a

⁴⁸Kuhn in Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 82.

⁴⁹For a good discussion of this point, see Peter Halfpenny, Positivism and Sociology (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), chapter five.

decision or agreement, and to that extent they are conventions".⁵⁰

This is exactly Kuhn's point. Public observation statements - statements of fact - are never anything but paradigmatically-informed social conventions. And this being the case, it is quite understandable that scientific investigators working in terms of different paradigm-defined conventions might "see different things".

Thus, although he was not the first to recognize the theory-laden nature of all observation statements, it is Kuhn's distinctive contribution to have taken this recognition to its logical conclusion. Concludes Kuhn, "There is no neutral algorithm for theory choice, no systematic decision procedure which, properly applied, must lead each individual in the group to the same decision".⁵¹ In short, notes Bernstein, Kuhn "denies that there is a 'third' completely neutral language or framework within which rival paradigmatic theories 'could be fully expressed and which could therefore be used in a point-by-point comparison between them'".⁵²

The work of Thomas Kuhn, along with others such as Paul Feyerabend⁵³ and, most recently, Richard Rorty⁵⁴, have been key

⁵⁰The Logic of Scientific Discovery (London: Hutchinson, 1968), p. 106.

⁵¹Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 200.

⁵²Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 85.

⁵³Against Method (New York: New Left Books, 1975).

in the emergence of a post-positivist philosophy of science in which incommensurability holds a central place. The central tenets of this post-positivist philosophy of science are summarized below by Mary Hesse:

- i) In natural science data is not detachable from theory, for what count as data are determined in the light of some theoretical interpretation, and the facts themselves have to be reconstructed in the light of interpretation.
- ii) In natural science theories are not models externally compared to nature in a hypothetico-deductive schema, they are the way the facts themselves are seen.
- iii) In natural science the lawlike relations asserted of experience are internal, because what counts as facts are constituted by what the theory says about their inter-relations with one another.
- iv) The language of natural science is irreducibly metaphorical and inexact, and formalizable only at the cost of distortion of the historical dynamics of scientific development and of the imaginative constructions in terms of which nature is interpreted by science.
- v) Meanings in natural science are determined by theory; they are understood by theoretical coherence rather than by correspondence with facts.⁵⁵

In short, it is the affirmation of post-positivist philosophy of science that all scientific inquiry - natural science and, by extension, social science as well - involves interpretation of theory-laden evidence by means of incommensurable theoretical frameworks which are themselves

⁵⁴(...continued)

⁵⁴Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.

⁵⁵Revolutions and Reconstructions in the Philosophy of Science (Brighton, England: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 172-173.

never other than social conventions adopted by a community of investigators. The post-positivist philosophy of science breaks the link with the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" by underscoring the central role of the "subject" - the community of investigators - in constituting the "object" - the world around us. It is through this break that a space for theoretical reflexivity is created.

It is important to note, however, that although incommensurability as encapsulated within post-positivist philosophy of science provides an opening for the development of theoretical reflexivity, the acceptance of the notion of incommensurability does not automatically result in a reflexive disposition. The problem lies in the tendency to equate incommensurability of paradigms with the incomparability of paradigms. To grasp this better, let us return to Kuhn's work.

Kuhn's willingness to take the recognition of the paradigmatically-determined nature of all evidence to its logical conclusion has made him the object of attack for positivists such as Popper. Popper accuses Kuhn of promoting the "Myth of the Framework" according to which "we are prisoners caught in the framework of our theories; our expectations; our past experiences; our language,"⁵⁶ and that

⁵⁶"Normal Science and Its Dangers", in Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, Lakatos and Musgrave, p. 56.

as a consequence we cannot communicate with or judge those working in terms of a different paradigm.

If it is true that the incommensurability of paradigms means that attempts at inter-paradigmatic communication are futile, and that reasoned judgements about the relative worth of rival paradigms are impossible, then the notion of incommensurability is as much an obstacle to theoretical reflexivity as is that of "truth as correspondence". For it is the underlying premise of theoretical reflexivity (as found in the tradition of critical theorizing) that rational reflection and reasoned judgements about the relative merits of paradigm-specific conventions which define what is to count as reliable knowledge are possible, and indeed, indispensable for the development of emancipation-oriented theory.

In fact, it is not at all necessary to equate incommensurability with the incomparability as implied by Popper's "Myth of the Framework". As Bernstein has shown, the Kuhnian notion of the incommensurability of paradigms in no way implies the incomparability of paradigms. Notes Bernstein,

... Kuhn did not introduce the incommensurability thesis in order to call into the question the possibility of comparing theories and rationally evaluating them, but to clarify what we are doing when we compare [incommensurable] theories.⁵⁷

To understand what we are doing when we compare the incommensurable, it is necessary to see how both the

⁵⁷Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 86, emphasis in the original.

positivist insistence on "truth as correspondence" - as well as Popper's notion of the "Myth of the Framework" - are expressions of a common philosophical apprehension. They are both expressions of what has been termed the "Cartesian anxiety" - the notion, central to the thought of René Descartes, that should we prove unsuccessful in our search for the Archimedean point of indubitable knowledge which can serve as the foundation for human reason, then rationality must give way to irrationality and reliable knowledge to madness. Notes Bernstein in his review of the work of the "father of modern philosophy",

With a chilling clarity Descartes leads us with an apparent and ineluctable necessity to a grand and seductive Either/Or. **Either** there is some support for our being, a fixed foundation for our knowledge, **or** we cannot escape the forces of darkness that envelop us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos.⁵⁸

It should be noted that the Cartesian anxiety, which has served as the driving force of modern philosophy - and which is reflected in positivism's insistence on the a-historical, extra-social standard of "truth as correspondence" - is bound up with the conception of knowledge that Aristotle called episteme: apodictic knowledge of the order and nature of the cosmos.

The peculiarly modern fear that the undermining of the viability of episteme must lead inexorably to irrationality

⁵⁸Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 18, emphasis in the original.

and chaos is itself, it can be argued, the result of the fact that the modern conception of knowledge and rationality has been limited to that of episteme. What is particularly noteworthy is that classical conceptions of knowledge were considerably broader. In addition to the conception of knowledge known as episteme, Aristotle also spoke of a form of knowledge he termed phronesis: a form of "practical reason" oriented toward the prudent exercise of judgement in contexts characterized by the contingent and variable. And since the political realm, in the classical conception, had such a character, the practice of phronesis was considered indispensable to the goal of leading a good and just life in the polis.

What is particularly interesting, is that although the classical conception of phronesis has been all but lost as a formally recognized category of knowledge in the modern period, the core traits of this kind of knowledge are clearly recognizable in the attempts to articulate a post-positivist philosophy of science. As Bernstein notes in a comparison of the work of Kuhn to that of the classically-oriented philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer,

... the type of rationality that Kuhn has been struggling to articulate when dealing with the complex issues of theory-choice and paradigm switches - his insistence that reasons function as values which can be differently weighted and applied to concrete situations, and his defence of the role of judgement in making choices and decisions - are closely related to Gadamer's analysis of phronesis There is a groping quality in Kuhn's several attempts to clarify the characteristics of the type

of argumentation that is involved in choosing among rival paradigms. It is as if he has been searching for a proper model to express his awareness that such deliberation and choosing are rational activities, but not the sort of rational activity that has been characterized as deductive proof or empirical verification or falsification.⁵⁹

In short, argues Bernstein, "without being completely aware of what he is doing Kuhn is appealing to a conception of rationality that has been at the core of the tradition of practical philosophy [phronesis]"⁶⁰

Thus what we are doing when we compare incommensurable paradigms is refusing to limit our conception of human reason to a mechanical application of an eternal, unchanging standard. We are affirming that a broader and more subtle conception of reason is possible than that which underlies both the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" and that of radical relativism as the logical consequence of incommensurability.

When we compare incommensurable paradigms we are participating in the revival of a neglected but potent "practical" form of reason - phronesis⁶¹ - which allows adherents of rival paradigms to communicate with each other

⁵⁹Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, pp. 40-41.

⁶⁰Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 41.

⁶¹Some authors refer to this conception of reason as a "dialogical" conception of reason. See, for example, Drucilla Cornell, "Toward a Modern/ Postmodern Reconstruction of Ethics," University of Pennsylvania Law Review, 133, No. 2 (January 1985).

and to learn from one another's arguments, and which enables us to weigh the relative merits of rival paradigms by comparing them with each other "in multiple ways without requiring the assumption that there is or must always be a common, fixed grid by which we measure progress".⁶²

What we are doing when we compare incommensurable paradigms is that we are recognizing that the standards we employ to judge between paradigms - like those we use to judge between theories within a paradigm - are human standards which are "made", and not nature's standards which are "given". We are recognizing that there is no straight-forward way of "keeping score" between rival paradigms (because incommensurable paradigms are, by definition, playing different "games"). But we are also affirming that we can use our powers of reason to evaluate different "games", to "persuade" others of the well-foundedness of our judgements, and thereby to "convert" others through a process of reasoned debate and argument to our point of view.

To compare the incommensurable is to affirm that it is possible to provide "good reasons" for judging one paradigm superior to another, even as we acknowledge that the standards for what counts as a "good reason" - and by extension, for what constitutes a "superior paradigm" - are themselves

⁶²Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 86.

products of human reasoning which is always historically contingent and context-dependent.

To compare the incommensurable is not to abandon the realm of reliable knowledge for that of madness; it is to recognize that knowledge-defining standards are always open to question and to reassessment. In short, to compare the incommensurable is to engage in theoretical reflexivity.

The dissolution of the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" (through the undermining of the underlying assumption of the separation of subject and object) has brought the issue of theoretical reflexivity to centre stage in contemporary social science. And the recovery of a lost conception of reason - phronesis - by social and political theorists provides a means by which the practice of theoretical reflexivity may be justified in a context dominated by the "Cartesian anxiety". The question remains, however, to what extent these developments have parallels in the discipline of international relations. It is to that question that we now turn.

Part II: Reflexivity and International Relations Theory

In the first part of this chapter, we examined the question of theoretical reflexivity in terms of social and political theory. The question remains, however, to what degree the developments in social and political theory have their parallels in international relations theory. To what extent has a space for theoretical reflexivity been created in the discipline of international relations?

I will attempt to answer this question by exploring the issue of theoretical reflexivity in international relations theory through a recently arisen meta-theoretical debate in the discipline - international relations theory's "Third Debate".

International Relations Theory's "Third Debate"

To understand the significance of the Third Debate for the discipline of international relations, it is necessary to place it in context. The contemporary debate, which dates from the late 1980s, can be seen as the third in a series of "discipline-defining" debates⁶³ in the twentieth century: the first being that between "idealism" and "realism" in the 1940s and 1950s,⁶⁴ with the second, which occurred during the 1960s,

⁶³Lapid, p. 236.

⁶⁴See E. H. Carr, The Twenty-Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations (London: Macmillan, 1939).

centering around the confrontation between "history" and "science".⁶⁵

One should also see the Third Debate in terms of contemporary developments in the realm of social and political theory more generally. It has already been suggested in this study that the claim that "International Relations is a discrete area of action and discourse, separate from social and political theory",⁶⁶ can no longer be sustained. Nowhere is there better evidence for this position than in international relations theory's "Third Debate". In short, the rise of the Third Debate can be understood as international relations theory's response to contemporary developments in social and political theory more generally, and in the philosophy of science in particular.

There is no question that the Third Debate reflects the general emphases shared by both contemporary positivist and post-positivist philosophy of science. Like the debates which preceded it, the Third Debate is part of the search for better theory. In the case of the Third Debate, however, and in line with contemporary philosophy of science, this search is being conducted not in terms of individual propositions or

⁶⁵For a collection of contributions to this second debate, see Klaus Knorr and James N. Rosenau, eds., Contending Approaches to International Politics (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969).

⁶⁶Mark Hoffman, "Critical Theory and the Inter-Paradigm Debate", Millennium, 16, No. 2 (1987), p. 231.

hypotheses, but in terms of larger conceptual schemes. The Third Debate is a "discourse about choice of analytic frameworks..."⁶⁷. It involves a focus on "meta-scientific units" (i.e., paradigms), where particular attention is directed to examining the "underlying premises and assumptions" of the paradigms in contention.⁶⁸

A good example of this approach to the on-going quest for better theory is the work of Michael Banks. In an important contribution to the Third Debate, Banks conceptualizes the present state of the discipline in terms of three contending paradigms: realism, pluralism, and structuralism. "The debate about their respective merits," argues Banks, "occupies centre stage in the discipline ..."⁶⁹

Banks attempts to detail and contrast the "basic images" of the respective paradigms. Notes Banks:

Each of the three starts with a wholly different basic image. For realists, the world society is a system of "billiard-ball" states in intermittent collision. For pluralists, it is a "cobweb", a network of numerous criss-crossing relationships. For structuralists, it is a "multi-headed octopus", with powerful tentacles constantly sucking wealth from the weakened peripheries towards the powerful centres.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Michael Banks, "The Inter-Paradigm Debate", in International Relations: A Handbook of Current Theory, eds. Margot Light and A. J. R. Groom (London: Pinter, 1985), p. 20.

⁶⁸Lapid, p. 239.

⁶⁹Banks, "The Inter-Paradigm Debate," p. 9.

⁷⁰"The Inter-Paradigm Debate," p. 12.

It is these contrasting images, notes Banks, that serve as the foundation for the erection of theoretical structures. These structures, while internally coherent, contradict one another in terms of major theoretical categories including: i) actors, ii) dynamics, iii) dependent variables, iv) subject boundaries, and v) specific concepts.

With regard to actors, notes Banks, "... realists see only states; pluralists see states in combination with a great variety of others; and structuralists see classes". As regards dynamics, "realists see force as primary; pluralists see complex social movements; structuralists see economics". As concerns dependent variables,

realists see the task of IR [international relations] as simply to explain what states do; pluralists see it more grandly as an effort to explain all major world events; and structuralists see its function as showing why the world contains such appalling contrasts between rich and poor.⁷¹

With regard to subject boundaries,

Realists define the boundaries of their subject in a narrow, state-centric fashion, often preferring the term "international politics" to describe it. Pluralists widen the boundaries by including multinational companies, markets, ethnic groups and nationalism as well as state behaviour, and call their subject IR or world society. Structuralists have the widest boundaries of all, stressing the unity of the whole world system at all levels, focussing on modes of production and treating inter-state politics as merely a surface phenomenon.⁷²

And finally, as regards specific concepts, Banks notes that:

⁷¹"The Inter-Paradigm Debate," pp. 12-13.

⁷²"The Inter-Paradigm Debate," p. 13.

Some concepts are found only in one paradigm, because they are of crucial importance to it: deterrence and alliances in realism, ethnicity and interdependence in pluralism, exploitation and dependency in structuralism. Others, however, are used with broadly similar meanings in all three: power, sovereignty, and law, for example. Yet others, like imperialism, the state, and hegemony, are used in all three but with sharply different interpretations.⁷³

It is clear there is much room for disagreement with the specifics of Banks' intervention. His conceptualization of the contending paradigms - from their basic images through to their contrasting notions of actors, dynamics, etc. - can be challenged as to its accuracy and adequacy. Indeed, disagreements may extend all the way to the labels used to designate contending paradigms.⁷⁴ In contrast to Banks' use of the terms "realism", "pluralism" and "structuralism", for example, Kai Holsti prefers those of the "Classical Tradition", "Global Society", and "Neo-Marxism";⁷⁵ Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi employ those of "realism", "pluralism", and "globalism";⁷⁶ R. D. McKinlay and R. Little identify their

⁷³"The Inter-Paradigm Debate," p. 13.

⁷⁴Apart from disagreeing on the content and labels of contending paradigms, authors also disagree on the issue of the number of relevant paradigms, some identifying many more than three. Three does seem to be the most common number, however, and in this regard Banks is once again representative.

⁷⁵The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

⁷⁶Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, eds., International Relations Theory (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

paradigms by the labels of "realist", "liberal" and "socialist".⁷⁷ The point remains, however, that Banks' work serves as an excellent example of how the emphases of contemporary philosophy of science have spilled over into the discipline of international relations, and influenced the form that interventions have taken in the Third Debate.

As was noted above, the Third Debate, like its forerunners, is a discipline-defining debate, concerned with the "search for better theory".⁷⁸ For that reason alone, it bears consideration. However, the Third Debate has special significance in terms of the concerns of the present chapter. For beyond the immediate arguments about the number, identifying characteristics, and appropriate labels for the paradigms in international relations theory, the Third Debate affords a valuable opportunity for exploring the issue of theoretical reflexivity in the discipline.

It has been argued that international relations theory's Third Debate not only reflects the influence of contemporary philosophy of science in general (i.e., with its emphasis on meta-scientific units), but that it is a direct response to

⁷⁷R. D. McKinlay and R. Little, Global Problems and World Order (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).

Similarly, in his overview of the sub-field of international political economy, Robert Gilpin speaks in terms of the "Nationalist", "Liberal" and "Marxist" perspectives. See his The Political Economy of International Relations (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).

⁷⁸Michael Banks, as quoted in Lapid, p. 235.

post-positivist philosophy of science in particular. In the words of Yosef Lapid, the Third Debate is "linked, historically and intellectually, to the confluence of diverse anti-positivistic philosophical and sociological trends".⁷⁹ In fact, as an ostensible response to post-positivist philosophy of science, the Third Debate has been interpreted by some as marking international relations theory's break with positivist orthodoxy. Moreover, as a consequence of its purported break with positivist orthodoxy and, specifically, with the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence", the Third Debate has been credited with contributing to an important increase in theoretical reflexivity within the discipline of international relations.⁸⁰

In the remainder of this chapter this interpretation of the Third Debate will be examined. It will be argued that to see the Third Debate as marking a conclusive break with the positivist legacy, and an opening to theoretical reflexivity would be a mistake. Rather, it will be suggested that for two important reasons, the Third Debate's contribution to increased reflexivity in the discipline has been limited. First, a significant number of interventions in the Third Debate, while clearly reflecting the influence of contemporary philosophy of science, continue to be structured in positivist

⁷⁹Lapid, p. 237.

⁸⁰See Lapid, pp. 249-250.

terms (particular as concerns the tenet of "truth as correspondence"). As a consequence, the possibilities for the development of theoretical reflexivity remain extremely limited. And secondly, of the interventions which do evidence an attempt to break with the positivist legacy, many have adopted a formulation which closes off openings to theoretical reflexivity as effectively as does positivism.

Nonetheless, it will also be argued that some interventions in the Third Debate do evidence a clear break with the positivist approach to theorizing, and do so in terms which are conducive to the development of a theoretically reflexive disposition. It is these interventions which hold out a real hope for the development of thorough-going theoretical reflexivity in the discipline of international relations.

Interventions in the Third Debate:

On the basis of our discussions of recent developments in the philosophy of science in the first part of this chapter, three possible stances with regard to contending paradigms can be distinguished. The first stance, corresponding to the Lakatosian reformulation of the positivist tradition, is that of "commensurable and therefore comparable". Rival paradigms are comparable, asserts this position, because ultimately they can be assessed according to a common standard - that of correspondence to the real

world. This stance, it will be remembered, is incompatible with the development of theoretical reflexivity, in that it sees the standard for what constitutes reliable knowledge as "nature's own", and thus beyond criticism.

A second stance with regard to contending paradigms is that which corresponds to the Popperian notion of the "Myth of the Framework". According to this stance, rival paradigms are "incommensurable and therefore incomparable". This stance breaks with positivism to the degree that it recognizes that standards for what constitutes reliable knowledge are human constructs and social conventions. However, it shares with positivism the idea that the acceptance of incommensurability means that rival standards cannot be compared and assessed, thereby closing itself off to the development of theoretical reflexivity as effectively as does positivism.

Finally, a third stance was identified. This is the stance associated with the position of Thomas Kuhn, according to which rival paradigms are "incommensurable yet still comparable". This stance recognizes the social nature of the standards for what constitutes "reliable knowledge". But it also affirms that these conventions can be compared and assessed by means of reasoned argument and deliberation. It is this stance which is most conducive to the development of theoretical reflexivity.

These three stances will be used to categorize the interventions in the Third Debate. Through this process, the

question of the extent to which the Third Debate has in fact contributed to a growth in reflexivity in the discipline of international relations will be addressed. We will begin with the first stance: that of "commensurable and therefore comparable".

Stance I: Commensurable and Therefore Comparable

The stance of "commensurable and therefore comparable" is, as was noted above, reflective of the Lakatosian reformulation of the positivist tradition. In terms of international relations theory's Third Debate, this stance has been most consistently adopted by neo-realists. One of the best examples of this type of intervention in the Third Debate is to be found in the writings of K. J. Holsti.⁸¹

To begin, there is no question that Holsti is most comfortable within the realist - or in his terms, "Classical" - tradition. Indeed, The Dividing Discipline can be seen as a spirited defence of the realist approach to the study of international politics at a time when calls are being heard for its replacement.

What is equally significant, however, is Holsti's adherence to a Lakatosian version of positivism, including the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence". Holsti's

⁸¹For Holsti's interventions, see The Dividing Discipline, as well as his response to Lapid, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Which are the Fairest Theories of All?", International Studies Quarterly, 33, No. 3, (1989).

allegiance to positivism is clearly evidenced in his statements concerning the purpose of theory and the nature of knowledge accumulation. For Holsti,

the ultimate purpose of theoretical activity is to enhance our understanding of the world of international politics"; it is to "increase our knowledge of the real world by helping to guide research and interpret data".⁸²

Moreover, notes Holsti, "We add to knowledge primarily when we render reality more intelligible by seeking generalizations of empirical validity...."⁸³

It is out of the understanding that theory is a reflection of the "real world" that Holsti explains the origins of the contending paradigms which constitute the Third Debate. "A plethora of ... 'paradigms'", notes Holsti, "is an expression of greater international complexity".⁸⁴ And because "[o]ur world is complex and growing more so", he asserts, "it is ... unlikely that any single theory or perspective ... could adequately explain all of its essential characteristics".⁸⁵ Thus, he concludes, "Theoretical pluralism is the only possible response to the multiple realities of a complex world".⁸⁶

⁸²"Mirror, Mirror", pp. 255-256, my emphasis.

⁸³"Mirror, Mirror", p. 256.

⁸⁴"Mirror, Mirror", p. 259.

⁸⁵"Mirror, Mirror", p. 256.

⁸⁶"Mirror, Mirror", p. 256.

It is in the tolerant and at times almost welcoming stance that Holsti takes to paradigmatic pluralism that one sees clearly the Lakatosian dimension to Holsti's positivism. For Holsti, paradigmatic pluralism is more than just an inevitable condition of theorizing which tries to comprehend a complex reality. In keeping with a Lakatosian orientation, pluralism is an important principle which, when respected, serves some very beneficial functions. Clearly echoing Lakatos's rejection of the Popperian notion of strict falsification, Holsti affirms that

Pluralism ... guards against the hazards of "intellectual knockouts," those attempts to disown past methodologies and theories on the assumption that they are entirely wrong This was a major shortcoming of the most extreme behaviourism and of some recent efforts to demolish realism and its variants.⁸⁷

In addition to guarding against straight-forward falsification of paradigms which, despite anomalies, have proven their worth as interpretive tools, the principle of pluralism also serves to insure that the discipline keeps progressing in its quest for ever truer descriptions of reality. Thus, notes Holsti, if the dominant realist tradition shows itself to be inadequate as a description of reality, "then new departures may help us redirect inquiry into the proper channels". If

⁸⁷"Mirror, Mirror", p. 256.

realism is lacking, argues Holsti, it can be refurbished by "grafting" new theoretical formulations onto it.⁸⁸

It is important to note that despite his Lakatosian support for paradigmatic pluralism, Holsti is not arguing that all paradigms are of equal value. In keeping with the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence", paradigms may be evaluated according to the accuracy of their description of the facts. Notes Holsti,

Progress is thus not measured by unlimited accumulation of perspectives, paradigms, models, or methodologies any more than it is by the replacement of "units of knowledge". Some perspectives, models, and the like should and do have higher intellectual claims than others. The ultimate test is how elegantly and comprehensibly they describe and explain the important persisting, new, and developing realities.⁸⁹

Thus it is that early in The Dividing Discipline, Holsti affirms that "isomorphism" and "correspondence with the observed facts of international politics" are the standards by which rival paradigms must be assessed.⁹⁰

Indeed, it is on the basis of its transhistorical correspondence with the facts that Holsti continues to promote the realist paradigm over its rivals. In an interesting reversal of the traditional sense of inferiority experienced

⁸⁸The Dividing Discipline, p. viii.

⁸⁹"Mirror, Mirror", p. 258, emphasis in the original.

⁹⁰The Dividing Discipline, p. vii.

by social scientists in regard to their counterparts in the natural sciences, Holsti affirms that:

We cannot throw away paradigms (or what passes for them) as natural scientists do, à la Kuhn, because the anomalies between reality and its theoretical characterization are never so severe in international relations as they are in the natural sciences. None of the thinkers of the past portrayed the world of international (or world) politics in so distorted a manner as did the analysts of the physical or astronomical universe prior to the Copernican revolution.⁹¹

From his affirmations that competing paradigms may be "synthesized" (grafted onto one another), and that realists have been more successful than many physicists in approximating reality - not to mention his assertion that "correspondence with the observed facts of international politics" is the basis upon which rival paradigms must be assessed - it is clear that Holsti does not accept the Kuhnian notion of incommensurability. The implications of the notion of the theory-ladenness of all "facts" is something he cannot embrace. Notes Holsti,

I remain sceptical of the "liberation of theory from data", or, as Halliday has put it, a "rejection of empiricism in favour of a theoretical approach that accepts the place of data in a subordinate position".⁹²

The implications of Holsti's rejection of the notion of incommensurability for increased theoretical reflexivity are clear. In the continued affirmation of the notion that

⁹¹"Mirror, Mirror", p. 257.

⁹²"Mirror, Mirror", p. 259.

"nature's own" standards - specifically, "truth as correspondence" - must be applied in the knowledge validation process, the possibility of critical reflection on the origins and merits of the conventions which define what is to count as reliable knowledge remains remote. Theoretical reflexivity, to the degree that it figures at all, is reduced to the much more limited notion of "careful examination of assumptions and premises" - a notion that Holsti correctly notes is perfectly consistent with positivism.⁹³

In conclusion, it should be noted that a significant number of interventions in the Third Debate - of which Holsti's stands out only because of his clarity - fall into the Lakatosian positivist stance of "commensurable and therefore comparable".⁹⁴ As a consequence, the interpretation of the Third Debate as marking a disciplinary shift toward

⁹³"Mirror, Mirror", p. 255.

⁹⁴Robert O. Keohane also supports this stance. For his discussion of the merits of a Lakatosian positivist approach to international politics, see "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in Neorealism and Its Critics, ed. R. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). See also the discussion of the relevance of a Lakatosian approach for the study of foreign policy in Charles F. Herman and Gregory Peacock, "The Evolution and Future of Theoretical Research in the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy," in New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy, eds. J. N. Rosenau, C. Hermann, and C. Kegley (Easton: Allen, 1987), p. 22.

Others, who by their call for a "synthesis" of competing paradigms, despite a nod to the difficulties posed by incommensurability, also seem to have adopted this stance are Viotti and Kauppi. See their International Relations Theory, pp. 575-581.

post-positivist theoretical reflexivity bears being reconsidered.

Stance II: Incommensurable and Therefore Incomparable

Although the majority of the interventions in international relations theory's Third Debate reflect what has been termed here "Stance I",⁹⁵ it should be noted that there are important exceptions. Noteworthy among these are those theorists who have adopted the second stance: that of "incommensurable and therefore incomparable".

An important intervention by R. D. McKinlay and R. Little - Global Problems and World Order - is a good example of this stance in the Third Debate. McKinlay and Little's starting point is that the source of the paradigms found in the literature - in their terms, Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism - is not to be found in "international complexity" (where paradigmatic pluralism is seen as the inevitable by-product). Rather, contending paradigms are expressions of radically different normative orders embedded in competing ideological frameworks. And, argue McKinlay and Little, with obvious reference to those who have adopted "Stance I", it is the refusal of those engaged in the Third Debate to acknowledge the ideological character of their work that leads them into "endowing their model with a spurious empirical or

⁹⁵"Commensurable and therefore comparable?".

scientific validity, which is made all the more striking in contrast to the ideology offered by other models".⁹⁶

In short, argue McKinlay and Little, the contending paradigms in international relations theory are incommensurable. And as a consequence, the hope held out by the adherents of "Stance I" - that of paradigm "synthesis" - is a pipedream. The consequence of incommensurability, note McKinlay and Little, is that

... even when the models [i.e., paradigms] look to the same topics, the general framework within which the topic is processed leads to systematic variation in problem explication ...

As a consequence " ... as any one model begins to engineer solutions to its perceived problems, it will in all likelihood create a problem for another model".⁹⁷

With their rejection of the tenet of "truth as correspondence", as well as the accompanying notion of a theory-independent realm of facts by which one can assess the merits of competing paradigms, adherents of "Stance II" appear to be on the post-positivist path to theoretical reflexivity. Unfortunately, this is not the case. It is not the case because the adherents of "Stance II" equate the incommensurability of paradigms with that of the incomparability of paradigms.

⁹⁶Global Problems and World Order, p. 272.

⁹⁷Global Problems and World Order, p. 267.

Again, McKinlay and Little serve as a useful example. The ability to assess the merits of competing paradigms, they argue, "... presupposes some form of comparatively valid evaluation procedure, entailing some decision rule which would stipulate which model was to be retained". And since any evaluation procedure which might be proposed would be no more than a social convention, and hence, inherently contestable, comparative assessments are virtually impossible. The "only comparatively valid test procedure", they conclude, "is to enquire whether each model is internally consistent".⁹⁸ And this criterion they judge to be met in each case.

Indeed, not only is comparative assessment virtually impossible, argue McKinlay and Little, but the very idea of meaningful communication between the adherents of rival paradigms - and the learning which is a product of that communication - is out of the question. The

sophistication and internal coherence of each model, combined with their very different goals, structural arrangements and belief systems, make meaningful inter-model debate well-nigh impossible ... Compromise and constructive debate can largely only be conducted within the confines and parametres of a single model.⁹⁹

Given the assumption of incomparability of paradigms - an assumption which forecloses the possibility of providing reasoned argument in support of one paradigm over against

⁹⁸Global Problems and World Order, p. 269, 270.

⁹⁹Global Problems and World Order, pp. 272-273.

another - how is one to account for paradigm choice by members of the research community? By definition, the explanation must be found outside the realm of reason and argumentation.

The intervention of James Rosenau on this issue is a good example of how Stance II adherents respond to this question. In accordance with the core assumptions of the stance of "incommensurable and therefore incomparable", Rosenau affirms that "...the way in which analysts become adherents of one or another approach is not necessarily based on intellectual or rational calculation". What then is the explanation for paradigm choice? Rosenau's answer is consistent, if disconcerting: "our temperaments", he affirms " ... are the central determinants of which approach we will find more suitable".¹⁰⁰

The problem with the stance of "incommensurable and therefore incomparable", for which the intervention of

¹⁰⁰See James N. Rosenau, "Order and Disorder in the Study of World Politics," in Globalism Versus Realism: International Relations Third Debate, eds. R. Marghoori and B. Ramberg (Boulder: Westview, 1982), pp. 4, 5.

He also affirms that temperaments "tend to remain ... fixed and resistant to new evidence" (p.7), underscoring further the impotence and irrelevance of reasoned argumentation in the process of paradigm choice.

McKinlay and Little stands as example,¹⁰¹ is that it has only broken with the positivist tradition in part. For while rejecting the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence", it remains consistent with the positivism's expression of the "Cartesian anxiety": that only an a-historical, extra-social standard can serve to adjudicate between competing conceptions of knowledge generation and validation. As a consequence, the reasoned assessment of the merits of contending paradigm-specific conventions for what constitutes reliable knowledge - that is, the development of theoretical reflexivity - is foreclosed.

Fortunately, however, the view that paradigms "pass like ships in the night"¹⁰² is not the only alternative to that of positivism's "commensurable and therefore comparable". It is to the third stance - a stance compatible with the notion of theoretical reflexivity - to which we now turn.

¹⁰¹Once again, McKinlay and Little are not the only authors to adopt such a stance. Rosenau's support of this position has already been noted.

Other interventions which would fit into this category are Richard W. Mansbach and Yale H. Ferguson, The Elusive Quest: Theory and International Politics (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988). In addition, certain of Robert Gilpin's comments in The Political Economy of International Relations might also qualify him as at least a part-time proponent of the stance of "incommensurable and therefore incompatible". For further discussion of Mansbach, Ferguson, and Gilpin as advocating a form of "radical relativism" in paradigm assessment, see Ernie Keenes, "Paradigms of International Relations: Bringing Politics Back In," International Journal, 44 (1989), pp. 46-48.

¹⁰²McKinlay and Little, Global Problems and World Order, p. 273.

Stance III: Incommensurable Yet Still Comparable

We have examined two distinct stances which are represented in international relations theory's Third Debate. And in each case, we have seen that the possibilities for the development of theoretical reflexivity - to the degree that they exist at all - are extremely limited. There is a third stance, however, which does hold out a real hope for the development of theoretical reflexivity. It is the stance of "incommensurable yet still comparable".

Those whose work manifests this stance share with the adherents of "Stance II" the rejection of the positivist tenet which defines truth as that which corresponds to the "real world". They accept that different paradigms constitute the world in different ways, that there is no way to know the world independently of our descriptions of it, and that as a consequence there is no neutral, context-independent standard by which competing paradigms can be assessed.

Adherents of "Stance III" differ from those of "Stance II", however, in their refusal to equate incommensurability with incomparability. The fact that no neutral, context-independent standards exists to assess competing paradigms does not mean that humans cannot use their faculty of reason in a given context to articulate standards and to persuade others, by means of argument, of the worth of those standards (even while remaining cognizant of the fact that new arguments and new contexts may result in a re-examination and revision

of those standards). It is just this position which expresses the core of the theoretically reflexive disposition.

While the numbers are few and the formulations underdeveloped - and even inconsistent across different works - it is the contention of this study that some international relations theorists are moving in the direction of this third stance. That is, a small but significant number of international relations theorists have begun to exhibit the "broader and deeper kind of political and epistemological self-consciousness"¹⁰³ that is fundamental to theoretical reflexivity.¹⁰⁴ They are exhibiting this political and epistemological self-consciousness by underscoring "the deep connections between the social and political contexts of particular theoretical enterprises and the kind of work actually done";¹⁰⁵ by recognizing, in the words of Horkheimer, that "What scientists ... regard as the essence of theory ...

¹⁰³H. R. Alker, Jr., and T. J. Biersteker, "The Dialectics of World Order: Notes for a Future Archeologist of International Savoir Faire," International Studies Quarterly, 28 (1984), p. 138.

¹⁰⁴It should be noted that as Bernstein has observed with regard to Kuhn, there is a "groping quality" in the attempts of these scholars "to clarify the characteristics of the type of argumentation that is involved in choosing among rival paradigms". And as in the case of Kuhn, it can be argued that "without being completely aware" of what they are doing, they are "appealing to a conception of rationality that has been at the core of the tradition of practical philosophy [phronesis]".

¹⁰⁵Alker and Biersteker, "The Dialectics of World Order", pp. 138-139.

corresponds, in fact, to the immediate tasks they set for themselves"; in short, by stressing the indivisible link between the "epistemological" (the standards defining reliable knowledge) and the "political" (the purpose for which such knowledge is intended).

Stressing the link between the "epistemological" and the "political" has important implications for re-conceptualizing the relationship of paradigms to the world, as well as for the notion of reliable knowledge. Rather than viewing contending paradigms as different ways of representing the same reality, one can understand them as expressions of different political projects for "coping" in the world.¹⁰⁶ Rather than defining reliable knowledge as knowledge which accurately represents the "real world" - a definition rendered inapplicable by the recognition of the constitutive role played by the "subject" in the knowledge validation process - reliable knowledge is understood as knowledge which proves useful in terms of a specific "coping" agenda. Accordingly, a paradigm will be found to be "true" - will be judged to produce reliable knowledge - to the extent that it demonstrates its

¹⁰⁶The notion that paradigms represent not different ways of describing the "real world", but rather different "ways of coping" in the world is central to the work of Richard Rorty. For a good discussion of Rorty's pragmatism, see Cornell West, The American Evasion of Philosophy (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), chapter five. In terms of international relations theory's Third Debate, this position has been articulated most explicitly by Keenes. See "Paradigms of international relations," p. 64.

"usefulness" as a guide to action in terms of the general political vision in which it is embedded and of the concrete political project to which it is directed.

The case of the realist paradigm in international relations theory serves as a good example. In terms of the perspective being advanced here, the success of realism has, pace Holsti, had less to do with its alleged accuracy in grasping the "facts" of international politics, than with its demonstrated utility for guiding state managers in their activities of "state- and nation-building".¹⁰⁷ That is to say, the realist paradigm has validated its truth-claims by demonstrating its ability to guide state policy-making; realism is "true" because it has met the needs of the policy-makers of the great powers - most importantly the United States - engaged in the pursuit of a specific agenda and faced "with a specific set of foreign policy problems".¹⁰⁸ As Smith has argued, because international relations theory, as an "American discipline" has been:

... so closely identified with the foreign policy concerns of the country, it is not surprising that the assumptions of Realism have proven to be so difficult to overcome. This is because the focus of Realism, namely how to maximize power so as to manage international events, fits extraordinarily well with the needs of a hegemonic power. The three key elements of Realism's account of world politics, the national interest, power maximization and the

¹⁰⁷Keenes, p. 65.

¹⁰⁸Steve Smith, "Paradigm Dominance in International Relations: The Development of International Relations as a Social Science," Millennium, 16, No. 2 (1987), p. 197.

balance of power, are particularly well-suited to the requirements of a foreign policy for the U.S.¹⁰⁹

If the validity of the knowledge generated by the realist paradigm cannot be understood apart from particular social actors and their political projects - specifically U.S. state managers dedicated to the establishment and maintenance of American hegemony - then a similar relationship must hold for other paradigms. Notes Smith,

Just as it has been argued ... that the US policy agenda dominated the study of international relations by dominating Realism within the US, so we should expect different paradigms [i.e., pluralism and structuralism] to appeal to persons in different settings.¹¹⁰

Alker and Biersteker concur:

Two global superpowers both able to destroy each other, but likely to self-destruct in the same process, are likely to have scholars especially interested in "global interdependence" or "peaceful coexistence" Anti-colonial revolutionaries in relatively underdeveloped countries are driven by other practical imperatives.¹¹¹

The conceptualization of competing paradigms as expressions of general political visions and corresponding to concrete political projects is vital to the stance of comparing the incommensurable in international relations

¹⁰⁹"Paradigm Dominance," pp. 198-199.

¹¹⁰"Paradigm Dominance," p. 202. "After all", he notes, "if you are not a great power, in Morgenthau's use of the term, what foreign policy options do you have?" (p. 201).

¹¹¹"The Dialectics of World Order", p. 139. For Alker and Biersteker's efforts to link contending paradigms to particular political agendas, see Figure 4, p. 138.

theory. It is vital in that it provides a way of assessing contending paradigms which is not bound to the notion of "truth as correspondence", but which is also capable of going beyond a-rational "temperament" as the justification for paradigm preference. By linking the "epistemological" and the "political", it becomes possible to assess rival paradigm-specific knowledge-defining standards in terms of the relative merits of the political visions/ projects in which the paradigms are embedded. In short, a means for rationally comparing incommensurable paradigms in international relations theory is possible once it is recognized that the question of "which paradigm is superior?" can be restated as "which general political vision/ concrete political project is most appropriate to the global polis?"; once it is recognized that at the meta-theoretical level, the question of "what is reliable knowledge?" can be reformulated as "how should we live?"

This recognition is imperative in the discipline of international relations. Given that paradigms validate themselves in terms of both social actors and specific purposes, the question of social identity and political purpose can no longer be avoided by those who comprise the community of international relations scholars. For if it is true that at the level of scholarship, "[paradigms] compete by virtue of the accounts they provide in explaining what we as scholars ... define as central to our purpose, enquiry,

ideology",¹¹² then the need to compare incommensurable paradigms directs us to a broader debate about which "purposes", which "enquiries" and which "ideologies" merit the support and energy of international relations scholars. If it is true that, in the words of Fichte, "the choice between comprehensive theories rests on one's interests entirely",¹¹³ then the nature of the interests with which international relations scholars identify themselves must be considered.

To acknowledge the link between the "epistemological" and the "political" is to recognize that participating in the "normal science" tradition of any paradigm means - consciously or not - lending support to a specific political project; it is to accept that to engage in paradigm-directed puzzle-solving is - intentionally or not - to direct one's energies to the establishment and maintenance of a specific global order. As a consequence, it becomes vital to engage in a critical examination of the relative merits of rival political projects and of contending global orders. For once it is recognized that the knowledge-defining standards that we adopt are not neutral, but have an undeniable political content, then it becomes imperative to "bring politics back in"¹¹⁴ -

¹¹²Smith, "Paradigm Dominance," p. 202, my emphasis.

¹¹³Quoted in Feyerabend, p. 128.

¹¹⁴Keenes, "Paradigms of International Relations".

openly and explicitly - to our deliberations on the character of reliable knowledge of international politics.

It should be emphasized that it would be a mistake to view the stress on the indivisible link between the "epistemological" and the "political" as marking the end of rational assessment of knowledge claims. It is of course true, that in the assessment of contending political projects and global orders there is no neutral, context-independent standard to guide us. Even so, the tradition of phronesis - of practical reason - affirms that meaningful debate about the merits of contending political visions is possible; that human reason can be employed to judge wisely and humanely. At the very least the attempt is worth making. For in a context in which the dominant political projects of the past have brought our global polis to the brink of annihilation, a reasoned discussion and theoretically self-conscious assessment of the relative merits of the political projects and global orders represented by the contending paradigms of international politics is essential. In short, theoretical reflexivity can no longer be viewed as a frill that the discipline can afford to do without.

Conclusion:

At the beginning of the 1980s, Robert Cox issued a call from the margins of the discipline for the development of a critical international relations theory. According to Cox, this form of theorizing would be distinguished by its recognition of that fact that

Theory is always for someone and for some purpose ... [that] [t]here is ... no such thing as theory in itself, divorced from a standpoint in time and space.¹¹⁵

As a consequence of this recognition, argued Cox, a critical international relations theory would be

more reflective upon the process of theorizing itself: to become clearly aware of the perspective which gives rise to theorizing, and its relations to other perspectives (to achieve a perspective on perspectives) ...¹¹⁶

In short, a critical international relations theory would be distinguished by theoretical reflexivity.

It has been argued in this chapter that the questions central to theoretical reflexivity have begun to make their way from the margins into the core of contemporary theorizing about international politics.¹¹⁷ Specifically, in the context of international relations theory's Third Debate - and despite

¹¹⁵Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," Millennium, 10, No. 2 (1981), p. 128.

¹¹⁶Cox, "Social Forces, States, and World Orders", p. 128.

¹¹⁷As is evidenced by the recent discussion in the International Studies Quarterly 33, No. 33 (1989) concerning the significance of the "Third Debate".

the continuing predominance of non-reflexive interventions - one sees evidence of the growth of a "broader and deeper kind of political and epistemological self-consciousness" that holds out the hope of the development of a thorough-going theoretical reflexivity. And it is on the basis of this growth that one can speak with justification of a potentially far-reaching - albeit still limited - restructuring of international relations theory.

Yet the restructuring of international relations theory in a critical fashion is not restricted to the growth of theoretical reflexivity alone. It is to a second body of evidence which is indicative of a fundamental restructuring of international relations theory - one which concerns a recognition of the central role of human consciousness in global politics - that we now turn.

Chapter Five:

Human Consciousness and International Relations Theory

The observer ... is able, by virtue of his own rationality, to retrace the steps which politics has taken in the past and to anticipate those it will take in the future. Knowing that behind these steps there is a rational mind like his own, the observer can put himself into the place of the statesman - past, present, or future - and think as he has thought or is likely to think.

Hans J. Morgenthau¹

But in the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquity, so remote from ourselves, there shines the eternal and never failing light of a truth beyond all question: that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind. Whoever reflects on this cannot but marvel that the philosophers ... should have neglected the study of the world of nations, or civil world, which, since men had made it, men could come to know.

Giambattista Vico²

Introduction:

In the preceding chapter we examined the issue of theoretical reflexivity. The traditional absence of theoretical reflexivity in social science was linked to the predominance of positivism - and in particular, the tenet of

¹"The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations," in Theoretical Aspects of International Relations, ed. William T. R. Fox (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), pp. 20-21.

²The New Science of Giambattista Vico (1744), trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), para. 331, p. 96.

"truth as correspondence" - in the study of society. Moreover, the rise of a post-positivist philosophy of science which rejects the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" was linked to the opening of a space for theoretical reflexivity. Finally, the traditional absence of theoretical reflexivity and the more recent opening to theoretical reflexivity in social and political theory was shown to have its parallels in international relations theory. As a consequence, it was argued, it is legitimate to speak of a restructuring of international relations theory in a critical, emancipation-oriented direction.

The rise of theoretical reflexivity in international relations theory is not the only evidence of such a restructuring in the discipline of international relations. In this chapter, it will be argued that a second defining characteristic of emancipatory theory derived from the Enlightenment tradition of "critique" - an emphasis on the fundamental role of human consciousness - is also found in contemporary international relations theory. If true, this would lend further support to the argument that there is currently a process of (meta)-theoretical "restructuring" in the discipline of international relations.

To that end, the present chapter will proceed as follows. First, in part one of this chapter, the conventional conceptualization of human consciousness and its place within mainstream social science will be examined. It will be argued

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that the predominance of the positivist approach to the study of human society in mainstream social science - and in particular, the positivist tenet of the methodological unity of science - has impeded the recognition of the constitutive and transformative role of human consciousness in social and political life. It will also be argued, however, that recent developments within social and political theory - in particular, the rise of "interpretive social science" - are challenging the positivist tenet of the methodological unity of science, thereby creating a space for the full recognition of the non-reductive power of human consciousness.

Then, in the second part of this chapter, the discipline of international relations will be examined for parallels to social and political theory. Specifically, the conventional conceptualizations of human consciousness associated with positivist international relations theory, as well as the rejection of those conceptualizations with the rise of a non-positivist "interpretive" international relations theory will be reviewed. The impact that interpretive approaches, derived from the work of social and political theorists, are having on the (re)-conceptualization of the role of human consciousness within the discipline of international relations will be presented as further evidence of the restructuring of international relations theory in a critical, emancipatory direction.

Part I: Human Consciousness in Social Science

In order to understand the conventional form that conceptualizations of human consciousness have taken within mainstream, positivist-dominated social science, it is important to review the major components and implications of the positivist tenet of the methodological unity of science. As was noted in chapter three, according to this tenet the research methodology developed for the study of the natural world is equally suited to the study of the social world.

It will also be remembered from our discussion of the positivist tradition in chapter three that underlying the tenet of the methodological unity of science is the assumption of "naturalism". That is, it is assumed that there is no fundamental difference between the social world and the natural world; the social world contains the same kind of regularities independent of time and place - in this case, "behavioural regularities" - as exist in the natural world. It is for this reason that the approach developed to conduct a scientific analysis of the natural world - an approach designed to identify regularities and subsume them under general covering laws - is held to be equally appropriate to the social world. It is this underlying assumption of naturalism which accounts for the way human consciousness has been conceptualized and treated within mainstream social science.

At the same time, it is important to note that the positivist conceptualization of human consciousness has not gone unchallenged in contemporary social and political theory. Specifically, theorists concerned with developing and promoting an "interpretive" approach to the study of society,³ have argued that the positivist conceptualization of human consciousness has served to obscure and misrepresent the fundamental role of human consciousness in social life.

I will begin by briefly reviewing two distinct ways that human consciousness has been conceptualized within positivist social science. I will then proceed to a review of the criticisms of positivism developed by "interpretive" theorists. A review of the alternative formulation proposed by these theorists - and the significance of their formulation in terms of the emancipation-oriented tradition of critique - will conclude the first part of this chapter.

Positivist Formulations of Human Consciousness

Human consciousness has been conceptualized in two distinct ways in positivist social science. In order to bring out both the differences and the commonalities of these two conceptualizations, I will review briefly the contribution of one of the main inspirations for positivist formulations of

³Also sometimes referred to as "hermeneutics".

human consciousness - in both a positive and negative sense: that of Max Weber.⁴

The focus of a social science, affirmed Weber, is "social action".⁵ Moreover, in his very definition of "social action", Weber directs attention to the issue of human consciousness - in his terms, "subjective meaning". In Weber's view, it is "subjective meaning" which distinguishes the social world from the natural world:

We shall speak of "action" insofar as the acting individual attaches a **subjective meaning** to his behaviour - be it overt and covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is "social" insofar as its **subjective meaning** takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course.⁶

Moreover, argues Weber, drawing on Dilthey's notion of hermeneutics (Verstehen), these "subjective meanings" have the property of being understandable to the perceptive social scientist, so long as it is recognized that they must be understood in terms of the behaviour of "one of more individual human beings" since only individuals "can be

⁴For an insightful discussion of Weber's contribution in the light of contemporary debates in social and political theory, see Susan J. Hekman, Weber, The Ideal Type, and Contemporary Social Theory (Notre Dame, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1983).

⁵"Basic Sociological Terms", in Economy and Society, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968); reprinted in Understanding and Social Inquiry, ed. Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 38.

⁶"Basic Sociological Terms," p. 38, my emphasis.

treated as agents in a course of subjectively understandable action".⁷

As a consequence, argues Weber, social science must be a science which concerns itself with "the interpretive understanding [Verstehen] of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences".⁸ That is, it was Weber's view that the social sciences should aim for "explanatory understanding", which, as McCarthy notes, can be defined as "placing a particular act in an understandable sequence of motivation that corresponds to an empirically verifiable regularity of behaviour".⁹

According to Weber, the correctness of the account offered by "explanatory understanding" is a function of two levels of adequacy: i) "causal adequacy" and ii) "adequacy at the level of meaning". It is with regard to the first that Weber would agree with positivist social scientists that it is necessary to test empirically hypotheses generated by means of Verstehen techniques. In Weber's words,

... no matter how clear an interpretation as such appears to be from the point of view of meaning, it cannot on this account alone claim to be the causally valid interpretation ... More generally, verification of subjective interpretation by

⁷"Basic Sociological Terms," p. 46.

⁸Weber, "Basic Sociological Terms," p. 38, (my emphasis).

⁹Thomas McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1978), p. 142. My discussion of Weber draws heavily on McCarthy's exposition, pp. 140-145.

comparison with the concrete course of events is, as in the case of any hypotheses, indispensable".¹⁰

However, it was in treating "causal adequacy" as a necessary but insufficient condition of validity, and by affirming the indispensability of a second dimension of adequacy - "adequacy at the level of meaning" - that Weber differentiates himself from positivist social science.

For it was Weber's view that

... if adequacy in respect of meaning is lacking, then no matter how high the degree of uniformity and how precisely its probability can be numerically determined, it is still an incomprehensible statistical probability ... Statistical uniformities ... constitute "sociological generalizations" only when they can be regarded as manifestations of the understandable subjective meaning of a course of social action.¹¹

Moreover, affirmed Weber, the discovery of (at first glance) non-understandable "uniformities" (i.e., behavioural regularities) does "not in the least alter the specific task of sociological analysis or of that of the other sciences of action, which is the interpretation of action in terms of its subjective meaning".¹² In short, Weber argued that the determination of "meaning" - specifically the "subjective meaning" attached to particular behaviour - is a vital and

¹⁰"Basic Sociological Terms," p. 43.

¹¹"Basic Sociological Concepts," p. 16.

¹²"Basic Sociological Terms," p. 41, my emphasis.

necessary part of the process of validating social scientific explanation.¹³

With Weber's influential views serving as backdrop, we are now in better position to understand the specificity of positivist social science's conceptualization of human consciousness. First, it is clear from our earlier discussions that all positivist social scientists would deny, in opposition to Weber, that there is any dimension of adequacy

¹³It is interesting to note that for Weber, the kind of social action which lent itself most fruitfully to explanatory understanding was that of "rationally purposeful action". As Halermas has noted,

... Max Weber assigns a methodologically privileged position to purposive-rational action. The sinnverstehend interpolated end, the assumed intention, will as a rule lead to an empirically correct explanation only if the end furnishes in fact a sufficient motive for the action. But this is the case when the action is guided by the intention of achieving success through the employment of purposive-rationally chosen means ... when it is oriented to the choice of adequate means for a subjectively clear end.

(Jürgen Habermas, Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften, p. 84. As quoted in McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 153.)

Of course, as McCarthy notes, "In cases of irrational action, the derivation of assumptions about uniformities of overt behaviour from knowledge of subjective motives becomes problematic" (p. 153). And it no doubt for this reason that Weber proposed that:

For the purposes of a typological scientific analysis it is convenient to treat all irrational, affectually determined elements of behaviour as factors of deviation from a conceptually pure type of rational action.

See "Basic Sociological Terms," pp. 39-40.

required in formulating an explanation beyond that of "causal adequacy". Beyond this, however, it is the question of the significance of the "subjective meanings" which human subjects attach to behaviour - and the value of trying to apprehend those meanings in terms of the goal of "causal adequacy" - that has served as the focus of debates within positivist-inspired mainstream social science. Basically, it can be argued that there have been two responses to this question: i) "strict behaviouralism" and ii) "meaning-oriented behaviouralism".

"Strict behaviouralism" is the original version of the behaviouralist movement in social science, a movement representing perhaps the most concerted effort to apply the positivist tenet of the methodological unity of science to the social world. "Strict behaviouralism" takes overt behaviour as the proper object of study. Considerable energy is directed toward achieving standardization in the measurement of human behaviour, and especially in operationalizing theoretical concepts in terms of observed behaviour. The ultimate goal, of course, is the subsumption of regularities in overt behaviour under general covering laws, themselves derived axiomatically from basic assumptions.

What then of human consciousness? That is, what of Weber's insistence on the importance of the "subjective meanings" that human beings attach to their behaviour, and of

the Verstehen tradition in social science which orients itself toward understanding those "subjective meanings"?

In general, strict behaviouralists hold that the understanding of "subjective meanings" is not only not sufficient for the validation of scientific knowledge about the social world (a view which Weber would share), but that "subjective meanings" are in no way necessary to the development of scientific accounts of social life. The reasoning behind this position is simple. Scientific knowledge of the social world - positivistically conceived - must be based on empirical evidence only (i.e., publicly observable objects or events - a category into which behaviour would fall). Since the domain of human consciousness is not amenable to such observation - since the "subjective meanings" attached to social phenomena do not exist in the public realm, (but rather in the private consciousness of the individual(s) concerned) - it can have no place either as a component of reliable knowledge of the social world, or as a means of validating such knowledge.

This is not to say, however, that "strict behaviouralists" see absolutely no role for Verstehen in scientific investigation. Dallmayr and McCarthy's useful distillation of the responses of two prominent "strict behaviouralists" - Theodore Abel¹⁴ and Richard Rudner¹⁵ - to

¹⁴See "The Operation Called Verstehen," in Dallmayr and McCarthy, Understanding and Social Inquiry.

Weber encapsulates the "strict behaviouralist" position on Verstehen:

1) Verstehen is a procedure employed to gain understanding of individual or group behaviour. Faced with an observed sequence of behaviour, the social scientist imputes to the agent certain "psychological states" (motives, beliefs, values, emotions) that might account for it. This is basically a matter of postulating "an intervening process 'located' inside the human organism" (Abel), or of "recreating psychological states" (Rudner) in order to make the observed behaviour comprehensible.

2) The procedure itself is based on acts of "sympathetic imagination" or "empathetic identification". The social scientist attempts to put himself in his subject's shoes. ... Abel breaks this down into three steps: a) internalizing the stimulus, b) internalizing the response, and c) applying a behaviour maxim to connect them. Each step is "based on the application of personal experience to observed behaviour".

3) [Verstehen] ... could not be a "method of verification", but, at best, a heuristic "aid in preliminary explorations of a subject", with perhaps the additional capacity "to relieve us of a sense of apprehension in connection with behaviour that is unfamiliar or unexpected" [Abel]. In the last analysis, the "probability of a connection" can be established "only by means of objective, experimental, and statistical tests". In a similar vein, Rudner assigns the "technique" of Verstehen to the heuristic realm of hypothesis formulation or the "context of discovery"; it is not a "method" relevant to the "context of validation". The common result of these analyses is, then, that the employment of interpretive understanding does not affect the logic of social inquiry; as a merely heuristic device it furnishes no grounds for

¹⁵(...continued)

¹⁵"On the Objectivity of Social Science," in Dallmayr and McCarthy, Understanding and Social Inquiry.

distinguishing the latter from the logic of the natural sciences.¹⁶

While all positivistically-minded social scientists accept, by definition, that the "understanding" of "subjective meanings" has no place in the context of validation, not all would be comfortable with the notion that "subjective meanings" themselves have no place in the scientific explanations of "social action".

For while rejecting Weber's notion of "adequacy at the level of meaning" as a necessary compliment to "causal adequacy", the adherents of a second positivist formulation of human consciousness - termed here, "meaning-oriented behaviouralism" - nonetheless accept that the integration of "subjective meanings" into social scientific accounts of human behaviour is necessary for the achievement of "causal adequacy".

One of the foremost representatives of "meaning-oriented behaviouralism" was Talcott Parsons, who played a major role in introducing Weber's work to the English-speaking social scientific community. As Dallmayr and McCarthy have noted, Parsons "treated Weber's work as a stepping stone toward a 'unified science' program assimilated cultural inquiry to

¹⁶Dallmayr and McCarthy, Understanding and Social Inquiry, p. 79, (emphasis in the original).

The positivist philosopher Otto Neurath has equated Verstehen techniques with a "cup of coffee": something which might increase the "serendipity" of the social scientist, but which has no place in empirical work. Dallmayr and McCarthy, Understanding and Social Inquiry, p. 6.

natural science canons".¹⁷ "What Weber did", affirmed Parsons,

was to take an enormous step in the direction of bridging the gap between the two types of science, and to make possible the treatment of social material in a systematic scientific manner rather than as an art.¹⁸

This of course raises the question of how "subjective meanings" are to be integrated into a scientific (i.e., positivistic) logic of investigation which stresses publicly verifiable standards of proof. Specifically, how is the social scientist to determine the exact nature of the preferences/motives/ goals of the subject(s) under study?

All positivist-inspired social scientists - including those committed to integrating "subjective meanings" into causal analysis of "social action" - share unease with regard to variables not open to public scrutiny. As a consequence, "meaning-oriented behaviouralists" have expended considerable effort to develop research techniques - content analysis,

¹⁷Understanding and Social Inquiry, p. 21.

¹⁸T. Parsons, ed., The Theory of Social and Economic Organization (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 10-11.

The problem with Weber's discussion, argued Parsons, was that

... he failed to complete the process, and the nature of the half-way point at which he stopped helps to account for many of the difficulties of his position.

The main weakness in Weber's work, affirmed Parsons, was the failure "to carry through a systematic functional analysis of a generalized social system of action", a weakness which Parsons' own work was meant to address.

interviews, surveys, questionnaires - which are designed both to bring "subjective meanings" (i.e., preferences/ motives/ goals) into the public realm and to facilitate standardized measurements of them. Like "strict behaviouralists", "meaning-oriented behaviouralists" would no doubt acknowledge that the methods of Verstehen (i.e., "sympathetic imagination"/ "empathetic identification") have proved useful in the "context of discovery".¹⁹ The final goal, however, remains the bringing of "subjective meanings" attached to social action into the public realm, so that they can be treated as "intervening variables" between the "stimulus" (the action context) and the "response" (behaviour).

By correlating particular beliefs/ motivations/ values with a particular behaviour in a particular context, notes McCarthy, it becomes possible to "derive empirically testable hypotheses about uniformities of behaviour under specific conditions".²⁰ In this way, argue "meaning-oriented behaviouralists", the importance of "subjective meanings" in "social action" underscored by Weber can be accommodated

¹⁹For example, in designing questionnaires, guiding the researcher in the interview process, etc.

²⁰McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 153.

without violating the positivist standard of "causal adequacy".²¹

The suitability of "meaning-oriented behaviouralism" in terms of the goal of positivist social science is clear. By integrating "subjective meaning" into regularities linking context and behaviour, and by devising ways of ensuring that those variables remain open to public scrutiny by the members of the scientific community, this approach conforms completely to the positivist tenet of the methodological unity of science. In short, while the "subjective meanings" attached to behaviour would seem to require a modicum of innovation at the level of research techniques, "meaning-oriented behaviouralists" - like "strict behaviouralists" - do not see the "meaningfulness" of social life as necessitating any qualitative change at the level of the positivistic logic of investigation.

It is this view - and the assumption of naturalism of which it is the expression - that is the prime focus of criticism of those wishing to promote an alternative to positivist approaches to the study of social life. It is to

²¹It can, of course, be argued that "meaning-oriented behaviouralists" have brought "subjective meanings" into the public realm only by operationalizing those meanings in terms of specific forms of behaviour - i.e., a specific opinion on an issue is operationalized in terms of a specific response to a question in an opinion survey. From this perspective, what is being correlated is not a "subjective meaning" with a specific behaviour, but rather one type of behaviour (e.g., the response to an opinion survey) with another (e.g., a vote in an election).

their criticisms - and their alternative formulation - that we now turn.

Beyond Positivism: Human Consciousness as Constitutive of Social Life

We have seen in our brief review of conventional positivist-inspired treatments of human consciousness in the social sciences, that consciousness has been conceptualized as "subjective meaning" which either has relevance only in heuristic terms in the "context of discovery" or which is integrated into scientific investigation as an "intervening variable" between context and behaviour. In either case, the dimension of human consciousness in social life does not pose any challenge to the assumption of naturalism which underlies the positivist tenet of the methodological unity of science. That is, human consciousness is not seen to raise any challenge to the idea that regularities independent of time and place exist in the social world in the same way as they do in the natural world.

It is the positivist accommodation of human consciousness to the assumption of naturalism that theorists advocating an interpretive approach to the study of society reject. It is important to be clear about the exact nature of the challenge posed by the interpretive approach to positivist social

science.²² Interpretive theorists do not deny that behavioural regularities exist in the social world. Nor do they contest that individuals attach "subjective meanings" to their behaviour.

What interpretive theorists contest is that the behavioural regularities which can be observed in the social world exist independently of time and place as they do in the natural world. What interpretive theorists contest is that the notion of "subjective meanings" attached by individuals to their behaviour is an adequate conceptualization of human consciousness in social life.

²²Contemporary interpretive social science draws on and has been influenced by at least five distinct traditions which see the dimension of "meaning" as constitutive of social reality. They include i) the tradition of phenomenology/ethnomethodology as developed by Husserl and Schutz; ii) the "linguistic tradition" as developed by the later Wittgenstein and Winch; iii) the hermeneutic tradition as developed by Heidegger and Gadamer; iv) the tradition of Critical Theory as developed by Marx and Habermas; and v) the tradition of genealogy as developed by Nietzsche and Foucault. For useful introductions to contemporary interpretive social science, see Dallmayr and McCarthy, Understanding and Social Science, Michael Gibbons, ed., Interpreting Politics (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1987), and Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, eds., Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

There are, of course, important differences between the various strands of contemporary interpretive theory. Here, it is the "Critical-Expressivist" approach, associated with the work of Charles Taylor, which will be emphasized. For a discussion of the distinctive characteristics of this approach, see Gibbons, "Introduction: The Politics of Interpretation," in Gibbons, Interpreting Politics. For an interesting comparison of this approach with that of genealogy, see Michael T. Gibbons, "Interpretation, Genealogy and Human Agency," in Idioms of Inquiry: Critique and Renewal in Political Science, ed. Terence Ball (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

Interpretive theorists start with the understanding that human beings are "fundamentally self-interpreting and self-defining".²³ That is, human beings live in a world of cultural meaning which has its source in their own interpretations of that world; human beings act in the context of a "web of meaning" - a web that they themselves have spun. As a consequence, the social world - in contrast to the natural world - "is itself partly constituted by self-interpretation".²⁴

The fundamental dimension of self-interpretation in the social world has important consequences for social science. As a consequence, argue interpretive theorists, the object of study of social science must include the interpretations and definitions of the human subjects whose interaction makes up the social world. Social science, then, is interpretive in a double sense. On one level, it is, like any knowledge-

²³Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, "The Interpretive Turn," in Rabinow and Sullivan, Interpretive Social Science, p. 7.

²⁴Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," in Rabinow and Sullivan, Interpretive Social Science, p. 46.

This is not to say that human beings are always fully cognizant of their participation in this on-going self-definition and self-interpretation process. Rather, in Giddens' terms, the activity of self-definition and self-interpretation often takes place at the level of "practical consciousness" (and not the more explicitly self-consciousness level of "discursive consciousness"). See Anthony Giddens, The Constitution of Society: Outline of a Theory of Structuration (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), p. 375.

generating activity, an interpretive enterprise.²⁵ What distinguishes it from interpretations of the natural world, however, is that an important part of the subject matter of social science is itself an interpretation - the self-interpretation of the human beings under study.²⁶

The "web of meaning" spun by human beings is fundamental to the nature of their behaviour. For it is the "web of meaning" which makes the behavioural regularities observed in the social world what they are - i.e., human practices - and distinguishes them from the non-human regularities observed

²⁵As was noted in the previous chapter.

²⁶As Habermas has noted,

The object domain of the sciences of actions consists of symbols and modes of behaviour that can't be grasped [as] actions independently of symbols. Access to the data includes here not only the observation of events but simultaneously the understanding of meaning complexes. In this sense we can distinguish sensory from communicative experience. Of course, all sensory experiences are interpreted ... But communicative experience is not directed to states of affairs in the same way as observation; it is directed to pre-interpreted states of affairs. It is not [only] the perception of facts that is symbolically structured, but the facts as such.

(Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften (Frankfurt: 1970), p. 188, as quoted in McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 155.)

Following Winch, Anthony Giddens has attempted to theorize the two levels at which social science is interpretive. See his discussion of the "double hermeneutic" in The Constitution of Society, p. 374.

in the natural world.²⁷ And it is for this reason, affirm interpretive theorists, that the practices in which human beings are engaged cannot be studied in isolation from the "web of meaning", which is, in a fundamental sense, constitutive of those practices, even as it is embedded in and instantiated through those same practices.

It is clear then, that while interpretive theorists may agree that behavioural regularities are an identifiable feature of the social world, they would nonetheless oppose "strict behaviouralism's" exclusive focus on actions "that are supposedly brute-data-identifiable"²⁸ to the neglect of the "web of meaning" constitutive of and embedded in those actions. But what of the alternative offered by "meaning-oriented behaviouralists"? Doesn't their approach, which renders the concern with "meaning" compatible with the positivist goal of subsuming behavioural regularities under general covering laws, meet the concerns of interpretive theorists?

Interpretive theorists deny that it does. The approach of "meaning-oriented behaviouralists" is not satisfactory, argue interpretive theorists, because of the way it conceptualizes both the "web of meaning" and the relationship

²⁷For example, the regularities in the interaction of molecules which serves as the focus of chemistry need not be considered in relations to any "self-interpretations" or "self-definitions" of those molecules.

²⁸Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 48.

of the "web of meaning" to human practices. Specifically, "meaning-oriented behaviouralism" conceives of the "web of meaning" as the sum-total of the "subjective meanings" of the individuals involved. And it conceives of the relationship between the "web of meaning" and human practices as a correspondence of specific "subjective meanings" to specific actions - a correspondence which allows for the establishment of verifiable correlations compatible with causal explanation.

Once again, it must be stressed that an interpretive approach has no more difficulty accepting that individuals may attach "subjective meaning" to their actions than it does acknowledging that behavioural regularities may be identified in the social world. What an interpretive approach contests, however, is: i) that the "web of meaning" should be understood as the sum-total of individual "subjective meanings", and ii) that the relationship between the "web of meaning" and human practice is one of correspondence.

Interpretive theorists, in contrast to "meaning-oriented behaviouralists", conceive of the "web of meaning" not as a sum-total of "subjective meanings" which grow out of individual self-interpretations and self-definitions, but rather as being comprised of "intersubjective meanings" which are the product of the collective self-interpretations and self-definitions of human communities. These "intersubjective meanings", moreover, are not the same as the positivist notion of a "consensus" about beliefs or values. As Taylor notes,

When we speak of consensus we speak of beliefs and values which could be the property of a single person, or many, or all; but intersubjective meanings could not be the property of a single person because they are rooted in social practice.²⁹

Furthermore, the relationship between the "intersubjective meanings" which make up the "web of meaning" and human practices is not one of correlation, where "intersubjective meanings" serve as an "intervening variable" in a causal sequence. Rather, the "intersubjective meanings" are constitutive of those practices.

There is no question that positivist-dominated social science has great difficulty in coping with this notion of "intersubjective meanings". As Charles Taylor has noted in a discussion of positivist political science,

Intersubjective meanings, ways of experiencing in society which are expressed in the language and descriptions constitutive of institutions and practices, do not fit into the categorical grid of mainstream political science. This allows only for an intersubjective reality that is brute-data-identifiable. But social practices and institutions that are partly constituted by certain ways of talking about them are not so identifiable. We have to understand the language, the underlying meanings, that constitute them.³⁰

This is not to deny that "subjective meanings" can be placed in a relationship of covariance with specific actions. Notes Taylor,

We can allow, once we accept a certain set of institutions or practices as our starting point and not as objects of further questioning, that we can

²⁹"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 58.

³⁰"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 59.

easily take as brute data that certain acts are judged to take place or certain states judged to hold within a semantic field of these practices - for instance, that someone has voted Liberal or signed the petition. We can then go on to correlate certain subjective meanings - beliefs, attitudes, and so forth - with this behaviour or its lack.³¹

But this approach has serious - and from the perspective of interpretive theorists, pernicious - consequences for social science. Continues Taylor,

But this means that we give up trying to define further just what these practices and institutions are, what the meanings are which they require and sustain. For these meanings do not fit into the grid; they are not subjective beliefs or values, but are constitutive of social reality. In order to get at them we have to drop the basic premise that social reality is made up of brute data alone ... We have to admit that intersubjective social reality has to be partly defined in terms of meanings; that meanings as subjective are not just in causal interaction with a social reality made up of brute data, but that as intersubjective they are constitutive of this reality.³²

An example provided by Taylor may serve to illustrate the points being made here. Let us take the case of

³¹"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 59.

³²"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 59.

As Taylor notes, one particularly promising way of conceptualizing "intersubjective meanings", the full implications of which are beyond the scope of this paper, is as "rules" having both normative and constitutive effect. Once again, Anthony Giddens has made an important contribution in this regard. See his discussion of "structuration theory" in New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretive Sociologies (London: Hutchinson, 1976). For a useful discussion and critique of Giddens' contribution, see John B. Thompson, "The Theory of Structuration," in Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and His Critics, ed. David Held and John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

negotiation, a form of social interaction familiar to the inhabitants of liberal, capitalist societies. First, it is quite plausible that behavioural regularities might exist in negotiation settings, and that furthermore, "strict behaviouralists" might succeed in identifying those regularities. It is also true, virtually by definition, that different parties in a negotiation setting will have different subjective motivations, goals, and values, and that "meaning-oriented behaviouralists" might succeed both in identifying those "subjective meanings" and in establishing significant correlations between them and specific actions (e.g., negotiating positions).

What interpretive theorists stress, however, is that those behavioural regularities and those diverging "subjective meanings" are dependent upon the existence of negotiation as a social practice for their very possibility. Moreover, negotiation, as a social practice, is itself constituted by a specific set of "intersubjective meanings".

The actors may have all sorts of beliefs and attitudes which may be rightly thought of as their individual beliefs and attitudes, even if others share them; they may subscribe to certain policy goals or certain forms of theory about the polity, or feel resentment at certain things, and so on. They bring these with them into their negotiations, and strive to satisfy them. But what they do not bring into the negotiations is the set of ideas and norms constitutive of negotiations themselves. These must be the common property of the society before there can be any question of anyone entering into negotiation or not. Hence they are not subjective meanings, the property of one or some individuals, but rather intersubjective meanings, which are

constitutive of the social matrix in which individuals find themselves and act.³³

The "intersubjective meanings" which constitute the practice of negotiation are very specific. Notes Taylor:

Our whole notion of negotiation is bound up ... with the distinct identity and autonomy of the parties, with the willed nature of their relations; it is a very contractual notion.³⁴

These particular "intersubjective meanings", moreover, are themselves context specific. As Taylor notes, the set of "intersubjective meanings" which constitute the practice of negotiation and bargaining, are not present in every society:

But other societies have no such conception. It is reported about the traditional Japanese village that the foundation of its social life was a powerful form of consensus, which put a high premium on unanimous decision. Such a consensus would be considered shattered if two clearly articulated parties were to separate out, pursuing opposed aims and attempting either to vote down the opposition or to push it into a settlement on the most favourable possible terms for themselves. Discussion there must be, and some kind of adjustment of differences. But our idea of bargaining, with the assumption of distinct autonomous parties in willed relationship, has no place there ...³⁵

As a consequence, the naturalist assumption that regularities in the social world - conceived independently of or in causal relation to individual "subjective meanings" - are, like regularities in the natural world, independent of time and place, must be rejected. By extension, the positivist tenet

³³"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 57.

³⁴"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 52.

³⁵"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 53.

of the methodological unity of science can no longer be sustained.

It is important to be clear about the argument that is being advanced by the interpretive theorists. Two points, in particular, merit stressing. First, while it is true that an interpretive approach stands opposed to positivism's "mechanical materialism", it would be a mistake to conclude that what it proposes as an alternative is a return to a radical form of idealism (i.e that the world is a creation of mind). It would be a mistake, first, because interpretive theorists have consistently argued that just as human practices are always constituted by a "web of meaning", so also a "web of meaning" is always embedded in, and instantiated through, concrete human practices. Thus, just as practices cannot be understood apart from the "web of meaning" which constitutes them, neither can a "web of meaning" be understood in isolation from the practices in which it is embedded. Furthermore, an interpretive approach does not imply idealism because such an approach recognizes that the process of self-reflection and self-interpretation always takes place in relation to a concrete historical context (material and social).

The second point which needs to be stressed - and at somewhat greater length than the first - is that an interpretive approach should not be equated with what might be termed the "hermeneutics of recovery". That is, it should

not be understood as advocating that: i) the true subject matter of social science is individual consciousness; ii) the appropriate methodology for the researcher is one of empathy; and iii) the appropriate goal of the social science is one of "recovering" the original "intentions" of human agents. The interpretive approach "emphatically refutes the claim the one can somehow reduce the complex world of signification to the products of self-consciousness in the traditional philosophical sense".³⁶ As noted above, interpretive theorists do not argue that the object of investigation is individual consciousness (subjective meaning), but rather the "web of meaning" - "the web of language, symbol, and institutions that constitutes signification"³⁷ - comprised of "intersubjective meanings". As a consequence, "intentionality" - like human behaviour itself - is understood to be "dependent on the prior existence of the shared world of meaning within which the subjects of human discourse constitute themselves".³⁸

As a consequence, "empathy" is not seen as an appropriate methodology for an interpretive approach. For empathy is a methodology oriented to gaining access to private

³⁶Rabinow and Sullivan, "The Interpretive Turn," p. 6.

³⁷Rabinow and Sullivan, "The Interpretive Turn," p. 6.

³⁸Rabinow and Sullivan, "The Interpretive Turn," p. 6. The work of Hans-Georg Gadamer has particular relevance to this point. For a good introduction to his work in this regard, see Georgia Warnke, Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1987).

consciousness. But as noted above, the "intersubjective meanings" are not confined to the realm of private consciousness. They are embedded in and instantiated through social practices which are part of the public realm. In the words of Rabinow and Sullivan:

Meanings or norms "are not just in the minds of the actors but are out there in the practices themselves; practices which cannot be conceived as a set of individual actions, but which are essentially modes of social relations, or mutual action." These meanings are intersubjective; they are not reducible to individual subjective psychological states, beliefs, or propositions. They are neither subjective nor objective but what lies behind both.³⁹

Instead of empathy, the methodology appropriate to an interpretive approach can be described as the "hermeneutic circle". By "hermeneutic circle" is meant that the social scientist endeavours to "make sense" of the social world by demonstrating that "there is a coherence between the actions of an agent and the meaning of the situation for him".⁴⁰ "Making sense" of the social world, then, involves a process

³⁹"The Interpretive Turn," p. 7. Or again to quote Taylor,

It is not just that all or most people in our society have a given set of ideas in their heads and subscribe to a given set of goals. The meanings and norms implicit in these practices are not just in the minds of the actors but are out there in the practices themselves, practices which cannot be conceived as a set of individual actions, but which are essentially modes of social relation, of mutual action.

"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," pp. 56-57.

⁴⁰Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 43.

of "testing" the adequacy of a proffered "reading", that is, i) of the "web of meaning" in terms of the concrete social practices in which it is embedded, and ii) of the "coherence" of observed social practices in terms of the "web of meaning" which constitutes those practices.⁴¹ As a consequence, the interpretation of a given "web of meaning"/ social practice can never be tested against an objective standard. Rather, the testing and refinement of particular interpretations is always done in terms of other interpretation. It is never possible to escape the "hermeneutic circle".⁴²

And finally, to conclude this second point, it would not be correct to equate an interpretive approach with a "hermeneutics of recovery" because the objective of social science for those committed to an interpretive approach is not limited to "recovering" the self-interpretations and self-

⁴¹It should, of course, be emphasized that to "make sense" of some behaviour in no way implies that the behaviour is rational. On the other hand, as Taylor notes, "... even contradictory irrational action is 'made sense of,' when we understand why it was engaged in." "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 43.

⁴²From the perspective of the "hermeneutic circle", then, the proper analogy for the methodology of an interpretive approach is not the method of physics (the subsumption of empirical regularities under covering laws), nor that of Dilthey's "romantic hermeneutics" (empathic identification), but rather the learning of a second language (the "web of meaning" which constitutes observed social practices) and then the translation of that language into one's mother tongue (the concepts of the social scientist). For a discussion of hermeneutics not as "empathy" but as a form of "translation", see Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Crossroad, 1988).

definitions which constitute social practices.⁴³ Because social practices are constituted by "intersubjective meanings", "recovering" those meanings - by means of the "hermeneutic circle" - is an important step.⁴⁴ Yet as is apparent from Taylor's statements that "... social reality has to be partly defined in terms of meanings",⁴⁵ that "that

⁴³Though it might be argued that the formulations of some interpretive theorists - starting with Dilthey - have tended in this direction. For a critique of this more limited notion of an interpretive approach to the social world, see Brian Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), chapter four. For a response which argues that Fay's critique does not apply to all forms of interpretive social science - in particular, to that proposed by Charles Taylor - see Gibbons, "Introduction: The Politics of Interpretation," in Gibbons, Interpreting Politics.

⁴⁴I have place the word "recovering" in inverted commas to underscore the problematic nature of the "recovery" process. Specifically, the notion of "recovering" the intersubjective meanings particular to a community of human agents is problematic for at least two reasons. First, though such meanings are always the product of an on-going process of self-interpretation and self-definition, as was noted above, that process is rarely one about which human agents are reflexively self-conscious (see note #24). As a consequence, the human agents themselves may be incapable of articulating the "intersubjective meanings" which constitute their practices. To "recover" unarticulated "intersubjective meanings" is then no simple and straight-forward activity.

Secondly, the notion of "recovery" must also be nuanced through the recognition that all acts of "recovery" involve interpretation. That is, the "reading" of a specific "web of meaning" and social practice is, in keeping with the reality of the "double hermeneutic", expressed in the language and terms of the social scientist. And because there is no way to escape the "hermeneutic circle" - because there is never any way to establish the validity of a particular reading beyond any doubt - every "reading", no matter how plausible or sophisticated, remains potentially contestable.

⁴⁵"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 59, my emphasis.

of which we are trying to find the coherence is itself partly constituted by self interpretation",⁴⁶ an interpretive approach is quite capable of accepting that the subject matter of social science extends beyond "webs of meaning".

Rather, the objective of an interpretive approach is to re-express the relationship between "intersubjective meanings" which derive from self-interpretation and self-definition, and the social practices in which they are embedded and which they constitute - in short, the "form of life" - in order to exercise critical judgement.⁴⁷ In short, the goal of an interpretive social science is not to re-state the understanding of the human agents involved, but to "attain[] greater clarity than the immediate understanding of the agent or observer".⁴⁸

In sum, interpretive theory offers a clear alternative to positivist formulations of human consciousness in the study of society. Moreover, it can be argued that interpretive

⁴⁶"Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 46, my emphasis.

⁴⁷Because an interpretive approach focuses, first and foremost on "intersubjective meanings", there is no difficulty in accommodating the need to examine, for example, unintended consequences of human behaviour or structural dimensions of human interaction (as there would be were "subjective meanings" the exclusive focus).

⁴⁸Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," p. 47.

For a good discussion of the place of the "hermeneutics of recovery" in interpretive social science, see Michael Gibbons, "Introduction", in Gibbons, Interpreting Politics.

theory's alternative is not only distinct but superior. Its superiority with regard to one central issue for social science - that of change - will complete the discussion of the place of human consciousness in social and political theory.

Human Consciousness and the Question of Social Change

The underlying assumptions of the two approaches reviewed here - positivist and interpretive - have important consequences in terms of the ability to explain change in the social world. For positivist social science, the naturalist assumption that the social world is marked by timeless regularities in human behaviour which form the basis both of social life and of social scientific explanation, means that any attempt to explain change in the social world must do so in terms of those unchanging behavioural regularities. Changes in those behavioural regularities would seem to be foreclosed from the beginning.

In contrast, for interpretive theorists, behavioural regularities are not independent of time and space, but rather contextually-specific expressions of a "web of meaning". This "web of meaning", moreover, is created and re-created through an on-going process of self-definition and self-interpretation on the part of human communities who are working to secure their existence under specific historical conditions (material and social). Changing historical conditions give rise to new interpretations and definitions, which in turn effect changes

in the material and social context of the community. In short, the "intersubjective meanings" embedded in the concrete social practices which make up a "form of life" are seen as capable of changing, and with them the "form of life" they constitute.

As a consequence, while positivist social science would seem able to explain change within "forms of life", interpretive social science offers a way of explaining change of "forms of life". It is interpretive social science's ability in this regard which makes clear its superiority over positivism, confronted as we are, by "forms of life" which are undermining the quality of life - if not threatening the very future of life - in the global polis.

Furthermore, not only is interpretive social science superior to positivism in terms of explaining change, it is also superior in terms of its suitability for the emancipatory agenda associated with the "Aristotelian project". As was noted above, "forms of life" are always constituted by "webs of meaning" which are themselves the product of an on-going process of self-interpretation and self-definition. As a consequence, argue interpretive theorists, interpretive theory can actually promote change in undesirable "forms of life" by directing its energies toward the promotion of the process of critical self-reflection of which human beings are capable. By focussing its attention on the relationship between "intersubjective meanings" and social practices which results in a particular "form of life", interpretive social science

can bring the process of self-interpretation and self-definition into public view.⁴⁹ And by exercising critical judgments about that relationship, it can generate fresh insights into social life which surpass the conventional understandings of the communities involved. As these communities then reflect upon those insights, find them valuable, and internalize them into new self-interpretations and self-definitions, the "web of meaning" which constitutes social practices - and, by extension, the practices themselves - may be transformed.⁵⁰

In short, an interpretive approach to the study of social life sees the social world not as one which is "given",⁵¹ but one which is "made",⁵² and, as a consequence, one which can be critically assessed by its members, and, most importantly, "re-made" on the basis of those assessments. An interpretive approach to the study of social life sees human consciousness and the power of self-definition, self-interpretation, and self-reflection associated with it as constitutive and

⁴⁹In Giddens' terms, interpretive social science can help move the on-going process of self-definition and self-interpretation from "practical consciousness" to "discursive consciousness".

⁵⁰In this sense, an interpretive approach conforms to an "educative" - as opposed to an "instrumental" - conception of theory and practice. The distinction between the two will be taken up in greater detail in chapter six.

⁵¹à la positivism.

⁵²à la Vico.

potentially transformative of "forms of life". It is in this way, that the approach of interpretive social science is compatible with the project of human (self)-emancipation which is at the core of the theoretical tradition associated with "critique".⁵³

We have seen that notion of "intersubjective meanings" associated with an interpretive approach to the study of the social world offers an alternative to the positivist conceptualization of "meaning" in social life as either an "heuristic aid", or as "subjective meanings" which can be correlated to specific actions. We have also seen how the alternative offered by an interpretive approach challenges the positivist tenet of the methodological unity of science by undermining the assumption of naturalism. In this way, interpretive social science opens a space for conceiving of human consciousness as both constitutive and potentially transformative of the social world - a development very much in keeping with the emancipation-oriented tradition of critical theory.

⁵³This is not to argue that all applications of an interpretive approach are oriented toward promoting emancipatory change. An interpretive approach could be used to reinforce unjust and oppressive "forms of life". However, while it may be the case that an interpretive approach to the study of human society is not sufficient for the promotion of emancipatory social change, it is nonetheless a necessary condition thereof.

The question remains, however, to what extent, if any, the insights of interpretive social theory are being applied in the discipline of international relations? Specifically, to what extent, if any, is an alternative to positivist conceptualizations of human consciousness in international relations theory being offered? To what extent is a parallel space for conceiving of human consciousness as both constitutive and potentially transformative of international politics being created? It is to these questions that we now turn.

Part II: International Relations Theory and the Question of Human Consciousness

The second part of this chapter has two objectives. The first is to examine the way in which human consciousness has traditionally been treated within international relations theory. On the basis of our discussion of international relations theory in chapter three, it should come as no surprise that the predominant way in which human consciousness has been treated has been positivist in inspiration and orientation. Specifically, the widespread commitment within the discipline to the tenet of the methodological unity of science, and the acceptance of the underlying assumption of naturalism, have resulted in standard positivist theoretical formulations of the role of human consciousness. Moreover, in keeping with the discussion in the first part of this chapter, the positivist conceptualization of human consciousness in international relations theory can be seen as a major factor in accounting for the discipline's inability to theorize fundamental change in the global order.

However, the second part of this chapter is not limited to a discussion of conventional formulations of human consciousness in international relations theory, and the theoretical limitations which derive from those formulations. For it is a central argument of this study that not only does international relations theory stand in need of fundamental

restructuring, but that the restructuring process is already underway. Thus, it is also the objective of the discussion which follows to substantiate this claim with regard to the question of human consciousness. Specifically, it will be argued that the insights of interpretive theorists are also being applied in the study of international relations. In short, the growing attention to interpretive approaches in the study of international politics is a second body of evidence in support of the "restructuring" of international relations theory.

Positivist Formulations of Human Consciousness in International Relations Theory

On the basis of our review of positivist formulations in the first part of this chapter, it is now possible to place positivist formulations of human consciousness in international relations theory in a larger meta-theoretical context. We shall begin with a review of the methodological pronouncements of an individual who, it can be argued, had a comparable influence on positivist formulations of human consciousness in the discipline of international relations to

that of Weber in social science generally. Specifically, we will begin with a look at the work of Hans Morgenthau.⁵⁴

On consecutive pages of the classic Politics Among Nations, Morgenthau makes the following two statements:

- I) Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.... The operation of these laws being impervious to our preferences, men will challenge them only at the risk of failure.⁵⁵
- II) For realism, theory consists in ascertaining facts and giving them meaning through reason.... To give meaning to the factual raw material of foreign policy, we must approach political reality with a kind of rational outline, a map that suggests to us the possible meanings of foreign policy. In other words, we put ourselves in the position of a statesman who must meet a certain problem of foreign policy under certain circumstances.... We assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power That assumption allows us to

⁵⁴It is noteworthy that Weber's contributions to the development of Western social science had a profound - if largely unacknowledged and unrecognized - influence on Morgenthau. This influence is particularly evident in Morgenthau's privileging of a "purposive-rational" conception of social action - the same conception privileged by Weber himself. It is also evident in the fact that Morgenthau, like Weber, conceptualizes irrational behaviour as a derivative deviation from "purposive-rational action". For Weber's comments on irrational action as a deviation from the "ideal type" of rational action, see note #13 in Part I of this chapter. For Morgenthau's comments concerning the construction of a derivative "counter-theory of irrational politics", see his Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 6th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. 7.

For a discussion of Weber's influence on Morgenthau, see Jim George, "The Study of International Relations and the Positivist/ Empiricist Theory of Knowledge: Implications for the Australian Discipline," in Richard Higgott, ed., New Directions in International Relations? Australian Perspectives (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1988), pp. 86-90.

⁵⁵Politics Among Nations, p. 4.

retrace and anticipate ... the steps a statesman - past, present, or future - has taken or will take on the political scene. We look over his shoulder when he writes his dispatches; we listen in on his conversations with other statesmen; we read and anticipate his very thoughts.⁵⁶

This raises the question of how one is to understand the relationship between these two statements. One possible response, as typified by Jim George, is to argue that Morgenthau's work is marked by a "pronounced theoretical tension" - even a "paradox".⁵⁷ The roots of this tension/paradox, argues George, lies in the fact that Morgenthau's work attempts to unite two distinct and mutually opposed methodological traditions: specifically, positivism (as expressed in Morgenthau's first statement) and interpretive theory [Verstehen] (as expressed in the second). The hermeneutic tradition, argues George, is in evidence in Morgenthau's admonition to put ourselves in the place of the statesman - in short, to "get 'inside' the world of the diplomat, the foreign policymaker, the strategist, and the power broker".⁵⁸ The positivist approach, of course, is clearly visible in Morgenthau's affirmations that "... [international] politics is governed by objective laws" which are "... impervious to our preferences".

⁵⁶ Politics Among Nations, p. 5.

⁵⁷ "The Study of International Relations," p. 92.

⁵⁸ George, "The Study of International Relations", p. 92.

On the face of it, the affirmation of a tension/ paradox would seem to represent a plausible reading of Morgenthau's work.⁵⁹ It would also seem to pose a major problem in terms of the coherence of Morgenthau's contribution to the foundations of the discipline. Indeed, George argues that it is further evidence of the discipline's uncritical strategy of turning its back on the "theory question" that an "'ambiguity' of this magnitude within its exemplar text" has so rarely provoked serious intellectual debate.⁶⁰

It could be argued, however, that the lack of concern within the discipline regarding the tension/ paradox decried by George might be explained in a slightly different way. From our discussion in the first part of this chapter, we saw that positivists have resolved the tension between an interpretive approach and positivism by incorporating Weber's emphasis on Verstehen as a means of understanding "subjective meanings" into positivist research. Specifically, positivists succeeded in overcoming the paradox between an interpretive approach (Verstehen) and the positivist tenet of the methodological unity of science by re-defining Verstehen as a technique potentially relevant to the context of discovery, and

⁵⁹For a parallel interpretation which sees the same kind of tension in Morgenthau's work - this time expressed as a conflict between a hermeneutically-inspired "practical realism" and a positivist "technical realism" - see Richard Ashley, "Political Realism and Human Interests," International Studies Quarterly, 25, No. 2 (1981).

⁶⁰George, "The Study of International Relations," p. 93.

subordinating it to the methods appropriate to the testing of hypotheses in the context of justification.

It will be argued here that positivist-minded international relations scholars - starting with Morgenthau - have done the same in their discipline. If true, then the lack of critical debate about the paradox between the Verstehen side and the "objective laws" side of Morgenthau can be understood as evidence of the hegemony of positivist formulations in the discipline of international relations.⁶¹

This is not to say that all positivist-minded international relations scholars have taken the same stance regarding human consciousness. For as in the case of Weber, it can be argued that to Morgenthau's reconciliation of positivism and Verstehen correspond two distinct positivist formulations.

On the one hand one finds those international relations theorists who correspond to our discussion of "strict behaviouralism" in the first part of this chapter. These scholars follow Morgenthau in affirming that the central focus of the study of international politics must be "the examination of political acts performed".⁶² Dominated as the

⁶¹An hegemony which certainly reinforces the kind of "theoretical agnosticism" lamented by George.

⁶²Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, p. 4.

discipline has been by realist assumptions,⁶³ it comes as no surprise that the political acts focused upon were performed by states.

The realist-inspired "strict behaviouralists" congregated to form one of the two main approaches to the study of international politics: that of "systems theory". From this perspective, states were treated as billiard balls, operating in a system.⁶⁴ Moreover, in keeping with the general orientation of "strict behaviouralism", it was assumed that "the perceptions of the actors ... [were] essentially irrelevant to the task of explanation".⁶⁵

Others, however, appealed to Morgenthau's (and Weber's) assertions to argue that while the examination of the behavioural facts of intentional politics - the "political acts performed" - was vital, the "examination of the facts is not enough". They followed Morgenthau in affirming that

To give meaning to the factual raw material of foreign policy, we must approach political reality

⁶³See John Vasquez, The Power of Power Politics: A Critique (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983).

⁶⁴For an overview of the literature of the early wave of systems theory, see Michael P. Sullivan, International Relations: Theories and Evidence (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), Part II. The most sophisticated and elegant contemporary contribution to "systems theory" is, of course, Kenneth Waltz's Theory of International Politics (New York: Random House, 1979).

⁶⁵Steve Smith, "Belief Systems and the Study of International Relations", in Belief Systems and International Relations, ed. Richard Little and Steve Smith (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1988), p. 16.

with a kind of rational outline, a map that suggests to us the possible meanings of foreign policy. In other words, we put ourselves in the position of a statesman ...⁶⁶

That is, these theorists - corresponding to the category of "meaning-oriented behaviouralists" - affirmed that the "subjective meanings" attached to "political acts performed" were a vital component of the development of scientific explanations of those acts. In the words of Philip Lawrence, "In judging and explaining foreign policy decision-making, the most crucial elements that must be evaluated are purposes and motives".⁶⁷ And once again, reflecting the realist hegemony in the discipline, the behaviour in question was that of the leaders of states, while the "subjective meanings" - the "purposes and motives" - to be evaluated were those attached by these state managers to their actions.

If the "strict behaviouralists" in the discipline of international relations were to be found in the "systems theorists" camp, "meaning-oriented behaviouralists", as implied in the Lawrence quote above, tended to gravitate to

⁶⁶Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, p. 5.

⁶⁷"Strategic Beliefs, Mythology and Imagery," in Little and Smith, Belief Systems and International Relations, p. 140.

that of "foreign policy analysis".⁶⁸ Here the attempt to determine the "subjective meanings" attached by state managers to their actions took a variety of forms employing a wide range of creative methodological techniques. These ranged from "the image",⁶⁹ to "belief systems",⁷⁰ to "operational codes",⁷¹ to "cognitive maps",⁷² to "lessons of the past",⁷³ to "Brecher's research design"⁷⁴ in the case of form, and included techniques such as "content analysis" and

⁶⁸As Smith has noted, the dual focus of the discipline was manifest in Waltz's analysis of the causes of war, as well as serving as the subject of a classic article by Singer, in which he spoke of the "level of analysis problem" in international relations theory. (Smith, "Belief Systems and International Relations", p. 16)

See Kenneth Waltz, Man, The State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), and J. D. Singer, "The Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations," in The International System: Theoretical Essays, ed. K. Knorr and S. Verba (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961).

⁶⁹See Kenneth Boulding, The Image (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1956).

⁷⁰See Ole Holsti, "The Belief System and National Images: A Case Study," Journal of Conflict Resolution, 6 (1962).

⁷¹See Alexander George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," International Studies Quarterly, 13 (1969).

⁷²See Robert Axelrod, ed., Structure of Decision (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

⁷³See Ernest May, "Lessons" of the Past (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). See also, Ernest May and Richard Neustadt, Thinking in Time (New York: Free Press, 1986).

⁷⁴See Michael Brecher, Blema Steinberg and Janice Stein, "A Framework for Research on Foreign Policy Behaviour," Journal of Conflict Resolution, 13 (1969).

questionnaires.⁷⁵ The underlying commonality which unites these approaches, however, is adoption of the "subjectivist" position⁷⁶ - that is, the concern with identifying the "subjective meanings" attached to international behaviour and with bringing those meanings into the public realm. As with "meaning-oriented behaviouralism" in general, the "subjective meanings" of state managers - their "perceptions" and "beliefs" - were understood as intervening variables - a "filtering device"⁷⁷ - between the empirical reality of the international context and international behaviour. And in keeping with the positivist tenet of the methodological unity of science, it was the position of "meaning-oriented behaviouralists" in the discipline of international relations that if the "perceptions [of state managers] could be studied and if significant regularities could be found, then here was another route to [scientific] international relations theory".⁷⁸

⁷⁵For an excellent overview of the distinctive characteristics of these different approaches and techniques, as well as references, see Smith, "Belief Systems and International Relations", pp. 17-27.

⁷⁶The term is A. N. Oppenheim's. See his "Psychological Processes in World Society", in Conflict in World Society, ed. Michael Banks (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1984), p. 114.

⁷⁷Smith, "Belief Systems and International Relations," p. 11.

⁷⁸Smith, "Belief Systems and International Relations," p. 16.

As with treatments of human consciousness in positivist social science in general, then, in positivist international relations theory the realm of human consciousness is conceptualized as either an "heuristic aid" in the context of discovery, or as a significant "intervening variable" which can be correlated to specific behaviour in specific contexts. What this shows is that positivist international relations theorists were just as determined to assimilate human consciousness to the tenet of the methodological unity of science in accordance with the assumption of naturalism which underlies it. As a consequence, positivist international relations theory - whether "strict behaviouralist" or "meaning-oriented behaviouralist" - is fundamentally unable to appreciate the constitutive and potentially transformative nature of human consciousness in terms of the global order.

There is, however, an alternative formulation of human consciousness in international relations theory - a formulation which draws not upon positivism, but upon interpretive social science for its inspiration - which does not suffer from positivism's limitations. It is to that alternative formulation that we now turn.

Interpretive Approaches to the Study of International Politics:

One of the earliest attempts to introduce an interpretive approach into contemporary international relations theory -

and one which remains one of the most sophisticated - is to be found in the work of Robert W. Cox.⁷⁹ Cox presents his "historical materialist" approach as an explicit alternative to that of mainstream positivist international relations theory.⁸⁰ The inspiration for Cox's approach are the writings of Marx and his twentieth century Hegelian-Marxist interpreter, Antonio Gramsci,⁸¹ as well their historicist precursor, Giambattista Vico. Already in his definition of the task of social science, Cox highlights the importance of human consciousness both as part of social reality, and for comprehending that reality as it changes:

A proper study of human affairs should be able to reveal both the coherence of minds and institutions characteristic of different ages, and the process

⁷⁹See, in particular, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," Millennium, 10, No. 2 (1981), reprinted, with a "Postscript", in Neorealism and Its Critics, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). See also Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method," Millennium, 12, No. 2 (1983).

⁸⁰He also distinguishes it from the a-historical and anti-humanist "structural Marxism" associated with Althusser and Poulantzas, p. 133.

⁸¹Cox quotes Gramsci to make the point that:

Historical materialism is in a certain sense a reform and development of Hegelianism. It is philosophy freed from unilateral ideological elements, the full consciousness of the contradictions of philosophy".

"Social Forces, States and World Orders", p. 152, note #15.

whereby one such coherent pattern - which we can call an historical structure - succeeds another.⁸²

Taking Vico's statement that "...this world of nations has certainly been made by men, and its guise must therefore be found within the modifications of our own human mind",⁸³ Cox goes on to lay particular stress upon human consciousness - upon the "ever-changing forms of mind" which are "the thread connecting the present with the past, a means of access to a knowledge of ... changing modes of social reality".⁸⁴

In Cox's formulation of historical materialism, ideas, along with material capabilities and institutions, are one of the three categories of forces which interact in, and make up, an historical structure. Nor are Cox's "ideas" to be equated with the "subjective meanings" of "meaning-oriented behaviouralists". Drawing explicitly on Taylor's formulations, Cox defines ideas as consisting of "intersubjective meanings" - "shared notions of the nature of social relations which tend to perpetuate habits [behavioural regularities] and

⁸²Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," p. 133.

⁸³As quoted in Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," p. 132.

⁸⁴Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," p. 132. Cox is clear in his affirmation, however, that the interpretive approach that he is advocating is not a "statement of radical idealism (i.e., that the world is a creation of mind)". "Forms of mind" are themselves "shaped by the complex of social relations in the genesis of which class struggle play[s] the principal role" (p. 132).

expectations of behaviour".⁸⁵ These "intersubjective meanings", notes Cox, "are broadly common throughout a particular historical structure and constitute the common ground of social discourse (including conflict)". In his application of this notion of international politics, Cox gives the following examples:

Examples of intersubjective meanings in contemporary world politics are the notions that people are organised and commanded by states which have authority over defined territories; that states relate to one another through diplomatic agents; that certain rules apply for the protection of diplomatic agents as being in the common interest of all states; and that certain kinds of behaviour are to be expected when conflict arises between states, such as negotiation, confrontation, or war.⁸⁶

⁸⁵Cox makes reference to Taylor's "Hermeneutics and Politics", in Critical Sociology, ed. Paul Connerton (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965), chapter six. See Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," p. 153, note #19.

Cox also makes reference to another category of ideas relevant to an historical structure. These are "collective images of social order held by different groups of people". These "collective images" are "differing views as to the nature and legitimacy of prevailing power relations, the meanings of justice and public good, and so forth. "Collective images", argues Cox, "may be several and opposed", and the "clash of rival collective images provides evidence of the potential for alternative paths of development and raises questions as to the possible material and institutional basis for the emergence of an alternative structure" (p. 136).

While the notion of "collective images of social order" is an important one, I believe that "collective images", like Taylor's "common meanings", are better understood as a sub-category of "intersubjective meanings". For Taylor's discussion of "common meanings" as a special sub-set of "intersubjective meanings", see "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," pp. 59-62.

⁸⁶Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," p. 136.

However, while these "intersubjective meanings" may appear relatively stable within an historical structure, they - and the social practices they constitute and through which they are instantiated - are quite capable of change. Notes Cox,

These notions, though durable over long periods of time, are historically conditioned. The realities of world politics have not always been represented in precisely this way and may not be in the future. It is possible to trace the origins of such ideas and also to detect signs of a weakening in some of them.⁸⁷

Accordingly, the methodology of Cox's historical materialist approach conforms to that of the hermeneutic circle's dialectical "to-and-fro" between "webs of meaning" and the social practices in which they are embedded, all while remaining attentive to the concrete historical (material and social) context:

The method of historical structures is one of representing what can be called limited totalities. The historical structure does not represent the whole world but rather a particular sphere of human activity in its historically located totality... Dialectic is introduced, firstly, by deriving the definition of a particular structure [i.e., the relationship between material capabilities, institutions, and ideas (intersubjective meanings)], not from some abstract model of a social system or mode of production, but from a study of the historical situation to which it relates, and secondly, by looking for the emergence of rival

⁸⁷Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," p. 136. It is interesting to note that in this regard, Cox makes explicit reference to Taylor's discussion of the contextually-specific "intersubjective meanings" which constitute the social practice of negotiation. See p. 153, note #20.

structures expressing alternative possibilities of development.⁸⁸

Cox clearly means his approach to be an alternative to positivist social science, which he defines as:

... the effort to conceive social science on the model of physics.... The data of politics are externally perceived events brought about by the interaction of actors in a field. The field itself, being an arrangement of actors, has certain properties of its own which can be called "systemic". The concept of "cause is applicable within such a framework of forces. Powerful actors are "causes" of change in the behaviour of less powerful ones, and the structure of the system "causes" certain forms of behaviour on the part of actors.⁸⁹

This contrasts strongly, observes Cox, with the historicist approach he employs:

In this approach, human institutions are made by people - not by the individual gestures of "actors" but by the collective responses to a collectively perceived problematic that produce certain practices. Institutions and practices are therefore to be understood through the changing mental processes of their makers.... The objective realities this approach encompasses - the state, social classes, ... conflict groups ... are their practices - are constituted by intersubjective ideas... none of these realities exist in the same way that individuals exist, but individuals act as though these other realities exist, and by so acting they reproduce them. Social and political institutions are thus seen as collective responses to the physical material context (natural nature) in which human aggregates find themselves. They in turn form part of the social material framework (artificial nature of the network of social relations) in which historical action takes place.

⁸⁸Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," p. 137.

⁸⁹Cox, "Postscript," p. 242.

Historicism thus understood is the same as historical materialism.⁹⁰

As Cox notes, the two approaches differ in both their goals and in their relations to the question of change in the global order:

The two approaches - positivist and historicist [interpretive] - yield quite different versions of the task of science... the tasks of a positivist science [are]: to find laws (which are regularities in human activity stateable in the form of "if A, then B"); and to develop theories which explain why observable laws hold within specific spheres of activity. Laws and theories advance knowledge beyond what would otherwise be "mere description", i.e., the cataloging of externally observed events.

Insofar as this approach aspires to a general science of society, it cannot discriminate between times and places. All human activity is its province (though this activity is arbitrarily divided among a priori categories of activity of which international relations is one), all of it treated as raw material for the finding of laws and the development of theories.... A general (read: universally applicable) science of society can allow for variations in technologies and in the relative capabilities of actors, but not in either the basic nature of actors (power-seeking) or in their mode of interaction (power-balancing). The universality of these basic attributes of the social system comes to be perceived as standing outside of and prior to history. History becomes but a mine of data illustrating the permutations and combinations that are possible within an essentially unchanging human story.⁹¹

The interpretive approach represented by Cox's historical materialism could not be more different:

The historicist approach to social science does not envisage any general or universally valid laws

⁹⁰Cox, "Postscript," pp. 242-243, emphasis in the original.

⁹¹"Postscript," p. 243.

which can be explained by the development of appropriate generally applicable theories. For historicism, both human nature and the structures of human interaction change, if only very slowly. History is the process of their changing. One cannot therefore speak of "laws" in any generally valid sense transcending historical eras, nor of structures as outside of or prior to history. Regularities in human activities may indeed be observed within defined historical limits, though not with the universal pretensions it aspires to. The research program of historicism is to reveal the historical structures characteristic of particular eras within which such regularities prevail. Even more important, this research program is to explain transformations from one structure to another. If elegance is what Robert Keohane writes of as "sparse, logically tight" theory, then the historicist approach does not lead to elegance. It may, however lead to a better appraisal of historically specific conjunctures. One person's elegance is another's oversimplification.⁹²

As an example of the kind of limitations suffered by an "oversimplifying" positivist approach to the study of international politics can lead, Cox discusses the contribution of Waltz to the development of a "structuralist realism". In Cox's view, it is the naturalist orientation toward the identification of timeless regularities in human behaviour which lies:

... at the root of the major defect in Waltz's approach pointed to by his critics (see especially Keohane and Ruggie): the inability of his theory to account for or to explain structural transformation.... Despite his wide historical learning, Waltz's work is fundamentally ahistorical. The elegance he achieves in the clarity of his

⁹²"postscript," pp. 243-244.

theoretical statement comes at the price of an unconvincing mode of historical understanding.⁹³

Nor is there any doubt in Cox's mind as to where the source of structural transformation is to be found, speaking as he does from a perspective informed by interpretive theory:

Development potential signifies a possible change of structure. It can be grasped by understanding the contradictions and sources of conflict within existing structure; and this task may be aided by an understanding of how structural transformations have come about in the past. Thus the determination of breaking points between successive structures - those points at which transformations take place - becomes major problem of method. John Ruggie raised this issue in pointing to the structural disjuncture between the medieval and modern world system, and to the inability of Waltz's structural realism to even consider let alone explain this transformation. The case is extremely important, since it contrasts two world constituted by quite distinct intersubjectivities. The entities as well as the modes of relations among them are of different orders.⁹⁴

As was noted earlier, Cox's historical materialist approach to the study of international politics remains one of the most developed attempts to formulate an interpretive

⁹³"Postscript," p. 243. See John Gerard Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis," and "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in Keohane, ed., Neorealism and Its Critics.

⁹⁴"Postscript", pp. 244-245, my emphasis.

Although a full discussion of Cox's conception of hegemony in international politics is beyond the scope of this study, it is significant that what distinguishes it from the positivist-inspired neorealist conception of hegemony is that Cox's Gramscian notion of hegemony "joins an ideological and intersubjective element to the brute power relationship", "Postscript", p. 246. See Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations".

approach within international relations theory. It is for this reason that we have spent considerable effort reviewing it. Impressive as Cox's intervention may be, however, it remains a part of the "margins" of the discipline (i.e., Marxist theorizing) and thus cannot on its own really suffice as persuasive evidence that the "core" of international relations theory (i.e., non-Marxist theorizing) is undergoing a process of "restructuring" of which the incorporation of interpretive approaches is a key element.

This raises the question of whether there is any additional evidence of the adoption of interpretive approaches in the discipline of international relations which does relate to the "core" of international relations theory. In fact there is evidence that over the course of the last decade, interpretive theory has influenced the discipline more widely than might at first be believed.

In the 1980s, regimes analysis was one of the most influential approaches to the study of international politics. Growing out of the tradition of international organization, this form of analysis focused on international regimes, defined as

implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations. Principles are beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude. Norms are standards of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations. Rules are specific prescriptions for action. Decision-making procedures are prevailing

practices for making and implementing collective choice.⁹⁵

This definition was well-suited to positivist international relations theory. The traditional concern with "prevailing practices", "behaviour", and "action", lent itself well to analysis according to the approach of "strict behaviouralism", while the emphasis on "expectations" and "beliefs" seemed to make "meaning-oriented behaviouralism" a natural approach for the study of regimes.⁹⁶ In time, however, some scholars began to sense the inherent limitations of the positivist approach.

One of the first clear examples in mainstream international relations theory of the move to rethink the appropriateness of the positivist approach to the study of regimes - and, by extension, to international politics in general - is to be found in an article published in the mid-1980s by two realist theorists: Friedrich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie.⁹⁷ Affirming the shift to international regimes as a "progressive problem shift" (in a Lakatosian sense) in

⁹⁵Stephen D. Krasner, "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables", in International Regimes, ed. S. Krasner (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 2.

⁹⁶For a representative sampling, see Krasner, International Regimes, as well as Kenneth A. Oye, ed., Cooperation Under Anarchy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

⁹⁷"International Organization: A State of the Art on an Art of the State," International Organization, 40, No. 4 (1986).

the research program of international organization, Kratochwil and Ruggie argued that: "To fully realize its potential, the research program must now seek to resolve some serious anomalies in the regime approach ...".⁹⁸

The anomalies in the regime approach to which Ruggie and Kratochwil wanted to direct attention were of an epistemological nature:

The problem is this: the practice of regime analysis is wracked by epistemological anomalies - anomalies that more often than not go unnoticed in the literature. These anomalies debilitate any endeavour to achieve clarity and precision in the concept of regimes and to enhance its productive capacity as an analytical tool.⁹⁹

The epistemological anomalies which they identify are of three types, all of which can be understood as the result of the contradiction between positivism's assumption of naturalism and the distinctive nature of the social world.

The first, which they identify as a fundamental contradiction between ontology and epistemology, is rooted in positivism's inability to theorize the intersubjective nature of social practices. Note Kratochwil and Ruggie:

International regimes are commonly defined as social institutions around which expectations converge in international issue-areas. The emphasis on convergent expectations ... gives regimes an inescapable intersubjective quality... Hence, the

⁹⁸"International Organization," p. 754.

⁹⁹"International Organization," p. 764.

ontology of regimes rests upon a strong element of intersubjectivity.¹⁰⁰

The second anomaly resides in the fact that positivism does not understand the "converging expectations" and "norms - standards of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations" associated with regimes as constitutive of regimes as social practices. As Kratochwil and Ruggie correctly note:

The standard positivist model works with an initial condition plus a covering law, on the basis of which it hypothesizes or predicts an occurrence. Even a single counterfactual occurrence may be taken to refute the covering law. (A probabilistic formulation would, of course, appropriately modify the criteria for refutation, but it would not alter the basic structure of the explanation).¹⁰¹

As a consequence, it is only natural that "norms", for example, are integrated into positivism's research design as a hypothetical "cause" of behaviour. Yet as they note, "... unlike the initial conditions in positivist explanations, norms can be thought of only with great difficulty as "causing" occurrences".¹⁰² Rather, as intersubjective elements of a "web of meaning" norms and converging expectations constitute regimes as social practices: they form "the constitutive basis of regimes" upon which human actions depend

¹⁰⁰"International Organization," p. 764, my emphasis.

¹⁰¹"International Organization," pp. 766-767.

¹⁰²"International Organization," p. 767.

for their very possibility.¹⁰³ Moreover, they do this even when they are ignored in specific instances.

As a consequence, argue Kratochwil and Ruggie,

...the common practice of treating norms as "variables" - be they independent, dependent, intervening or otherwise - should be severely curtailed. So too should be the preoccupation with the "violation" of norms as the beginning, middle, and end of the compliance story.¹⁰⁴

And finally, the positivist-inspired study of regimes is marked by an anomaly revolving around the fact that, contrary to positivist assumptions, the "intersubjective meanings" (converging expectation, norms) which constitute regimes as social practices are subject to change with time. They are subject to change because they are the product of an on-going process of community self-interpretation and self-definition. The problem with positivism's focus on timeless regularities is

... its presumption that, once the machinery is in place, actors merely remain programmed by it. But this is clearly not so. Actors not only reproduce normative structures, they also change them by their very practice, as underlying conditions change, as new constraints or possibilities emerge, or as new claimants make their presence felt. Lawyers call

¹⁰³"International Organization," p. 764.

¹⁰⁴"International Organization," p. 768.

this "interstitial lawmaking", and sociologists, the process of "structuration".¹⁰⁵

Given these three anomalies, argued Kratochwil and Ruggie, the solution is clear. What is required in the study of regimes is an approach which allows for the recognition of the intersubjective nature of the meanings which constitute social practices and which can change according to time or place. In short, what is required is an approach which draws on the insights of interpretive social science:

We have now reached the same conclusion through three different routes: the conventional epistemological approaches in regime studies do not and cannot suffice.... The problems we have pointed to are not insuperable, but their resolution will require the incorporation into prevailing approaches

¹⁰⁵"International Organization," p. 770. They go on to cite Giddens with regard to his notion of "structuration" as follows:

According to the theory of structuration, all social action consists of social practices, situated in time-space, and organized in a skilled and knowledgeable fashion by human agents. But such knowledgeability is always "bounded" by unacknowledged conditions of action on the one side, and unintended consequences of action on the other By the duality of structure I mean that the structured properties of social systems are simultaneously the medium and the outcome of social acts.

See Anthony Giddens, A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 19.

of insights and methods derived from the interpretive sciences.¹⁰⁶

Kratochwil and Ruggie go on to observe that experimentation to "open[] up the positivist epistemology to more interpretive strains, more closely attuned to the reality of regimes" has already begun. They note the efforts by Ernst Haas, Robert Cox, Hayward Alker, and Richard Ashley.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, by the end of the decade, interpretive approaches were to be found in all localities within the discipline - at the centre as well as at the margins - and in virtually all fields of analysis - regimes studies and beyond. Indeed, the impact of interpretive approaches was so widespread that in

¹⁰⁶"International Organization," p. 771. Nor are they daunted by predictable attempts by at least some members of the international relations community to discredit interpretive approaches:

Interpretive epistemologies that stress the intimate relationship between validation and the uncovering of intersubjective meanings are simply too well developed today to be easily dismissed by charges of subjectivism - or, more likely in the arena of international relations theory, of idealism. (p. 765)

¹⁰⁷"International Organization," p. 766.

It should be noted that Kratochwil and Ruggie have themselves tried to expand upon the modalities of an interpretive approach to the study of international relations. See Friedrich Kratochwil, Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), as well as John Gerard Ruggie, "International Structure and International Transformation: Space, Time, and Method," in Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s, ed. Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James N. Rosenau (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1989).

his 1988 presidential address to the annual convention of the International Studies Association, Robert O. Keohane was moved to extend recognition to what he termed the "reflective" approach to international relations, who were challenging "the predominant rationalistic [i.e., positivistic] analysis of international politics".¹⁰⁸ The "reflective" (i.e., "interpretive") approach, he noted, is an approach "which stresses the impact of human subjectivity and the embeddedness of contemporary international institutions in pre-existing practices".¹⁰⁹ It is marked by an emphasis on the "importance of the intersubjective meanings of international institutional activity".¹¹⁰

In conclusion, despite the continued predominance of positivist approaches to the study of international relations, there is clear evidence that the alternative provided by interpretive social science is increasingly being given

¹⁰⁸Robert O. Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches," International Studies Quarterly, 32, No. 4 (1988), p. 381.

¹⁰⁹"International Institutions," p. 379.

¹¹⁰"International Institutions," p. 381. In addition to the interpretive efforts undertaken by Ruggie, Kratochwil, Alker, Ashley, Haas and Cox, one might also note those of Nicholas Onuf, Alexander Wendt, and Raymond Duvall. See Nicholas G. Onuf, World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); Alexander Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," International Organization, 41, No. 3 (1987); as well as Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall, "Institutions and International Order", in Rosenau and Czempel, Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges.

serious attention within the discipline of international relations. And despite the objections that have been raised - and continue to be raised¹¹ - there is good reason to believe that interpretive approaches will not be easily dislodged from contemporary international relations theory.

In concluding this section, let us summarize the implications of the rise of an interpretive approach for the study of international politics. First, it is important to be clear about what interpretive approach does not do. What it does not do is alter in any way the sense in which a "science" of international politics is "interpretive" in the way that all scientific activity is "interpretive" - i.e., all

¹¹For example, Robert Keohane, operating from a Lakatosian positivist position, faults interpretive approaches for their failure to develop an adequate "research program that could be employed by students of world politics". "Waltzian neorealism", he notes,

has such a research program; so does neoliberal institutionalism, which has focused on the evolution and impact of international regimes. Until reflective [i.e., interpretive] scholars or others sympathetic to their arguments have delineated such a research program and shown in particular studies that it can illuminate important issues in world politics, they will remain on the margins of the field, largely invisible to the preponderance of empirical researchers, most of whom explicitly or implicitly accept one or another versions of rationalistic [i.e., positivistic] premises.

"International Institutions," p. 392.

For an "interpretivist" response to and criticism of Keohane's positivistically-informed discussion of interpretive approaches to international politics, see R. B. J. Walker, "History and Structure in the Theory of International Studies," Millennium, 18, No. 2 (1989).

scientific activity involves the "interpretation" of data in terms of paradigm-specific conventions about what constitutes "valid knowledge". In other words, the focus on the "intersubjective meanings" which constitute social practices which is characteristic of an interpretive approach is no escape from the "Cartesian anxiety" addressed in the previous chapter.¹¹² Indeed, following Giddens, the attention paid to "intersubjective meanings" does not render interpretive social science less interpretive than natural science, but rather makes it doubly so.

What an interpretive approach to the study of international politics does do is underscore the fact that the behaviour observed in the international realm is - like behaviour in the domestic realm - a form of social practice which is constituted by and simultaneously instantiates a "web of meaning". What an interpretive approach to the study of international politics does is enable us to recognize that the realm of international politics - like all political and social realms - is a realm which is not "given" but "made", and, therefore, capable of being "remade". What an interpretive approach to international politics does is allow

¹¹²For an argument which does advocate the incorporation of "intersubjective meanings" into international relations theory as a means of getting around the problems posed by the paradigm-determined nature of all knowledge, see Roger Tooze, "Economic Belief Systems and Understanding International Relations", in Little and Smith, Belief Systems and International Relations, pp. 132-133.

us to theorize change within "forms of life" - and most importantly, of "forms of life" - which have a bearing on the future of our global polis.

Conclusion:

This chapter began by exploring the issue of human consciousness in terms of social and political theory. It was argued that the predominance of the positivist approach to the study of human society in mainstream social science - in particular, the positivist tenet of the methodological unity of science - has impeded the recognition of the constitutive and potentially transformative role of human consciousness in social and political life. It was also argued however, that the rise of interpretive approaches to the study of society have challenged positivism's hegemony, and have created a space for the full recognition of the non-reductive power of human consciousness.

Then, in the second part of this chapter, the discipline of international relations was examined in the light of the developments in social and political theory. It was argued that once again, despite the predominance of positivist formulations of human consciousness in international relations theory, the rise of interpretive approaches in the discipline is undeniable.

As a consequence, it can be argued that the same space for the recognition of the constitutive and transformative

role of human consciousness that has been created in contemporary social science - a recognition which stands as one of the three defining characteristics of critical theory - is being created in the discipline of international relations. If true, this is further evidence for the "restructuring" of international relations theory in a more critical, emancipation-oriented direction.

There remains a third characteristic of critical theory, however, which has yet to be addressed in terms of contemporary theorizing about international relations. It is to that characteristic that we now turn.

Chapter Six:

International Relations Theory and Social Criticism

Hence, a theory of politics presents not only a guide to understanding, but also an ideal for action. It presents a map of the political scene not only in order to understand what that scene is like, but also in order to show the shortest and safest road to a given objective. The use of theory, then, is not limited to rational explanation and anticipation. A theory of politics also contains a normative element.

Hans J. Morgenthau¹

True, the rationality of pure science is value-free and does not stipulate any practical ends, it is "neutral" to any extraneous values that may be imposed upon it. But this neutrality is a positive character.

Herbert Marcuse²

Introduction:

In the preceding two chapters, it has been argued that international relations theory is undergoing a process of fundamental restructuring. As evidence of this restructuring, attention has been drawn to the growth of theoretical reflexivity in the discipline, as well as to the opening toward the recognition of the constitutive and potentially

¹"The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations," in Theoretical Aspects of International Relations, ed. William T. R. Fox (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), p. 18.

²One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 156, emphasis in the original.

transformative role of human consciousness that has accompanied the rise of interpretive approaches to the study of international politics. These two developments are significant, for, as was discussed in chapter two, theoretical reflexivity and attention to the constitutive and transformative role of human consciousness are both characteristics of the emancipation-oriented tradition of critical theory. It is on the basis of the emergence of these elements in the discipline of international relations that it can be argued that international relations theory is undergoing a "restructuring" process which is taking it in a critical, emancipatory direction.

There remains, however, one defining characteristic of critical theory that has not yet been discussed in relation to contemporary theorizing about international relations. This is critical theory's engagement in social criticism in support of practical political activity for societal transformation. More specifically, it is the effort, born of the desire to contribute to human emancipation, to promote a process of education and "conscientization" among those poorly served by present social and political arrangements, through which the disadvantaged can empower themselves to effect radical social change. In short, emancipation-oriented critical theory is

characterized by the desire to serve as "the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age".³

It is the task of the present chapter to address this issue. To that end, the chapter will proceed in the same manner as the two before it. In the first part, the insights of social and political theory will once again be applied both to show how the predominance of positivism in social science has inhibited the development of theorizing which is self-consciously engaged in social criticism directed to promoting emancipatory change, and to show why positivism's influence can and must be challenged. Then, in the second part of this chapter, we will turn to contemporary theorizing about international politics to determine whether the insights of social and political theory on the question of an explicit theoretical commitment to social criticism are being brought to bear within the discipline of international relations. It will be argued that, in fact, there are international relations theorists who are applying the insights of social and political theory in this regard, and that, as a consequence, a space for theorizing which embraces emancipation-oriented social criticism is being created within the discipline.

³Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 41; quoted in Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" in Feminism as Critique, ed. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 31.

Part I: Positivism and the Activity of Social Criticism

The first task before us is to show in terms of mainstream social science the link between the predominance of positivism, on the one hand, and the virtual absence of theory which is engaged in social criticism in support of social change, on the other. This link will be made by directing attention to the third positivist tenet identified in chapter three: that of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge.

From our discussion in chapter three it will be remembered that the assumption of the separation of fact and value underlies the positivist tenet of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge. That is, positivism assumes that the factual and the normative can be separated into distinct realms, with science concerning itself with the former while judiciously avoiding pronouncing upon or being influenced by the latter.

Of course, positivists are more than willing to recognize that the activity of scientific research takes place in an environment in which values are ubiquitous. They are even willing to concede, for example, that individual researchers who are committed to a positivist approach to the study of society may be influenced by their personal values in the pre-scientific choice of topic or research area. They are also willing to admit that the findings of scientific research may

be applied in the post-scientific context in value-laden ways. Indeed, it is because of their recognition of the ubiquitousness of values and norms that positivists lay such stress on a research methodology designed to prevent the incursion of extraneous values into the scientific research process itself. It is only by keeping values and facts separate, and by confining scientific research to the study of the latter, argue positivist theorists, that we can be sure that the knowledge which is generated in the research process is, in and of itself, "value-neutral", whatever the motivations of the specific researchers, and despite the value-informed ways such knowledge might be applied.

As a result, the predominance of positivism in social science has inhibited the development of theory engaged in social criticism. For the self-conscious engagement in social criticism which characterizes emancipatory critical theory obviously cannot limit itself to a study of the "factual". The engagement in social criticism is an expression of critical theory's commitment to the "Aristotelian project". As a consequence, critical theory manifests the "Aristotelian project's" long-standing concern with the theoretical specification of the kind of moral-political order which renders human beings capable of leading a "good and just life", as well as the practical task of the cultivation of

"virtuous character" integral to such an order and life.⁴ Critical theory responds to those long-standing concerns at a theoretical level by attempting to shed light on the nature of relations of subordination and domination, and by working to "demystify as ideological rival approaches that obfuscate[] or rationalize[] those relations".⁵ It responds at a practical level by framing

its research programme and its conceptual framework with an eye to the aims and activities of those oppositional social movements with which it has a partisan though not uncritical identification. The questions it asks and the models it designs are informed by that identification and that interest.⁶

It is clear, then, why positivism's predominance in social science would inhibit the development of theory self-consciously engaged in social criticism. The need to theorize issues such as subordination, domination, injustice/ justice, equality, freedom, democracy which accompanies such an engagement comes into direct conflict with positivism's tenet of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge. From positivism's perspective, the problem with such an orientation lies not in the fact that critical theorists hold emancipation-oriented values, or that the findings of research will be applied with a normatively-inspired intent to promote

⁴See Thomas McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), p. 2.

⁵Fraser, p. 31.

⁶Fraser, p. 31.

emancipation, but that the theoretical and practical agenda of human emancipation is being brought into the scientific research process itself. In short, as Richard Bernstein has noted, "... the very idea of the theorist as a critic of society and politics is avoided or ruled out by 'methodological prohibitions'".⁷

As a consequence, if a space for theory engaged in social criticism is to be created, the positivist tenet of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge must be challenged. The mounting of such a challenge will proceed by way of a critical examination of the underlying assumption of the possibility of separating fact from value. In fact, it will be argued that the claim of the possibility of separating fact and value can no longer be sustained. In order to substantiate this conclusion, we will focus on the most rigorous effort within social science to ensure the separation of fact and value: that of the positivist approach itself.

Positivism and the Separation of Fact and Value:

As was noted in chapter three, the assumption of the possibility of separating fact from value is at the core of the positivist enterprise. It is this assumption which lies

⁷The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 54.

at the heart of the logical positivist endeavour to separate meaningful statements (relating to the factual) which fall within the purview of science, from "meaningless" statements pertaining to normative issues. It is also at the heart of the considerable efforts made by positivists of all stripes to devise methodological techniques and research designs which can effectively "filter out" the value-bias of the individual researcher.

In the following pages, three distinct sets of arguments will be advanced to show how the case of positivism itself proves that the assumption of the separation of fact and value cannot be sustained. It cannot be sustained because, despite the vigorous efforts of positivists to isolate the realm of fact from that of values, the scientific research process which has resulted from those efforts remains inherently value-laden. In spite of the rigorous application of positivist methodologies designed to guard against the incursion of the normative domain into scientific research - and indeed, at least in part because of that rigorous application - the positivist model of science is informed by norms and values with serious implications for both the "moral-political order" in which people live and the kind of "character" that is cultivated within such an order.

We shall proceed by focussing on three dimensions of positivism's understanding of scientific knowledge: i) that of which such knowledge does not consist; ii) that of which

such knowledge does consist; and iii) the relation between such knowledge and action. In each case, the normative content of positivism's separation of fact and value - in Marcuse's terms, the "positive character" of positivism's "neutrality"⁸ - will be drawn out. We will proceed with the three elements in turn.

The Normative Content of the Positivist Quest for "Value-Free" Knowledge

i) That of Which Positivist Knowledge Does Not Consist

Positivist scholars are very clear in their view that the scientific research process does not engage in an attempt to resolve questions in the realm of values. Questions concerning the nature of "goodness", "beauty", "peace" or "justice" belong to the normative realm, and are thus inappropriate objects of scientific analysis.⁹ These kind of questions, affirm positivist theorists, are best left to those

⁸See the quote at the beginning of this chapter. It is no surprise that the critique of positivism is central to Marcuse's work. As Habermas has noted, Marcuse was the "first to make the 'political content of technical reason' [i.e., positivism] the analytical point of departure for a theory of advanced capitalist society". Moreover, he developed this viewpoint, not only philosophically but also sociologically and politically. See Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'", in Toward a Rational Society, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 85.

⁹Except, of course, to the degree that one endeavours to study what people think about such issues - i.e., as "social facts".

individuals (e.g., philosophers, theologians) whose concern is not with "science", but rather with "normative theory".

This position raises the question of the status of theorizing about normative issues. In the positivist era, it has become the practice of many positivist-inspired researchers to affirm that theorizing about normative issues is no less valuable than scientific research, that it is just "different". Indeed, at the limit, positivists may even present their approach as one which stands in a subordinate one to normative theory: i.e., "the positivist approach can only tell us what means can be used to achieve what ends, while normative theory will decide what ends are to be pursued". So long as the two activities do not intrude upon one another's domain, reassure positivist theorists, they may exist in a relationship of relative harmony.

In fact, the generosity of spirit evidenced by individual positivists is belied by the internal logic of their approach. For it has been a principle of positivist theorizing virtually from its inception that the only kind of "reliable knowledge" - the only "true" knowledge - is knowledge which corresponds to empirical reality. In short, the only knowledge which can be validated rationally is the knowledge produced by positivism itself. As a consequence, in terms of the internal logic of the positivist tradition, questions in the domain of "normative theory" fall outside of the purview of reason. In short, statements concerning value questions are not so much

"wrong", as - to use the explicit terminology of logical positivism - "meaningless".

If reason cannot be employed to assess value questions, if statements about normative issues cannot be other than "meaningless" in character, then it follows that choice in the area of values and norms must be a-rational - if not, anti-rational - in nature. Within scientific rationality, one lives in a world of facts which are held to be objective. And as Marcuse has noted, "Outside this [scientific] rationality, one lives in a world of values, and values separated out from the objective reality become subjective".¹⁰

In short, the internal logic of positivism leads to the endpoint of "decisionism" - that is, the understanding that values and norms have no basis in objective reality, but are inherently "subjective" in nature. Deciding between competing values is a function of "personal preference" in the private realm which requires - and indeed, is in a position to offer - no rational defence or justification. In short, one value is as valid as another.

It should be noted that in a context in which scientific rationality is accorded unconditional validity, the relegation of discourse about normative issues to a non/anti-rational domain of subjective preferences and opinions cannot but deprive that discourse of validity. In short, the

¹⁰One-Dimensional Man, p. 147.

impoverishment of discourse about normative issues is a direct consequence of positivism's quest for "value-free" knowledge.¹¹

Decisionism leads to a number of theoretical problems, not the least for positivism itself. For if all values are equally subjective, if one value is as (a)-rational as another, then the values integral to the positivist enterprise itself - i.e., the commitment to accuracy implied by the tenet of "truth as correspondence"; the value of logical consistency basic to the notion of scientific theory as axiomatic in structure - cannot be defended against alternatives. In other words, positivism's assertion of the non-rational nature of

¹¹In reaction, those who oppose this denigration of values often respond by trying to "rescue some abstract and harmless validity for them" by means of "a metaphysical sanction (divine and natural law)". However, in a context in which positivist science's definition of rationality and truth are hegemonic, metaphysical sanction is not a viable solution. The problem with such sanctions, notes Marcuse, is that they

... are not verifiable and thus not really objective. Values may have a higher dignity (morally and spiritually), but they are not real and thus count less in the real business of life - the less so the higher they are elevated above reality.

decisions about values undermines its own claims as the superior manifestation of reason.¹²

Decisionism poses problems for more than just positivist science, however. Even more importantly in terms of this discussion, the decisionism which results from the positivist quest for "value-free" scientific knowledge has serious political implications. As Marcuse has noted, political values are not exempt from the "subjectivization" process implicit in positivism's internal logic:

If the Good and the Beautiful, Peace and Justice cannot be derived either from ontological or scientific-rational conditions, they cannot logically claim universal validity and realization. In terms of scientific reason, they remain matters of preference ...¹³

In short, positivism's "neutrality" with regard to value questions - its "tolerance" of disparate values and normative orientations - has very non-neutral consequences in terms of questions concerning the merits of rival social and political orders. In its most unvarnished form, positivism's "tolerance" of disparate values means that it must accord the same legitimacy to a social and political order fashioned in

¹²One can also argue that there is a contradiction between positivism's self-identification with the "Enlightenment project" of stripping away illusions and replacing them with reliable, objective knowledge, on the one hand, and the denigration of values such as the value of truth over against that of illusion implicit in that self-identification. See Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory, p. 53.

¹³One-Dimensional Man, p. 148.

accordance with, say, fascist principles as it would to one reflecting the principles of democracy. In short, the choice between totalitarianism and democratic rule is the same as the choice between chocolate and strawberry ice cream - simply matters of "personal choice" in the "private realm" bearing no requirement - and indeed, allowing of no possibility - of rational justification. In the words of Horkheimer,

Justice, equality, happiness, tolerance, all the concepts that ... were in preceding centuries supposed to be inherent in or sanctioned by reason, have lost their intellectual roots. They are still aims and ends, but there is no rational agency authorized to appraise and link them to an objective reality. Endorsed by venerable historical documents, they may still enjoy a certain prestige, and some are contained in the supreme law of the greatest countries. Nevertheless, they lack any confirmation by reason in its modern sense. Who can say that any one of these ideas is more closely related to truth than its opposite? According to the philosophy of the average modern intellectual, there is only one authority, namely, science, conceived as the classification of facts and the calculation of probabilities. The statement that justice and freedom are better in themselves than injustice and oppression is scientifically unverifiable and useless. It has come to sound as meaningless in itself as would the statement that red is more beautiful than blue, or that an egg is better than milk.¹⁴

The result is clear. Such a stance, notes Marcuse, leads inexorably to a "rejection or devaluation of those elements of thought and speech which transcend the accepted system of validation".¹⁵ Ideas such as justice and freedom cannot be

¹⁴Eclipse of Reason (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 23-24.

¹⁵One-Dimensional Man, p. 184.

counterposed to those of oppression and domination except as a-rational, subjective "preferences". This seriously undermines the status of potential challenges to the status quo. In Marcuse's words:

The unscientific character of these ideas fatally weakens the opposition to the established reality; the ideas become mere ideals, and their concrete, critical content evaporates into the ethical or metaphysical atmosphere.¹⁶

In short, the decisionist stance implied in positivism's separation of fact (the domain of reason) and value (the domain of unreason) which asserts that "anything goes" in the latter is hardly neutral in political and social terms. In fact, in that it makes it difficult to justify rationally any challenge to the established social and political order, it

¹⁶One-Dimensional Man, p. 148.

It should be noted that positivist science's "hostility" to concepts such as justice and emancipation is no less real for the fact that individual positivists seem willing to accord them some validity in their own sphere. Indeed, Marcuse argues that positivism's hostility to progressive values

is most sweeping when it takes the form of toleration - that is, where a certain truth value is granted to the transcendent concepts in a separate dimension of meaning and significance (poetic truth, metaphysical truth). For precisely the setting aside of a special reservation in which thought and language are permitted to be legitimately inexact, vague, and even contradictory is the most effective way of protecting the normal universe of discourse from being seriously disturbed by unfitting ideas.

One-Dimensional Man, p. 184.

can be argued that positivism is inherently biased in favour of the status quo.¹⁷

In sum, in its contribution to the impoverishment of discourse about normative issues, and in its undermining of normatively-grounded critiques of existing moral-political orders, it can be argued that positivism's quest for value

¹⁷As John Krige has put it, "anything goes ... means that in practice, everything stays". Science, Revolution and Discontinuity (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester, 1980), p. 142, emphasis in the original.

Although we have focused on the critique of the "positive character" of positivism's "neutrality" as regards norms and values from the perspective of critical theory, it should be noted that a critique of the implicit political content of positivism can be made from traditions of theorizing other than that of critical theory. Leo Strauss, perhaps the leading proponent and representative of what Warren has termed the "traditional" concept of political theory, has argued that the decisionist stance implicit in positivism gives significant support to the "liberal" definition of society. Notes Strauss,

Since this understanding implies that before the tribunal of reason all values are equal, the rational society will be egalitarian or democratic and permissive or liberal: the rational doctrine regarding the difference between facts and values rationally justifies the preference for liberal democracy - contrary to what is intended by the distinction itself.

In short, argues Strauss, in its explicit support for the separation of fact and value, positivism lends implicit support to the ideology of liberalism. And in this sense, and despite the intentions of positivists, positivist science cannot be seen to be "value-free". See Leo Strauss, "An Epilogue," in Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics, ed. Herbert Storing (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 324. For a discussion of Strauss in terms of the revival of the "traditional" concept of political theory - including his critique of positivism - see Scott Warren, The Emergence of Dialectical Theory (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), chapter one.

free scientific knowledge is anything but value-free in its consequences. However, this is not the only sense in which the positivist quest for "value-free" knowledge conceals a normative content. It is to the normative content of a second dimension of positivist science - that of which scientific knowledge does consist - that we now turn.

ii) That of Which Positivist Knowledge Does Consist

If the first set of arguments about positivism's normative content relates to positivism's conception of what scientific knowledge "is not" - i.e., norms and values - the second set relates to positivism's conception of what scientific knowledge "is". What scientific knowledge is, argue positivists, is knowledge about objective reality. Specifically, it is knowledge of the empirical regularities which exist independently of time and place. As a consequence, positivist social scientists have directed their energies to identifying empirical regularities in social and political behaviour, which can then be subsumed under general covering laws.

The extension of the naturalist assumption to the realm of human behaviour has significant normative content. For, it can be argued that by portraying regularities in human behaviour as ontologically permanent and universal in character, positivist social science lends extensive support to existing political and social orders. It does so to the

extent that it teaches people to mis-recognize human behaviour as substantially unalterable, and to the extent that it encourages people to see contingent social practices as part of the "natural order". In short, positivism "reifies" social relations: it portrays them, not as human self-creations, but as "things" existing independently of human reflection or volition. And to the extent that people see the social practices which comprise existing "forms of life" as beyond their control or influence, to the degree that people perceive an existing "form of life" as the very expression of "Reason" itself, they become more willing to accept those practices, more prepared to resign themselves to those "forms of life".¹⁸ In Marcuse's words, the "instrumental reason" which characterizes positivism

... has become the great vehicle of reification - reification in its most mature and effective form. The social position of the individual and his relations to others appear not only to be determined by objective qualities and laws, but these qualities and laws seem to lose their mysterious and uncontrollable character; they appear as calculable manifestations of (scientific) rationality. The world tends to become the stuff of total administration, which absorbs even the administrators. The web of domination has become

¹⁸Indeed, it was Comte's explicit hope that once people had come to know the true nature of the social world - by means, of course, of the positivist approach to the study of that world - they would stop demanding ends which cannot be met because of the nature of things. Comte termed the attitude which came with knowing the true nature of society as one of "wise resignation". See Brian Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), p. 24.

the web of Reason itself, and this society is fatally entangled in it.¹⁹

A second consequence of positivism's naturalist conceptualization of human interaction relates to the stance positivist social science adopts in relation to established "forms of life". For as will be remembered from our discussion in the last chapter, positivism can theorize change - and be employed to effect change - only within the limits set by the fixed behavioural regularities which make up a given "form of life". Positivist social science can conceptualize and participate in change in "forms of life" - for example, to improve the functioning of a given "form of life" - but never of "forms of life", never the radical transformation of a "form of life" into another. The consequence of such a stance in terms of given "forms of life" is clear:

With respect to the institutionalized forms of life, science (pure as well as applied) would thus have a stabilizing, static, conservative function. Even its most revolutionary achievements would only

¹⁹One-Dimensional Man, pp. 168-169.

Marcuse's notion of "reification" is borrowed from Lukács, who developed the concept of "reification" out of the synthesis of Marx's concept of the "fetishism" of commodities in capitalism and Weber's notion of "rationalization" - i.e., the extension of the formalistic, quantifying, "technical" reason to the phenomena of social life. For a discussion of Lukács' critique of positivist reification - as well as criticisms by Gramsci that fall into the same general category - see Warren, chapter three.

be construction and destruction in line with a specific experience and organization of reality.²⁰

In short, positivism is, in Horkheimer's terms, a form of "traditional theory" - that is, a form of theorizing which is unable to criticize the "given" social reality, which accepts "the prevailing ideas, actions, and social conditions unthinkingly ...", and which, as a consequence, contains a built-in bias in support of established "forms of life".²¹

In sum, positivist science has definite normative content, not only in that it impoverishes discourse about normative issues and forecloses the possibility of a rational justification of changing a given social and political order in accordance with a normative vision, but also in that it reifies social practices, thereby portraying the dominant "forms of life" as part of the natural order, in addition to

²⁰Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, pp. 165-166.
Marcuse continues:

The continuous self-correction of science - the revolution of its hypotheses which is built into its method - itself propels and extends the same historical universe, the same basic experience ... the instrumentalist horizon of thought was indeed a new horizon. It created a new world of theoretical and practical Reason, but it has remained committed to a specific historical world which has its evident limits - in theory as well as in practice, in its pure as well as applied methods.

²¹Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in M. Horkheimer, Critical Theory: Selected Essays, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Toronto: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 270. For a useful introduction to Horkheimer's distinction between "traditional" and "critical" theory, see Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory, pp. 179-185.

playing a conservative and stabilizing role in terms of established "forms of life". There is yet another sense, however, in which positivist social science can be seen to harbour a hidden normative content. It is to a discussion of this third normative dimension of positivist science - the relationship between knowledge and action - that we now turn.

iii) The Relation of Positivist Knowledge to Action

The third and final sense in which positivism can be seen to have normative content relates to its conception of the relationship between theory and practice. It will be remembered from our overview of the positivist tradition in chapter three that the structure of explanation is one in which there exists a symmetry between explanation of the occurrence of a phenomenon in the past and the prediction of the re-occurrence of that phenomenon in the future. That is, it is integral to positivism's structure of explanation that the subsumption of an occurrence under a general covering law - coupled with the assumption that such occurrences are manifestations of regularities independent of time and place - will allow for an exact determination of the conditions under which that phenomenon will re-occur.

Now it is this symmetry of explanation and prediction within the positivist tradition which provides the basis for the manipulative control of the natural world. It is this symmetry of explanation and prediction which has led to the

near-miraculous successes of natural science in areas as varied as the exploration of space to the splitting of the atom.

However, the significance of positivism's theory of explanation goes further. For as Fay has argued, this theory of explanation is rooted in and expressive of "a whole series of metaphysical assumptions as to the nature of truth and reality..."²² That is, for the positivist-inspired researcher,

... reality is comprised of observable objects and events which are related nomologically, i.e., they are related according to a series of general laws of the type, if X then Y under situation C, and that therefore, in line with this scientific assumption about reality, only statements which reveal the concrete forms under which those general relationships take can be true statements. Science must view the world this way in order for it to provide the kind of explanations it prizes, which is to say, in order for it to provide the control over phenomena which is a sign of it having understood a phenomenon. Because science marks out the "world" as a world of observable phenomena subject to general laws it thereby is constituting this "world" for the viewpoint of how one can gain control over it.²³

Concludes Fay:

It is for this reason that possible technical control provides the framework within which the definition of reality and truth in [positivist] science occurs The possibility of controlling variables is a factor in terms of which one distinguishes a cognitive enterprise as scientific,

²²Brian Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice, p. 40.

²³Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice, p. 40, emphasis in the original.

and thus technical control is a defining element in the scientific enterprise itself.²⁴

In short, the positivist conception of the relationship between theory and practice is one of knowledge of regularities for the purpose of exercising instrumental control.

It is important to note that the built-in interest in technical control which Fay identifies in the positivist theory of explanation is not limited to applications of the positivist approach to the natural world. In that the structure of explanation remains unchanged, it can be asserted that positivism's interest in control is equally present in its application in the study of the social world. Indeed, it is noteworthy that from the beginning, positivist theorists have been quite cognizant of and explicit about this interest. "From Science comes Prevision", noted Comte, and "from Prevision comes Control".²⁵

The conduct of scientific inquiry conceived as an interest in control in the social world has definite normative content. For the objects of technical control in the case of a "science of society" are neither atoms nor molecules - they are human beings. As a consequence, the application of a positivist approach to the study of science cannot be

²⁴Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice, p. 41.

²⁵As quoted in Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice, p. 37.

separated from the form of politics implicit in the interest in the technical control of human beings integral to positivism's theory of explanation. Notes Marcuse:

The science of nature develops under the technological a priori which projects nature as potential instrumentality, stuff of control and organization. And the apprehension of nature as (hypothetical) instrumentality precedes the development of all particular technical organization ...

The technological a priori is a political a priori inasmuch as the transformation of nature involves that of man, and inasmuch as the "man-made creations: issue from and re-enter a societal ensemble. One may still insist that the machinery of the technological universe is "as such" indifferent towards political ends ... However, when technics becomes the universal form of material production, it circumscribes an entire culture; it projects a historical totality - a "world".²⁶

In short, the form of politics which corresponds to positivist social science's interest in technical control is quite simply a politics of "domination", in which "Scientific-technical rationality and manipulation are welded together into new forms of social control".²⁷ Within this form of politics, the manipulation of human behaviour and even human thought is key. Moreover, it is a defining characteristic of this form of politics that control is exercised over the majority by a small minority of "technical experts", whose knowledge of the regularities manifest in the social world allow for the effective control of that world.

²⁶One-Dimensional Man, p. 154.

²⁷One-Dimensional Man, p. 146.

Of course, in liberal democratic societies, technical experts are nominally under the control of the elected representatives of the people at large. Yet as Habermas has noted, the politics of "domination" - in his terms, the politics of "technocratic consciousness" - are increasingly marked by a situation in which "the objective necessity disclosed by experts seems to predominate over the decisions of [elected] leaders":

The dependence of the professional [technical expert] on the politician appears to have reversed itself. The latter becomes a mere agent of a scientific intelligentsia which, in concrete circumstances, elaborates the objective implications and requirements of available techniques and resources as well as of optimal strategies and rules of control The political would then be at best something of a stopgap in a still imperfect rationalization of power, in which the initiative in any case passed to scientific analysis and technical planning.²⁸

As a consequence, concludes Marcuse, positivism's "Technological rationality ... protects rather than cancels the legitimacy of domination, and the instrumentalist horizon of reason opens on a rationally totalitarian society ..."²⁹

In conclusion, the nature of positivism's hidden normative content is now manifest. In its impoverishment of discourse about normative issues, and its denial of legitimacy to normatively-based challenges to the established order; in

²⁸Jürgen Habermas, "The Scientization of Politics and Public Opinion," in Habermas, Toward a Rational Society, pp. 63-64.

²⁹One-Dimensional Man, pp. 158-159.

its reification of social practices and its contribution to the maintenance of existing "forms of life"; and finally, in its very promotion of a politics of domination, the positivist approach to the study of the social world cannot be seen as "value-free".

What conclusions may be drawn from this discussion? In fact, the implications are much further reaching than simply concluding that positivist knowledge has undeniable normative content. We began our discussion with the recognition that positivism has made a concerted and on-going effort to separate fact from value in the production of "value-free" scientific knowledge. If positivism has failed in that effort, then it is reasonable to conclude that the very assumption of the possibility of separating fact and value must itself be reconsidered; the very tenet of "value-freedom" in scientific knowledge re-assessed.

In short, what positivism's failure to separate fact from value shows is that the goal of "value-freedom" in scientific knowledge is a chimera. What it shows is that the proper question is not "How can normative concerns be accommodated within the value-free scientific enterprise?", but rather, "What norms and values inform what kinds of theorizing?" What it shows is that the very term "normative theory" is

redundant, even as that of "scientific theory" as something distinct from the normative realm is misleading.³⁰

It is as out of this recognition and in response to the specific criticisms made of positivist forms of theorizing that critical theorists have fashioned their own theoretical enterprise. Specifically, critical theorists have responded to the problem of decisionism by attempting to formulate a conception of reason which is broader than the instrumentalist form of reason of positivism. Alternatively described in terms of a recovery of "Vernunft" or of "phronesis", the conception of reason elucidated by critical theorists is one which is designed to allow for reflective deliberation and discussion of normative questions as well as empirical ones.³¹

³⁰And, as was noted in chapter three, it is in this regard that it becomes clear that the very idea of "normative theory" as an enterprise separate and distinct from "scientific theory" is a product of the positivist era.

³¹Without question, one of the central figures in the development of this broader notion of critical reason is Jürgen Habermas, who has attempted to ground critical reason in the very structure of speech ("universal pragmatics"). In particular, it is Habermas's notions of "discourse" - a mode of communication involving a suspension of normal constraints of action - which bears noting. For Habermas it is in the context of "discourse", in which actors orient their communication to the sole purpose of arriving at a "rational consensus", in which both truth claims concerning matters of fact ("theoretical discourse") and legitimacy claims concerning matters of normative correctness ("practical discourse") are tested by means of reason. For a good introduction to Habermas's notion of discourse, see Stephen K. White, The Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas: Reason, Justice and Modernity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chapter two.

At the same time, it must also be recognized that Habermas's efforts have been subjected to serious criticism (continued...)

Furthermore, critical theorists have responded to the reifying effects of positivist social science, and its acquiescence in the face of established "forms of life", by engaging in a critique of reification and by promoting the idea of radical social and political transformation. That is, critical theorists have worked to expose the behavioural regularities which comprise given social and political systems as "social practices" inseparable from "webs of meaning", and therefore capable of being changed through a process involving critical reflection. The point is not to deny existence of the behavioural regularities that positivism has identified in the social world, but rather

³¹(...continued)

from within the tradition of critical theorizing. In particular, the foundationalist, "transcendental" dimension of his work has come in for strong questioning. For an interesting attempt to develop a "pragmatic" reading of Habermas which avoids this problem, see Richard J. Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), pp. 182-197.

Of course, Habermas is not the only critically-oriented theorist attempting to elucidate a broader conception of reason capable of dealing with both the "fact" and "value" dimensions of human existence. See, for example, the discussion of Taylor's notion of "strong reflection", understood as going beyond evaluation in terms of mere preferences, to deploy

a language of qualitative worth (for example, of justice or injustice, courage or cowardice, nobility or ignobility) of the desires entertained or alternatives under consideration

in Michael T. Gibbons, "Interpretation, Genealogy and Human Agency," in Idioms of Inquiry: Critique and Renewal in Political Science, ed. Terence Ball (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 142-146.

to determine when theoretical statements grasp invariant regularities of social action as such and when they express ideologically frozen relations of dependence that can in principle be transformed.³²

Furthermore, critical theorists have undertaken not to accept existing social and political arrangements (à la "traditional theory"), and to work for piecemeal reform of those arrangements, but to encourage the radical transformation of existing "forms of life" in accordance with the principles of freedom and justice.³³

And finally, critical theorists have responded to the undemocratic politics of "domination" which follows from the instrumental link between theory and practice in positivist social science with an emphasis upon the necessity of an "educative" conception of theory and practice. What is distinctive about this conception is that it

does not see social theory as useful because it allows people to manipulate causal variables so that they can get what they want in an efficient manner. Instead, social theory is seen as a means by which people can achieve a much clearer picture of who they are, and of what the real meaning of their social practices is, as a first step in becoming different sorts of people with different sorts of social arrangements The purpose of ...theory is to engender self-knowledge and so to liberate

³²Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 310.

³³Again, the work of Jürgen Habermas is paradigmatic. For a good selection of his writings in this regard, see Steven Seidman, ed., Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

people from the oppressiveness of their social arrangements.³⁴

In short, the purpose of critical theory is not to manipulate people, but to "enlighten" them. It is not a politics of "domination", because in the case of critical theory, unlike that of positivist theory, the objects of analysis - human beings suffering oppression - are free to refuse the knowledge that is being offered should they, upon reflection, find it unhelpful.³⁵ In short, critical theory's conception of the relationship between theory and practice corresponds not to the positivist goal of the replacement of politics by the "administration of things", but to the democratic ideal of human beings consciously acting together to define and organize the community in which they live; not to the positivist telos of "social engineering", but to the Aristotelian telos of the "leading of a good and just life in the polis".

³⁴Brian Fay, Critical Social Science (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p. 89.

³⁵Indeed, it is one of the crucial tests of critical theory that its offerings be taken up freely by those to whom it is directed. In the words of Horkheimer,

The value of a [critical] theory is not decided alone by the formal criteria of truth ... the value of a theory is decided by its connection with the tasks, which in the particular historical moment are taken up by progressive social forces.

As quoted in David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 192.

At this point an objection may be raised. That is, it might be argued that the critique of positivism - and the response to it - being privileged in this chapter have been made by (formerly) positivist social scientists themselves. If true, this has two serious implications. First, it would mean that the kinds of criticisms of positivism found in critical theory are by no means unique. Secondly, and even more seriously, it would mean that the target of criticism in this chapter has not really been mainstream positivist-inspired social science, but rather a caricature thereof. In short, it could be argued that the kinds of criticism that have been advanced here might apply to social science in its early infatuation with positivism - the period of the 1950s known as "behaviouralism" - but that they do not apply to the social science practised after the "post-behavioural revolution" of the 1960s.

Therefore, to conclude this section on positivism and social criticism, I will examine one of the most well-known expositions of the post-behavioural challenge to behaviouralism: David Easton's 1969 Presidential Address to the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, published as "The New Revolution in Political

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Science".³⁶ By means of this examination, it will hopefully become clear that the post-behavioural critique is qualitatively different from that of critical theory, that its modification of behaviouralism in no way alters the positivist core of that approach, and that as a consequence, the critique mounted by critical theorists is neither unfair nor outdated.

We may begin by noting what at first glance appear to be striking similarities between the two critiques. Like critical theorists, post-behavioural critics experience

a deep dissatisfaction with political research and teaching, especially of the kind that is striving to convert the study of politics into a more rigourously scientific discipline modelled on the methodology of the natural sciences.³⁷

Like critical theorists, post-behavioural critics argue that behavioural science "conceals an ideology of empirical conservatism," and lends "its support to the maintenance of

³⁶In Easton, The Political System: An Inquiry Into the State of Political Science, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), pp. 323-348.

Easton is particularly appropriate in this regard, as his earlier writings served the basis in chapter three of this study for determining the internal logic of positivist social science. If that logic has been abandoned - or even just altered in a fundamental fashion - in Easton's post-behavioural transformation, this would lend support to the argument that the positivist social science of the 1950s and 60s is not that of the 1970s and 80s. If, however, it can be shown that the Easton of 1969 is not fundamentally different from the Easton of 1953, this would reinforce the conclusion of this study - namely, that the critique of mainstream social science mounted by critical theory remains as appropriate and actual today as when it was first advanced.

³⁷Easton, "The New Revolution," p. 324.

the very factual conditions it explores. It unwittingly purveys an ideology of social conservatism tempered by modest incremental change."³⁸ Moreover, behavioural research "must lose touch with reality" and "serves to conceal the brute realities of politics". As a consequence, the

task of post-behaviouralism is to break the barriers of silence that behavioural language necessarily has created and to help political science reach out to the real needs of mankind in a time of crisis.³⁹

Moreover, like critical theorists, post-behaviouralists recognize that "Science cannot be and never has been evaluatively neutral despite protestations to the contrary". Therefore, "[r]esearch about and constructive development of values are inextinguishable parts of the study of politics".⁴⁰

Finally, post-behaviouralists, like critical theorists, lay great stress on the notion of intellectual as engaged "social critic" who strives for "relevance" in terms of society's problems:

Members of a learned discipline bear the responsibilities of all intellectuals. The intellectuals' historical role has been and must be to protect the humane values of civilization. This is their unique task and obligation. Without this they become mere technicians, mechanics for tinkering with society.... To know is to bear the responsibility for acting and to act is to engage in reshaping society.⁴¹

³⁸"The New Revolution," p. 326.

³⁹"The New Revolution," p. 326.

⁴⁰"The New Revolution," p. 326.

⁴¹"The New Revolution," p. 326.

Finally, like critical theory, the impetus for post-behaviouralism comes from "[n]ew conditions of the modern world ... [which] force us to reconsider our image of what we want to be".⁴² Easton lists

[f]ear of the nuclear bomb, mounting internal cleavages in the United States in which civil war and authoritarian rule have become frightening possibilities, an undeclared war in Vietnam that violates the moral conscience of the world"

as some of the conditions which prompted a "search for an answer as to how we as political scientists have proved so disappointingly ineffectual in anticipating the world of the 1960s" - a search whose concrete expression is post-behaviouralism.⁴³

Despite these apparent similarities, however, the gulf between critical theory and post-behaviouralism is as wide as that separating critical theory from behaviouralism itself. First of all, it is crucial to realize that the entire post-behavioural critique retains as its foundation the central tenets of the positivistic logic of investigation. Easton is most explicit in his affirmation that one should not understand post-behaviouralism to be denying "the very possibility of a science of politics", or "the possibility of discovering testable generalizations about human behaviour".⁴⁴

⁴²"The New Revolution," p. 328.

⁴³"The New Revolution," p. 328.

⁴⁴"The New Revolution," p. 324.

Consequently, post-behaviouralism stands in relation to behaviouralism not as a "reaction", nor even really as a "revolution", but - in a telling designation which is also Easton's - a "reform".⁴⁵

Easton does recognize that "a set of social conditions which have no historical precedent" now raise doubts about scientific (i.e., positivist) ideals. Even so, it is particularly important to note that Easton reaffirms his acceptance of the positivist-inspired "Ideal Commitments of Political Science", including "technical proficiency in the search for reliable knowledge, the pursuit of basic understanding with its necessary divorce from practical concerns, and the exclusion of value specification as beyond the competence of science".⁴⁶ He does this by numbering himself among those "post-behaviouralists who continue to place their hopes in modern behavioural science". And it is on the basis of this hope that Easton proceeds to explore how positivist-inspired behavioural science might be refurbished - but not fundamentally altered - by the concerns of the post-behavioural movement.

In terms of the specific concerns of this chapter, it is important to note that Easton lists "the exclusion of value specification as beyond the competence of science" as one of

⁴⁵"The New Revolution," p. 324.

⁴⁶"The New Revolution," p. 332.

the three "ideal commitments" of political science. It is the "concern for generalized, verifiable understanding", argues Easton, which forces "social scientists to discriminate with extreme care about what we can and cannot do with our premises and tools":

We can describe, explain, and understand but we cannot prescribe ethical goals. The value question is thus set aside, not because we consider it inconsequential, but only because we see it as unresponsive to the tools useful in analyzing and explaining the empirical world.⁴⁷

In short, the positivist tenet of the value-free nature of scientific knowledge and the assumption of the separation of fact and value which underlies it remains intact. This being the case, it may be asked what difference there is between a behavioural and post-behavioural science in relation to normative questions and value issues?

One of the main differences is that whereas behavioural political science saw value-free scientific knowledge as an immanent possibility - if not an already existing reality - post-behaviouralists are much more willing to accept that such knowledge continues to elude our grasp. It does so because the hidden value commitments of the research community have proved much more tenacious and difficult to neutralize than at first anticipated. Moreover, it is these hidden and unexamined value commitments, argue post-behaviouralists, that have made of

⁴⁷"The New Revolution," p. 331.

political science - and by extension, all of social science - a conservative force in the behavioural era. Notes Easton,

We have continued to develop our discipline as though the subjects we select for research, the variables we choose to investigate, the data we collect, and the interpretation we generate, have all some extraordinary pristine purity, unsullied by the kinds of value premises to which we subscribe, consciously or otherwise. We do not consistently ask the question, central to the sociology of knowledge: To what extent are our errors, omissions and interpretations better explained by reference to our normative presuppositions than to ignorance, technical inadequacy, lack of insight, absence of appropriate data, and the like? Behaviouralists have indeed failed to insist, with the same fervour we have applied to our technological innovation, that our operating values be brought forward for self-conscious examination and that their impact on research be assessed.⁴⁸

Concludes Easton:

There is no single explanation for the narrow vision of our discipline. We can, however, at least go so far as to offer this hypothesis: Whatever the reasons, the failure to broaden the vision of our basic research may be due in good part to a continuing hesitation to question our normative premises and to examine the extent to which these

⁴⁸"The New Revolution," p. 338.

Easton goes on to note that:

Today the hazards of neglecting our normative presuppositions are all too apparent. There can be little doubt that political science as an enterprise has failed to anticipate the crises that are upon us. One index of this is perhaps that in the decade from 1958 to 1968, The American Political Science Review published only 3 articles on the urban crises; 4 on racial conflicts; 1 on poverty; 2 on civil disobedience; and 2 on violence in the United States. (p. 338)

premises determine the selection of problems and their ultimate interpretations.⁴⁹

Given this analysis of the problems associated with behavioural social science, the post-behavioural remedy is not hard to anticipate. As found in the post-behavioural credo, it is composed of two parts. First, research must be conducted into the influence of the value commitments of the members of the research community; what is required is a "new awakening into the part that our value commitments ... play in limiting the range of our basic research". However, notes Easton, "this moral self-scrutiny may not be enough. If we are to transcend our own cultural and methodological biases, such self-awareness can carry us only part of the way."⁵⁰

Therefore a second strategy is required. This second strategy is the construction of "value theory" to complement the construction of "empirical theory". Easton notes that though both "value" (i.e., normative) theory and "empirical" (i.e., scientific) theory were called for at the beginning of the behavioural period, the latter has unquestionably been privileged over the former. As a consequence, social scientists have been imprisoned within the "limitations of the ongoing value framework". It is therefore the task and contribution of post-behaviouralism to reaffirm the need for

boldly speculative theorizing that is prepared to build upon rather than to reject the findings of

⁴⁹"The New Revolution," p. 339.

⁵⁰"The New Revolution," p. 340.

contemporary behavioural science itself and that is prepared to contemplate the implications of these findings for political life, in the light of alternative, articulate value frameworks.⁵¹

It is this kind of theorizing, affirms Easton, which

can sensitize us to a whole range of new kinds of basic political problems worth investigating. It might also point up the significance of inquiry into these problems with new or radically modified types of relevant empirical theories. Thereby we could perhaps be freed from that occupational myopia brought about by excessive attention to the facts as they are. We could perhaps be less prone to stumble into the pitfall of "empirical conservatism," of commitment to system-maintenance perspectives, of which political science has with justice been accused by post behaviouralists and others.⁵²

On the basis of this review of the post-behavioural critique of behaviouralism, it is now possible to see how that critique not only differs from the more radical critique advanced by critical theorists, but actually remains within the logic of positivism. To begin, though the desire to combat "empirical conservatism" is a laudable one, the notion that the roots of that conservatism are to be found in the unexamined "normative premises" of individual social scientists researchers is in no sense a repudiation of the

⁵¹"The New Revolution," p. 340.

⁵²"The New Revolution," p. 341.

It is interesting to note that among the "post-behaviouralists and others", Easton references Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man. Unfortunately, he did not seem to have incorporated any of Marcuse's substantive arguments into his analysis of the source of social science's "empirical conservatism".

positivist conception of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge. Positivists may well concede, given the difficulty in identifying and neutralizing all of the normative premises individual researchers bring with them to their work, that in practical terms science never has been - and indeed, consequently may never be - "evaluatively neutral". Even so, that concession in no way impugns the notion of value-free scientific knowledge as a "regulative ideal". Indeed, the reinvigorated effort post-behaviouralists wish to commit to exploring the way unexamined "normative premises" distort scientific research is itself an expression of post-behaviouralism's continuing acceptance of the desirability - if not the absolute attainability - of value-free scientific knowledge. In short, the separation of fact and value remains both desirable and a regulative ideal in post-behavioural research. This is, quite clearly, qualitatively different from the critique mounted by critical theorists which locates important value implications not in the personal commitments of individual social scientists but in the internal logic of positivism itself - and, in particular, in the very effort to separate fact and value undertaken by positivist-inspired social science.

Secondly, post-behaviouralism's reaffirmation of the importance of the enterprise of normative theory - separate, distinct from, and moreover limited by the findings of empirical theory - is once again no repudiation of positivist

tenets or assumptions. Indeed, as was already pointed out in chapter three, the very category of normative theory is a product of the positivist era itself. Once again, this position is quite different from that of critical theorists, whose intent it is not to justify normative theorizing, but to question the very positivist-inspired distinction between normative theory on the one hand, and empirical-scientific theory on the other.

Finally, it should be noted that because post-behaviouralism is not a fundamental break with positivism, it remains subject to the same contradictions and limitations as do other forms of positivist-inspired social science. It remains subject to the critique that in not challenging the positivist identification of "Reason" with science - in not elucidating an alternative conception of reason to that of a foundational-technical enterprise - post-behaviouralism cannot rationally justify the normative theory it calls for. Neither can it rationally justify the "humane values of civilization" to which it calls intellectuals to protect. Indeed, as a consequence of the relegation of values to the non-scientific (i.e., non/ a-rational realm), post-behaviouralism cannot even justify the value of "relevance" which stands at the centre of its critique of behaviouralism.

In addition, post-behaviouralism also stands subject to the critique which centres on positivism's conception of the relationship between theory and practice. For despite its

laudable desire to be "relevant" to the problems of society and to contribute to human welfare, in not questioning the technical-instrumental nature of the positivist relation of theory to practice, post-behaviouralism's effort to be more "relevant" may ironically lead to nothing less than a more effective practice of totalitarian forms of politics.

In conclusion, then, the post-behaviouralist movement of the 1960s did re-orient social science in significant ways. Even so, in continuing to erect its criticism and reform of behaviouralism in accordance with positivist tenets and assumptions, post-behaviouralism neither anticipates nor renders obsolete the critique mounted by critical theory.

We began this chapter by establishing the link between the positivist tenet of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge and the dearth of social scientific theory explicitly engaged in social criticism. We then proceeded to a critical appraisal of the positivist approach to determine its success in achieving "value-free" status. On the basis of that appraisal, we were led to agree with Bernstein that "[d]espite all the talk of objectivity and value neutrality", positivist social science is "shot through with explicit and

implicit value judgements, and controversial normative and ideological claims".⁵³

As a consequence of this exercise, it was concluded that the very assumption of the possibility of separating fact from value was unfounded, and that as consequence, the quest for the holy grail of "value-free" scientific knowledge should be abandoned. Rather, it is more important to recognize that all forms of theorizing have normative content, and that the task of a responsible student of society is not to deny that content, but to become self-consciously aware of it.

The challenging of the positivist tenet of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge by means of undermining the validity of the assumption which underlies it has created a "space" in contemporary social and political theory for the kind of overtly normative theorizing required by the "Aristotelian project". The question remains, however, to what extent a similar "space" is being created in international relations theory. It is to that question that we now turn.

⁵³Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory, pp. 52-53.

Part II: International Relations Theory and Social Criticism

There is no question that the discipline of international relations exhibits the same dearth of social criticism oriented to effecting social change that one finds in mainstream social science. As was shown in chapter three, there is a strong commitment on the part of a significant number of international relations theorists to the positivist enterprise of generating "value-free" scientific knowledge by means of the separation of fact and value. This commitment results in a strong resistance to the idea of merging overtly and intentionally "normative" theorizing with "empirical" analysis, as would seem to be required for a socially-critical international relations theory.

James Rosenau's admonition that "To think theoretically one has to be clear as to whether one aspires to empirical theory or value theory" is a classic statement of positivist strictures applied to the study of world politics.⁵⁴

Progress in the study of international affairs
depends on advances in both empirical and value

⁵⁴"Thinking Theory Thoroughly," in The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy, rev. ed. (London: Frances Pinter, 1980), reprinted in International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, ed. Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi (New York: MacMillan, 1987), p. 22.

It is clear that Rosenau defines the idea of a scientific theory of international relations in terms of the positivist tradition: "To think theoretically", he affirms, "one must be able to assume that human affairs are founded on an underlying order", and "one must be predisposed to ask about every event, every situation, or every observed phenomenon, 'Of what is it an instance?'". (pp. 24, 25)

theory. But the two are not the same. They may overlap; they can focus on the same problem; and values always underlie the selection of the problems to which empirical theories are addressed. Yet they differ in one overriding way: empirical theory deals essentially with the "is" of international phenomena, with things as they are if and when they are subjected to observation, while value theory deals essentially with the "ought" of international phenomena, with things as they should be **if and when they could be subjected to manipulation.**⁵⁵

Rosenau is willing to concede that the "habit of making the necessary analytical, rhetorical, and evidential distinctions between empirical and value theory can be difficult" to develop.⁵⁶ "Young students" and those "who have strong value commitments and a deep concern for certain moral questions", argues Rosenau, are particularly susceptible to laxity in this regard.⁵⁷ Rosenau attempts to counter this tendency by assuring those with strong moral commitments that "Empirical theory is not superior to moral theory; it is simply preferable for certain purposes, and one of these is

⁵⁵"Thinking Theory Thoroughly," p. 22, my emphasis.

⁵⁶"Thinking Theory Thoroughly," p. 23.

⁵⁷"Thinking Theory Thoroughly," p. 23.

Rosenau's discussion of the pedagogical challenge involved is noteworthy:

... I have found that helping students become habituated to the is-ought distinction is among the most difficult pedagogical tasks. They can understand the distinction intellectually and they can even explain and defend it when pressed; but practising it is another matter and often their empirical analyses **slip into moral judgments without their being aware of it.** (p. 23, my emphasis)

Indeed.

the end of deepening our grasp of why international processes unfold as they do." Moreover, he argues,

moral values and policy goals can be ... best served by putting them aside and proceeding detachedly long enough to enlarge empirical understanding of the obstacles that hinder realization of the values and progress toward the goals.⁵⁸

Rosenau also recognizes that "impatience with [purely] empirical theorizing" tends to be "especially intense among Third World students of international relations":

The newly developed consciousness of the long-standing injustices built into First World-Third World relationships, the lure of dependency theory, and perhaps a frustration over the central tendencies of social science in the First World have made Third World theorists particularly resistant to detached empirical theorizing.⁵⁹

⁵⁸"Thinking Theory Thoroughly," p. 23.
In order to overcome the resistance to separating fact and value, Rosenau suggests the following approach:

This is the one line of reasoning on behalf of thinking theoretically that my most value-committed students find persuasive. If empirical theory is posited as a tool of moral theory, they can approach it instrumentally and see virtue in habituating themselves to distinguishing between the two.

Even so, laments Rosenau,

It takes a while ... before the perceived virtues of habituation are translated into actual habits and, in fact, some never manage to make the transition, hard as they may try. Impatient with the need for change, convinced that time is too scarce to afford the slow pace of empirical inquiry, many simply give up and dismiss the is-ought distinction as one of those picayune obsessions to which some academics fall prey.

"Thinking Theory Thoroughly," p. 23.

⁵⁹"Thinking Theory Thoroughly," p. 23.

And it is noteworthy that Rosenau is not unaffected by this resistance:

Their resistance gives a First World scholar pause: is his insistence on habituating oneself to the is-ought distinction yet another instance of false superiority, of projecting onto the developing world practices that have worked in industrial societies? that "the idea that the is-ought distinction may be inappropriate to theorizing in much of the world"?⁶⁰

However, while Rosenau concedes that "Of late I have become keenly aware of the biases that may underlie my intellectual endeavours", he concludes by re-affirming his commitment to the separation of fact and value:

In this particular instance ... I cannot even begin to break the habit. The relevance of the distinction strikes me as global, as independent of any national biases, as necessary to thinking theoretically wherever and whenever enlarged comprehension is sought.⁶¹

Rosenau's discussion is instructive on a number of points. For he summarizes and encapsulates in a very succinct manner the essence of the positivist tenet of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge. As such, his discussion also underscores the absolute centrality of the positivist

⁶⁰"Thinking Theory Thoroughly," pp. 23-24.

⁶¹"Thinking Theory Thoroughly," pp. 23, 24.

assumption which underlies that tenet: the possibility of separating fact from value.⁶²

As we saw in the first part of this chapter, a substantive critique of this assumption has been raised through the demonstration of the implicit though - for all that - no less important normative content of positivist social science. This raises an important question: is a similar critique being mounted by similar means in the discipline of international relations?

The short answer to that question is "yes". It is the task of the remainder of this chapter to detail the exact nature of this critique in contemporary international relations theory. We will also focus on the way the implications of this critique are being drawn out in terms of a fundamental "restructuring" of international relations theory. It is to these tasks that we now turn.

⁶²It should be noted, of course, that Rosenau's statements concerning the necessity of separating fact from value are by no means unique. Kal Holsti, for example, clearly indicates his acceptance of the positivist tenet of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge in his castigation of the World Order Models Project (WOMP) for engaging in a normatively-based condemnation of the nation-state system which "does little to enhance international theory as a discipline with scientific pretensions". See Kal J. Holsti, The Dividing Discipline (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1985), p. 141.

The Normative Content of Positivist International Relations Theory:

In the first part of this chapter it was argued that positivist social science's commitment to the separation of fact and value in pursuit of "value-free" scientific knowledge has definite - if largely unrecognized - normative content. It would seem reasonable, therefore, to conclude that a critical examination of positivist international relations theory would show that it too has definite normative content.

Happily, the process of critically examining positivist international relations theory is already underway. I will proceed in terms of the three dimensions of positivist theorizing outlined in the first part of this chapter: i) that of which scientific knowledge does not consist; ii) that of which scientific knowledge does consist; and iii) the conception of the relationship between theory and practice.

It will be remembered that the first dimension of positivist theorizing - of what scientific knowledge does not consist - refers to the notion that discussion of normative issues is beyond the purview of science. This notion has as a direct consequence the denigration of (overtly) normative discourse and the undermining of normatively-based challenges to the established moral-political order.

It is important to note that similar recognitions are beginning to be articulated in discussions of positivist international relations theory. Mervyn Frost, for example

argues that it is the direct consequence of the predominance of positivism in international relations theory - in his terms, the "positivist bias" - which has led to the paucity of normative theorizing in the discipline.⁶³ Notes Frost,

In international relations as a scientific discipline it is generally taken for granted that the aim should be primarily descriptive and/ or explanatory. Scholars are supposed to provide analyses which are above all firmly grounded in the facts; they should not become involved in normative arguments. This has become so much the accepted practice in the discipline that it is simply taken for granted without any attempt at justification. The fact that a discipline so centrally concerned with normative questions should itself consistently eschew all normative argument is a paradox that calls for critical investigation.⁶⁴

One of the central explanations for the dearth of normative theory, according to Frost, is to be found in the positivist tenet of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge:

... there is the particular epistemological and methodological bias held by most scholars in the field of international relations in common with scholars in many of the other social sciences. This may be called the **positivist bias** and it rests on a radical distinction between facts and values which accords epistemological priority to factual knowledge.⁶⁵

⁶³Towards a Normative Theory of International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁶⁴Towards a Normative Theory, p. 11, emphasis in the original.

⁶⁵Towards a Normative Theory, p. 11, emphasis in the original.

It is also noteworthy that Frost provides a challenge to Rosenau's attempt to paint a picture of harmonious relations between "empirical" and "normative" theory, by linking the "positivist bias" to "prevailing doubts about the worth of normative theory relating to international relations generally",⁶⁶ and by recognizing the tendency within positivism to conceive of normative discourse in "decisionistic" terms - i.e., as a-rationally (if not anti-rationally) "emotivist" in nature, where

a value judgement may be seen as purely arbitrary, i.e. it may be seen as a judgement for which a person simply opts; [which] is neither right nor wrong, but is simply what the person has chosen.⁶⁷

Frost caps his examination of positivist by drawing upon interpretive social science - and critical theory in particular - to challenge the viability of the separation of fact and value. Frost's conclusion is succinct: "Neutrality is not possible. If it is claimed it is an illusion."⁶⁸

It should be noted that if there evidence that the discipline is becoming aware of the deleterious consequences of positivism for normative discourse, there is also a growing recognition of the normative implications of "decisionist" formulations in terms of existing moral-political orders.

⁶⁶Towards a Normative Theory, p. 2.

⁶⁷Towards a Normative Theory, p. 16.

⁶⁸Towards a Normative Theory, p. 30.

A good example of this latter recognition is to be found in a recent critique of the work of John Burton by Richard Little.⁶⁹ To begin, it is necessary to recall that in terms of Banks' division of the literature, Burton's theorizing about global politics fits into the "pluralist" paradigm.⁷⁰ With its emphasis on a "cobweb" view of the global order, with its concern for the "individual" and with meeting "human needs", Burton's notion of "world society" can be seen as an attempt to develop a clear alternative to realist notions of states as "billiard-balls" engaged in a "struggle for power" in defence of the "national interest" - notions that Burton associates with the "massive violence, repression and exploitation" which in his view characterize "world society".⁷¹

While attempting to promote a "pluralist" alternative to realism, however, Burton continues to share with many (neo)-realists the positivist approach to theorizing. As a consequence, he is committed to the hope that social science will show the way to the establishment of a "non-ideological"

⁶⁹"The Decision Maker and Social Order: The End of Ideology or the Pursuit of a Chimera?", in Conflict in World Society, ed. Michael Banks (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1984).

⁷⁰For the characteristics of "pluralism", as opposed to "realism" and "structuralism", see chapter four.

⁷¹Burton, quoted in Little, "The Decision Maker and Social Order," p. 79. For Burton's own work, see John W. Burton, World Society (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), as well as Global Conflict: The Domestic Sources of International Crises (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1984).

model of social order, capable of meeting human needs for peace and social justice.⁷² In short, Burton subscribes to the positivist goal of "value-free" knowledge by means of a separation of fact and value in scientific theorizing.⁷³

Burton's focus on facts, and his denigration of literature which incorporates an explicitly normative component into its analysis as "ideological" and "non-scientific" has serious consequences, however. For while Burton has "developed a complex body of theory which provides the basis for a new 'world view'"⁷⁴ - a world view which may well be preferable to that informing the present global order" in terms of peace and social justice - the positivist denigration of the validity of normative discourse which informs his work means that Burton is unable to defend the

⁷²Little, "The Decision Maker and Social Order," p. 79.

⁷³As Little notes, Burton actually tries to transcend the fact-value distinction, by arguing that

once human needs are adequately understood, social scientists will be able to discuss values objectively and thus, like their natural science counterparts, transcend ideology. Order, for example, can be defined in terms of the fulfilment of human needs. In this event, only an inadequate understanding of these needs prevents the emergence of a consensus about the foundations for building harmonious or ordered societies.

The problem, however, is that Burton has not transcended the fact-value distinction, but rather has tried to reduce values to a kind of fact, which, as Little correctly notes, "reflects a positivist conception of knowledge". See Little, "The Decision Maker and Social Order," pp. 93-94.

⁷⁴Little, "The Decision Maker and Social Order," p. 95.

norms and values which inform his theorizing over and against those already in place. In short, by "refusing to fight a battle which must be fought if his ideas are to be influential",⁷⁵ by refusing to engage in a reasoned defence of his values and normative commitments, Burton is unable to challenge the established moral-political order as effectively as he could. Once again, we see that the positivist denigration of normative discourse ends up by serving the interests of the present order, and has, therefore, a definite normative content.⁷⁶

If there is growing recognition of the normative content of what positivist international relations theory excludes, there is also increasing attention being paid to the normative content of what such theorizing does include. Specifically, increasing attention is being paid to the normative content of positivist international relations theory's naturalistic

⁷⁵Little, "The Decision Maker and Social Order," p. 95.

⁷⁶Once again, Burton is not the only challenger of the established moral-political order whose efforts are greatly weakened by a commitment to the positivist tenet of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge. Karl W. Deutsch, for example, has the same difficulty in justifying his personal commitment to democracy in global politics. For if the commitment to democracy cannot be justified as anything more than an "emotivist" response, why should it be seen as any more legitimate than any other form of governance? Similarly, peace researcher Anatol Rapoport's championing of an ethical humanist position is greatly attenuated by his retention of a positivist conception of science which withholds legitimacy from the humanist values he wishes to promote.

conceptualization of world politics in terms of recurring behavioural regularities.

One of the most trenchant critiques of this aspect of contemporary theorizing about international politics is to be found in the work of Richard Ashley, and in particular, in his "The Poverty of Neorealism".⁷⁷ The particular target of Ashley's critique is the "positivist structuralist" analytic framework of neorealism.⁷⁸ And the concern with the positivist reification of the global order is a central element of Ashley's critique. For it is a defining characteristic of positivist neorealism, argues Ashley, that it denies

the historical significance of practice, the moment at which men and women enter with greater or lesser degrees of consciousness into the making of their world.⁷⁹

And it is for this reason, notes Ashley, that

Nowhere in neorealist categories do we find room for the idea that men and women who are the objects of theory can themselves theorize about their lives; are in fact engaged in a continuing struggle to shape and redefine their understandings of themselves, their circumstances, their agencies of collective action, and the very categories of social existence; do indeed orient their practices in light of their understandings; and, thanks to all of this, do give form and motion to the open-ended processes

⁷⁷International Organization, 38, No. 2 (1984); reprinted in Neorealism and Its Critics, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

⁷⁸Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism," p. 258.

⁷⁹"The Poverty of Neorealism," p. 290.

by which the material conditions of their practices are made, reproduced and transformed.⁸⁰

Of particular interest is the degree to which positivist neorealism has succeeded in reifying the state. As Ashley argues, rather than understanding states as historically-emergent institutions which are the result of a particular configuration of social practices, and which are constituted by particular "webs of meaning", positivist neorealism views states as ontologically prior to and independent of human consciousness and action.⁸¹ For the purposes of neorealist theory, notes Ashley,

the state must be treated as an unproblematic unity: an entity whose existence, boundaries, identifying structures, constituencies, legitimations, interests, and capacities to make self-regarding decisions can be treated as given, independent of transnational class and human interests, and undisputed (except, perhaps, by other states).⁸²

Furthermore, state (inter)-action is theorized as a behavioural regularity independent of time and place. Specifically, state action is conceived as rational utility maximization behaviour, corresponding to the anarchical nature of the interstate system which makes "self-help" imperative for all states, the combined product of which can be analyzed in terms of a "balance of power", the exact configuration of which derives from the distribution of power - understood as

⁸⁰"The Poverty of Neorealism," p. 291.

⁸¹See "The Poverty of Neorealism," pp. 268-273.

⁸²"The Poverty of Neorealism," p. 268.

capabilities - in the system.⁸³ Change within the system - e.g., as the result of a re-distribution of capabilities - can be theorized; change of the system, however, is beyond the scope of positivist realism's abilities.

As Ashley notes, positivist neorealism's reification of the state has important consequences in terms of the "intellectual space" for theorizing alternatives to the status quo:

As a framework for the interpretation of international politics, neorealist theory cannot accord recognition to - it cannot even comprehend - those global collectivist concepts that are irreducible to logical combinations of state-bounded relations. In other words, global collectivist concepts - concepts of transnational class relations, say, or the interests of human kind - can be granted an objective status only to the extent that they can be interpreted as aggregations of relations and interests having logically and historically prior roots within state-bounded societies. Much as the "individual" is a prism through which methodological individualists comprehend collectivist concepts as aggregations of individual wants, needs, beliefs, and actions, so also does the neorealist refract all global collectivist concepts through the prism of the state.⁸⁴

Moreover, notes Ashley, this "state-centrism" has important normative content:

Importantly, this means that neorealist theory implicitly takes a side amidst contending political interests. Whatever the personal commitments of individual neorealists might be, neorealist theory allies with, accords recognition to, and gives

⁸³See Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (New York: Random House, 1979).

⁸⁴"The Poverty of Neorealism," p. 270, emphasis in the original.

expression to those class and sectorial interests ... that are actually or potentially congruent with state interests and legitimations. It implicitly opposes and denies recognition to those class and human interests which cannot be reduced to concatenations of state interests or transnational coalitions of domestic interests.⁸⁵

It is important to be clear about what is being argued here. Neorealism privileges the state because it is realist, but neorealism reifies the state because it is positivist. A liberal/ pluralist approach, or radical/ marxian approach to the study of world order, while perhaps not reifying the state, would, to the extent that it is positivist, nonetheless reify aspects of that order (e.g., "individual human nature", class).

To underscore this point, let us turn, albeit briefly, from neorealism to the work of the marxian, Immanuel Wallerstein. Wallersteinian "World Systems Theory" has provided a clear alternative to both realist and pluralist conceptualizations of international politics. It should also be noted by Wallerstein has been explicit in his intent to incorporate a non-positivist, historical materialist approach

⁸⁵"The Poverty of Neorealism," pp. 270-271.

The positivist reification of the state which one finds in neorealism also accounts for the lack of interest in theorizing the state among neorealists themselves. See, for example, Kenneth Waltz's noticeable lack of enthusiasm for such an undertaking in "Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics," in Keohane, Neorealism and Its Critics, pp. 329-330.

into the study of the modern world system.⁸⁶ Even so, it can be argued that despite both his intention and best efforts, Wallerstein's work has not totally escaped the positivist-dominated approach to the study of the social world of North American academe. Thus it is that Aronowitz, while generally sympathetic to Wallerstein's efforts, points out in a review of The Modern World System that the concept of system in Wallersteinian World Systems Theory "is not used in a manner consistent with Wallerstein's own intentions...."⁸⁷ Specifically,

the meaning of "system" is not homologous in this work with the marxist [i.e., historical materialist] notion of "totality," in which the elements of a system are understood within a matrix of mutual determinations. Instead Wallerstein offers the term in its precise contemporary sense, most typically employed by those in various natural and social sciences who subscribe to the specific metaphilosophic and methodological theory known as systems theory.⁸⁸

Now it will be remembered from our discussion in chapter three that systems theorists such as David Easton were at the forefront of bringing the positivist approach to bear on the

⁸⁶An approach having many affinities with the critical orientation privileged within this study. Wallerstein is most explicit on this point in "Some Reflections on History, the Social Sciences, and Politics," in his The Capitalist World Economy (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. vii-xii.

⁸⁷Stanley Aronowitz, "A Metatheoretical Critique of Immanuel Wallerstein's The Modern World System", Theory and Society, 10 (1981), p. 505.

⁸⁸Aronowitz, p. 505, emphasis added.

study of society. Indeed, systems theory in the social sciences was an explicit attempt to contribute to the positivist "search for uniformities in political relations," and, above all, to the development of a "general framework within which ... facts [can] acquire meaning to transcend any particular time and place".⁸⁹

Small wonder, then, that Wallerstein's notion of "World System" conforms not to that of historical materialism's "totality" in which system and elements are understood in terms of mutual determination, but rather to that of positivism's reified "social fact" which transcends time and place; to the understanding that the system as "social fact" - as a "thing" rather than a relation⁹⁰ - "is the determining instance of its elements, each of which is constituted as a subsystem by its structured place within the larger structure".⁹¹ Nor is it surprising, with such a positivist-

⁸⁹The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), pp. 78, 89, quoted in Scott Warren, The Emergence of Dialectical Theory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 9.

⁹⁰Emile Durkheim's guidebook to the application of the positivist approach to the study of the social world, The Rules of Sociological Method (1938), trans. S. A. Solovay and J. H. Mueller (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964), contains the following admonition:

"The first and most fundamental rule is: Consider social facts as things."

(p. 14, emphasis in the original).

⁹¹Aronowitz, p. 505.

derived notion of system, that Wallerstein's efforts to theorize anti-systemic practice to transform the "World System" have been plagued by serious limitations.

In short, positivist international relations theory - of which neorealism is the prime, though by no means, the only example - misrepresents social practices which are constituted by "intersubjective meanings", as "things" - "behavioural regularities" - existing in a meta-physical sense both prior to and independently of human self-interpretation and self-definition. In keeping with its naturalist orientation, notes Ashley, it "treats the given order as the natural order".⁹² It encourages a mode of thinking consistent with St. Simon's "wise resignation" to the world as it is, "and thereby deprives political interaction of those practical capacities

⁹²"The Poverty of Neorealism," p. 258.

which make social learning and creative change possible".⁹³ As a consequence, positivist international relations theory is hardly neutral - it is a force operating in support of the maintenance of the global status quo.⁹⁴

Furthermore, the contribution of positivist international relations theory to the maintenance of the global status quo extends beyond the reification of the global order. With obvious parallels to Horkheimer's notion of "traditional theory", Robert Cox argues that positivist-inspired mainstream

⁹³"The Poverty of Neorealism," p. 258. It can be argued that it was the positivist underpinning of classical realism, identified in chapter three, that moved E. H. Carr to assert that realism

places its emphasis on the acceptance of facts and the analysis of their causes and consequences. It tends ... to maintain, explicitly or implicitly, that the function of thinking is to study a sequence of events which it is powerless to influence or to alter realism tends to emphasize the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies, and to insist that the highest wisdom lies in accepting, and adapting oneself to, these forces and these tendencies.

The Twenty Years Crisis (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 10, my emphasis.

⁹⁴Ashley is hardly alone in his concern with the reifying effects of international relations theory. R. B. J. Walker concurs in noting that:

Historical practices are analysed as ahistorical structures. Conscious human practices are erased in favour of structural determinations.

Walker, "History and Structure in the Theory of International Relations," Millennium, 18, No. 2 (1989), p. 179.

international relations theory⁹⁵ should be understood as a type of "problem solving theory", which

takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework of action.⁹⁶

The prime task of this type of theory is

to make these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble. Since the general pattern of institutions and relationships is not called into question, particular problems can be considered in relations to the specialized areas of activity in which they arise. Problem-solving theories are thus fragmented among a multiplicity of spheres of aspects of action, each of which assumes a certain stability in the other spheres (which enables them in practice to be ignored) when confronting a problem arising within its own. The strength of the problem-solving approach lies in its ability to fix limits or parameters to a problem area and to reduce the statement of a particular problem to a limited number of variables which are amenable to relatively close and precise examination.⁹⁷

The strength of problem-solving theory is simultaneously its weakness, however, because it rests upon a false premise:

Problem-solving theory is nonhistorical or ahistorical, since it, in effect, posits a continuing present (the permanence of the institutions and power relations which constitute its parameters) ... [however] the social and

⁹⁵Cox, like Ashley, focuses his attention on ahistorical neorealism in particular, however he does seem to suggest that non-realist liberal internationalism shares neorealism's ahistorical view of the "essences of man, the state, and the interstate system", and thus suffers from similar liabilities. See Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," Millennium, 10, No. 2 (1981), pp. 130-132.

⁹⁶Cox, "Social Forces, States, and World Orders," p. 128.

⁹⁷"Social Forces, States and World Orders," pp. 128-129.

political order is not fixed but (at last in a long-range perspective) is changing.⁹⁸

Moreover, notes Cox, "the assumption of fixity is not merely a convenience of method, but also an ideological bias".

Problem solving theories [including theories of international relations] can be represented ... as serving particular national, sectional, or class interests, which are comfortable with the given order. Indeed, the purpose served by problem-solving theory is conservative, since it aims to solve the problems arising in various parts of a complex whole in order to smooth the functioning of the whole.⁹⁹

Concludes Cox,

This aim rather belies the frequent claim of problem-solving [i.e., positivist] theory to be value-free. It is methodologically value-free insofar as it treats the variables it considers as objects (as the chemist treats molecules or the physicist forces and motion); but it is value-bound by virtue of the fact that it implicitly accepts the prevailing order as its own framework.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸"Social Force, States, and World Orders," p. 129.

⁹⁹"Social Forces, States, and World Orders," p. 129.

¹⁰⁰"Social Forces, States, and World Orders," pp. 129-130.

Cox's assertion that positivist-inspired mainstream international relations theory should be understood as a form of "problem-solving" theory, designed to make established "relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble" is supported by Ekkehart Krippendorff's analysis of the twentieth century origins of mainstream international relations theory. Krippendorff notes that mainstream international relations theory - both its realist and idealist variants - arose as a response to the first World War. The horrendous consequences of the war posed a particular problem for the representatives of established interests, in that it provided an unfortunate opening for those who wanted to make a link at the level of popular consciousness between existing political-economic structures on the one hand, and militarist inter-state rivalry on the other. Specifically, Marxist imperialism theorists from Lenin, through Bukharin to Luxemburg were intent on using popular disaffection resulting from the war experience to

(continued...)

¹⁰⁰(...continued)

promote reflection and organization designed to replace the war-prone capitalist order with a just and peaceful socialist one.

The result was the creation of mainstream international relations theory, which appeared virtually as a side-product of the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919. The new discipline was provided housing in the American Council on Foreign Relations (1920) and the British Royal Institute of International Affairs (1920), and spread from there to other government-sponsored institutes - and of course, universities - in Western Europe and North America, and finally throughout the world. (The "Deutsche Hochschule für Politik" was also created in 1920, while in Geneva, the "Institut Universitaire des Hautes Etudes Internationales" was created in 1927.)

From the beginning the task of this new discipline was clear. It was to counter more radical interpretation of the origins of the first World War (and later, other wars) by portraying war not as a necessary outgrowth of capitalist political-economic structures, but rather an "industrial accident", which could be prevented through better management techniques. The exact nature of these techniques - international law and organization (idealism) or balance of power (realism) - was, of course, the central point of dispute in mainstream international relations theory. The central commonality of all positivist-inspired mainstream approaches, however - that is, their role as "problem-solving" theory for a capitalist world order - has not been altered.

Krippendorff's full discussion is, lamentably, available only in German. See Internationale Politik: Geschichte und Theorie (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1987), chapters one to three. A much condensed version in English can be found in Ekkehart Krippendorff, "The Dominance of American Approaches in International Relations," Millennium, 16, No. 2 (1987), p. 211.

For a good review of their theoretical contributions in this regard, see Anthony Brewer, Marxist Theories of Imperialism (London: Routledge, 1980).

It is interesting to note that Krippendorff accounts for the creation of "peace research" in the end of the 1960s with the failure of conventional forms of mainstream international relations theory to provide effective techniques for the "maintenance of peace" in the global system. See Krippendorff, Internationale Politik, p. 37. For a critique of peace research as a form of "problem-solving" theory in support of established interests, see Herman Schmid, "Peace Research and Politics," Journal of Peace Research, 3 (1968), as well as Schmid, "On the Conditions of Applied Social Science," Social Sciences Information, 12, No. 5 (1973); Lars Dencik, "Peace
(continued...)

In sum, there is increasing evidence within the discipline of international relations that the normative content of both what positivist international relations theory excludes and what it includes is being recognized. But what of the normative content of the third dimension of positivism identified in the first part of this chapter: that of the instrumental nature of the relationship between theory and practice?

To begin, it is noteworthy that leading positivist theorists in the discipline of international relations have been under no illusion as to the link between research and the application of the knowledge generated: "The urge to explain", notes Waltz, "is not born of idle curiosity alone. It is produced also by the desire to control, or at least to

¹⁰⁰(...continued)

Research: Pacification or Revolution?", in Contemporary Peace Research, ed. Ghanshyam Pardesi (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982); Ole Jess Olsen and Ib Martin Jarvad, "The Vietnam Conference Papers: A Case Study of a Failure of Peace Research," Peace Research Society, Papers, 14 (1970). For a summary of the views of these radical critics, see William Eckhardt, "The Radical Critique of Peace Research: a Brief Review," Peace Research, 18, No. 3 (1986).

know if control is possible, rather than merely to predict".¹⁰¹ And perceptive commentators on the evolution of the discipline - both working within it and looking in from the outside - have noted the instrumental quality of positivist international relations theory's view of knowledge and action. Stanley Hoffmann, speaking from within the discipline, notes the "social engineering" impetus at work:

The champions of a science of international affairs ... have wanted to draw consequences from the real world from their research: the greater the drive to predict (or the tendency to equate science, not just with intelligibility but with control and prediction), the greater the inclination to play the role of wise adviser - or the engineer.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 6, my emphasis.

Once again, it is important to stress that the control impulse should not be understood as the result of the personal value-commitments of the positivist researcher. The same impulse is to be found in positivistically-oriented "peace research", particularly as post-behavioural concerns with "relevance" and "action" have taken centre stage. As two critical peace researchers have noted:

For more and more peace researchers, the chasm between peace research and peace action, between peace researcher as knower and the peace researcher as actor, has come to be regarded a particularly acute problem. Some (like Lentz and the Newcombes) have redoubled their efforts to devise more sophisticated technical means and instrumental strategies for predicting and/ or repressing the outbreak of violence

Herbert G. Reid and Ernest J. Yanarella, "Toward a Critical Theory of Peace Research in the United States: the Search for an 'Intelligible Core'," Journal of Peace Research 13, No. 4 (1976), p. 331, emphasis added.

¹⁰²"An American Social Science: International Relations," Daedalus, 106, No. 3 (1977), pp. 54-55, my emphasis.

And speaking from outside the discipline, Jürgen Habermas notes the "control impulse" evident in the work of Herman Kahn, one of international relations preeminent strategists.¹⁰³

In general, however, there has been less willingness - especially from within the discipline - to acknowledge the politics of domination which correspond to such a control-oriented "social engineering" view of international relations theory. Indeed, despite his recognition of the dimension of control which is built right into positivist international relations theory's view of theory and practice, Hoffmann seems

¹⁰³"Technology and Science as Ideology," in Habermas, Toward a Rational Society, p. 117. Notes Habermas,

On Herman Kahn's list of the most probable technical innovation of the next thirty years I observe among the first fifty items a large number of techniques of behavioural and personality change...

including

new and possibly pervasive techniques for surveillance, monitoring and control of individuals and organizations;

new and more reliable "educational" and propaganda techniques affecting human behaviour - public and private;

new and relatively effective counterinsurgency techniques.

to equate positivism's colonization of the discipline with the process of "democratization".¹⁰⁴

Happily, this too is beginning to change. What Dahrendorf refers to as the "Applied Enlightenment",¹⁰⁵ is coming to be recognized, even in the discipline of international relations, as the very betrayal of the Enlightenment tradition. Reflecting the influence of the Frankfurt school's concern with the political implications of "technocratic consciousness", and its objective of engaging in a critique of the "scientization of politics", Ashley has criticized positivist neorealism's reduction of politics to "pure technique": "Political strategy is deprived of its artful and performative aspect, becoming instead the mere calculation of instruments of control".¹⁰⁶

The undemocratic implications are clear:

Absent from neorealist categories is any hint of politics as a creative, critical enterprise, an enterprise by which men and women might reflect upon

¹⁰⁴"An American Social Science," pp. 42-43:

... international politics remained the sport of kings, or the preserve of cabinets - the last refuge of secrecy, the last domain of largely hereditary castes of diplomats.

The twentieth century brought change however:

With democratization, as Comte had predicted, came the age of positivism...

¹⁰⁵As quoted in Hoffmann, "An American Social Science," p. 43.

¹⁰⁶"The Poverty of Neorealism," p. 292.

their goals and strive to shape freely their collective will.¹⁰⁷

In short, affirms Ashley, positivist neorealism is "an ideology that anticipates, legitimizes, and orients a totalitarian project of global proportions..."¹⁰⁸

The recognition of the implicit "normative content" of positivist international relations theory has prompted calls for a rethinking of the process of theorizing within the discipline. The recognition of the normative and political implications of the "decisionist" orientation of positivist international relations theory has given rise to calls for the acknowledgement of the possibility of rational debate about normative issues, and the integration of such debates into the theory process.¹⁰⁹ As Frost has noted, if it is true that value-freedom is an "illusion",

It follows that social scientists and scholars in international relations as well, cannot avoid

¹⁰⁷"The Poverty of Neorealism," p. 252.

¹⁰⁸"The Poverty of Neorealism," p. 258.

Once again, it is important to be clear about what is being argued. To the extent that neorealism feeds into a "totalitarian project", it does so, not because it is realist but because it is positivist. A liberal/ pluralist or radical approach to international politics, for example, despite the significant differences from one which is realist in inspiration, also contributes to a politics of "domination" to the extent that it is positivist.

¹⁰⁹This, of course, involves a re-definition of the notion of rationality from that of the limited "technical rationality" of positivism to the broader concept of rationality implied by phronesis (practical reason).

becoming engaged in normative questions and must face up to the challenge of normative theory.¹¹⁰

Of course, for some scholars, forcing these questions back onto the table "would be enough to bring on a bad case of positivist vertigo".¹¹¹ Even so, these are questions which can and must be asked, argues Walker, once it is recognized that

The ideology-laden distinction between social science and socio-political theory, between empirical and normative forms of enquiry, simply cannot be sustained, no matter how much it may have legitimated disciplinary divisions and claims to professional expertise.¹¹²

Richard Little would agree. Although his remarks are specifically addressed to the theoretical efforts of John Burton, they obviously pertain to the larger issue of the validity - and indeed, necessity - of explicitly normative critiques of the existing moral-political order:

In a world of competing values, the merits of any particular model, therefore, are not self-evident. No model is free from ideology. Since John Burton wishes to change the world, he has no alternative but to make the argument for change in ideological terms.¹¹³

Similarly, the recognition of positivist international relations theory's contribution to the maintenance of the status quo by reifying the world order and by serving as a "problem-solving" instrument for that order has prompted a

¹¹⁰Towards a Normative Theory, p. 30.

¹¹¹"History and Structure," p. 177.

¹¹²"History and Structure," pp. 167, 178.

¹¹³"The Decision Maker and Social Order," p. 95.

strong reaction. To counter the reifying effects of positivist international relations theory, argues Walker, "... priority should be given to history and thus to approaches that stress interpretation, practice, and the critique of reification".¹¹⁴

And in response to positivist international relations theory's role as "problem-solving" theory, Cox calls for the creation of a "critical" theory of international relations, which is critical "in the sense that it stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about". A critical theory of international relations, unlike positivist "problem-solving" theory, would "not take institutions and social and power relations for granted", but would "call[] them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing".¹¹⁵ Perhaps most importantly, a "principal objective" of a critical theory of international relations "is to clarify [the] range of possible alternatives" to the existing order, and in this way "be a guide to strategic action for bringing about an alternative order..."¹¹⁶

And finally, out of the recognition of the politics of "domination" implicit in positivist international relations theory's conception of the link between theory and practice,

¹¹⁴"History and Structure," p. 163, my emphasis.

¹¹⁵Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," p. 129.

¹¹⁶Cox, "Social Forces, States, and World Orders," p. 130.

there is the growing recognition that in its efforts to "be a guide to strategic action for bringing about an alternative order", an emancipatory non-positivist international relations theory must strive to incorporate an "educative" - and not an "instrumental" - conception of the relationship of theory to practice.¹¹⁷ In short, a "restructured" international relations theory which places human emancipation at the centre of its theorizing must work to ensure a "fit" between its methods and its goals.

Conclusion:

We began this chapter by linking the presence of positivism - in particular, its tenet of the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge - with the virtual absence of social criticism in contemporary social science. We then proceeded to challenge this tenet by calling into question the viability of the assumption of the very possibility of separating fact from value. On the basis of the demonstration of the significant - if unacknowledged - normative content of positivist social science, it was concluded that all forms of theorizing have a normative component. As a consequence, the fact that a particular tradition of theorizing is self-consciousness of its normative orientation - an orientation

¹¹⁷Frost refers to this as the "democratic dimension of critical understanding". See Towards a Normative Theory, p. 35.

manifest, say, in explicit social criticism in support of the transformation of the established order - is not a liability, and indeed, should be seen as an advantage over unreflectively normative traditions.

In the second part of this chapter we focused our attention on the discipline of international relations. It was argued that as in positivist social science, "ethical", "metaphysical" and "ideological" questions, have been marginalized in the discipline of international relations through positivist-inspired "socio-scientific attempts to reduce them to problems of utilitarian calculations and empirical testing".¹¹⁸ It was also argued, however, that there is a growing recognition in the discipline of the unacknowledged "normative content" of positivist international relations theory.

The recognition of the implicit "normative content" of positivist international relations theory - and of the impossibility of "value-free" knowledge - has important consequences in terms of the restructuring process which has served as the focus of this study. For it has created a theoretical "space" in the discipline of international relations for overt criticism of the established global order

¹¹⁸"History and Structure," pp. 167, 163.

and the promotion of alternatives.¹¹⁹ And in that social criticism in support of the transformation of established "forms of life" is a fundamental characteristic of critical theory, the growth of theorizing concerned with social criticism in support of human emancipation is one more piece of evidence in support of the fundamental "restructuring" of international relations theory.

¹¹⁹It should be noted that while the majority of these efforts have privileged the category of class, recently we have witnessed critical and transformatively-oriented theoretical efforts focussing on the categories of gender as well as race. For the examples of the latter, see Sandra Whitworth, "Gender in the Inter-Paradigm Debate," Millennium, 18, No. 2 (1989), as well as Cynthia Enloe, Bananas, Beaches & Bases (London: Pandora, 1989), and Jan Nederveen Pieterse, Empire and Emancipation: Power and Liberation on a World Scale (New York: Praeger, 1989), respectively.

Chapter Seven:

Conclusion

A political science which is true to its moral commitment ought at the very least to be an unpopular undertaking. At its very best, it cannot help being a subversive and revolutionary force with regard to certain vested interests - intellectual, political, economic, social in general.

Hans J. Morgenthau¹

The hostility to theory as such which prevails in contemporary public life is really directed against the transformative activity associated with critical thinking. Opposition starts as soon as theorists fail to limit themselves to verification and classification by means of categories which are as neutral as possible, that is, categories which are indispensable to inherited ways of life ...

Max Horkheimer²

This study has concerned itself with providing an answer to a very specific question: why is it that theory oriented toward human emancipation remains poorly developed within the discipline of international relations? We are now in a position to provide an answer to this question, both in terms of what does explain the traditional absence of emancipatory international relations theory, as well as what does not.

¹"The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations," in Theoretical Aspects of International Relations, ed. William T. R. Fox (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), p. 22.

²"Traditional and Critical Theory," in M. Horkheimer, Critical Theory: Selected Essays, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Toronto: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 232.

This absence cannot be explained by either a lack of commitment to the improvement of human welfare on the part of international relations theorists, or a lack of awareness by these theorists as to the nature of the threats under which our planet is living. Indeed, as was shown early on in this study, an explicit concern with human welfare is clearly manifest among a significant number of international relations theorists. Though working out of different analytical traditions, these theorists remain united in their view of "the study of international relations" as "the art and science of the survival of mankind".³

This being the case, it was necessary to locate the explanation for the dearth of emancipatory theorizing elsewhere than the personal concern (or, rather, presumed lack of it) with the "common good". As a consequence, the explanation for the lack of emancipatory theorizing was sought in the very structure of mainstream international relations theory. To do this, however, it was necessary to move beyond the bounds of international relations theory proper, to avail ourselves of the insights of social and political theory more generally.

By drawing on a range of arguments put forward by social and political theorists, it was possible to arrive at an explanation of the virtual absence of emancipatory theory in

³Karl Deutsch, The Analysis of International Relations, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1988), p. ix.

terms of the predominance of the positivist approach in the discipline of international relations. Specifically, the three tenets which together comprise the "positivist logic of investigation" - that of "truth as correspondence", the methodological unity of science, and the "value-free" nature of scientific knowledge - were shown, in their turn, to have inhibited the development of the three elements which characterize emancipatory theory: "theoretical reflexivity", attention to the active and creative role of human consciousness, and social criticism in support of the transformation of established "forms of life".

The benefits of the incorporation of the insights of social and political theory into a discussion of international relations theory proved even more far-reaching than expected, however. For the insights afforded by social and political theory allowed for much more than a "wrecking operation" in terms of positivist international relations theory. Along with exposing the limitations of positivist international relations theory - i.e., the non-viability of the separation of subject and object, naturalism, and the separation of fact and value - these insights also directed us toward positive alternatives for changing international relations theory in a way more in harmony with the emancipatory imperative of the "Aristotelian project". Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the meta-theoretical perspective afforded by social and political theory has also made clear the degree to which theorizing

about international politics is already showing signs of undergoing such change - a "restructuring" of international relations theory. Specifically, it has become clear that in important respects international relations theory already is being restructured in a post-positivist direction which is i) self-consciously reflexive, ii) intentionally interpretive, and iii) explicitly critical of the existing global order. In short, the "restructuring" of international relations theory is its transformation into emancipatory, "critical" theory.

Thus, the adoption of a strategy based on the rejection of the claim that "international relations is a discrete area of action and discourse, separate from social and political theory",⁴ would seem to have proved its worth. For it is a strategy which allows for the putting of blame where it belongs - on the positivist structure of contemporary international relations theory - and not on the character or

⁴Mark Hoffman, "Critical Theory and the Inter-Paradigm Debate", Millennium, 16, No. 2 (1987), p. 231.

motivations of individual theorists involved in that theorizing.⁵

In light of the seemingly obvious benefits derived from an incorporation of the insights of social and political theory into the discipline of international relations, it is disconcerting to note that a number of prominent theorists recently expressed reservations about such a strategy.⁶ Thus it is that Kal Holsti notes with "sympathy" Theda Skocpol's comment that meta-theoretical debates "(may) lead to dead ends

⁵Nor would it be fair to be unduly critical of mainstream international relations theorists for having adopted a "logic of investigation" which subverts their personal commitments to the improvement of human welfare. In fact, they are little different than the members of investigative communities of other disciplines. As Bechtel has noted,

Most scientists ... simply adopt a philosophy of science that is popular, or that suits their purposes, and cite it as authority.

Of course, there are significant liabilities associated with an uncritical acceptance of prevailing orthodoxies. Continues Bechtel,

This proclivity to borrow positions from philosophy is rather common but poses serious dangers because what may be quite controversial in philosophy may be accepted by a particular scientist or group of scientists without recognizing its controversial character.

See William Bechtel, Philosophy of Science (London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1988), p. 2.

⁶It is ironic, when one considers that these same individuals were instrumental in introducing the meta-theoretical perspective afforded by social and political theory into discussion about contemporary theorizing about international politics in the first place.

because they fail to enhance understanding of our subject matter".⁷ In a similar vein, Robert Keohane argues that

It will not be fruitful ... indefinitely to conduct a debate at the purely theoretical level, much less simply to argue about epistemological and ontological issues in the abstract. Such an argument would take us away from the study of our subject matter, world politics, toward what would probably become an intellectually derivative and programmatically diversionary philosophical discussion.⁸

And James Rosenau, commenting on the outlook for international relations theory in the 1990s, notes that in previous decades

a preoccupation with the analytic problems of theorists tended to take precedence over the substantive dilemmas of actors on the global stage. For better or worse, and for diverse reasons ranging from battle fatigue to a growing acceptance of diversity, today the epistemological and methodological issues have turned quiescent, or at least an appreciation of the need for theory has come to be widely shared, thus giving rise to a readiness to live-and-let-live that has enabled theorists to focus on the subject matter itself, on the patterns that may be evolving and the habits that may be attenuating as the world's actors struggle to achieve goals and cope with challenges.⁹

⁷In K. J. Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Which are the fairest theories of all?", International Studies Quarterly, 33, No. 3 (1989), p. 260; Theda Skocpol, "The Dead End of Metatheory," Contemporary Sociology, 16, No. 2 (1987), pp. 10-12, my emphasis.

⁸"International Institutions: Two Approaches", International Studies Quarterly, 32, No. 4 (1988), p. 382, my emphasis.

⁹"Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Toward a Postinternational Politics for the 1990s," in Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics in the 1990s, ed. Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James N. Rosenau (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1989), pp. 18-19, my emphasis.

These interventions may be understood and responded to in at least two distinct ways. At one level, they can be understood as the expressions of individual scholars who, to this point, remain unconvinced that the claim that "International Relations is a discrete area of action and discourse, separate from social and political theory",¹⁰ can no longer be sustained. Accordingly, the proper response is one of offering reasoned arguments in support of a strategy which rejects that claim in the hope of "converting" those who remain unpersuaded as to its worth.

This has been the approach adopted here. Specifically, it has been argued that meta-theoretical issues are not "programmatically diversionary" for the study of world politics. They are not "programmatically diversionary" because it is only by incorporating a meta-theoretical perspective that international relations theory can restructure itself as critical theory - a restructuring which is imperative if the discipline is to meet the theoretical challenges outlined at the beginning of this study: specifically, i) to promote meaningful discussion and debate in the context of paradigmatic pluralism; ii) to theorize fundamental change in the world order; and iii) to develop theory to guide practice which can address normative concerns as well as questions of practical efficacy. As a consequence, meta-theoretical issues

¹⁰Hoffman, "Critical Theory and the Inter-Paradigm Debate," p. 231.

stand at the very core of the "subject matter" of the discipline.

However, there is a second way in which the interventions noted above may be interpreted. At another level, they may be understood as the scholarly manifestation of an on-going effort to discipline and neutralize any endeavour having the potential to unleash social forces which might threaten established power and privilege. As Horkheimer notes, disciplinary and neutralizing efforts begin "as soon as theorists fail to limit themselves to verification and classification by means of categories which are as neutral as possible, that is, categories which are indispensable to inherited ways of life ...".¹¹ In short, it can be argued that the "hostility" to meta-theory which has prevailed - and, as evidenced in the interventions noted above, continues to prevail - in the discipline of international relations "is really directed against the transformative activity associated with critical thinking".¹²

If this is true, then the appropriate response is not only one of marshalling reasoned arguments in support of a meta-theoretically-inspired "restructuring" of international relations theory - although this is certainly an important part. The appropriate response must also incorporate a

¹¹Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," p. 232.

¹²"Traditional and Critical Theory," p. 232.

political effort oriented toward transforming the very "inherited ways of life" which give rise to disciplining and neutralizing efforts in the first place.

In short, a "critical" international relations theory - like all critical forms of theorizing - must be validated on two distinct levels. At one level, it is validated, as are all forms of theorizing, by developing reasoned arguments in support of its claims which are successful in gaining the assent of the relevant academic community. Yet while this level of validation is crucial, it is not sufficient. In the words of Horkheimer:

General criteria for assessing critical theory as a whole do not exist, for they are always based on the recurrence of events and thus on a self-reproducing totality For all its insight into isolated events and for all the agreements of its elements with the most advanced traditional theories, critical theory has no specific authority on its side other than the interest in the abolition of social injustice which is connected to it.¹³

In short, a "critical" international relations theory must also validate itself in terms of the lives of those to whom it is ultimately directed. Critical international relations theory must realize itself in the concrete emancipation of human beings.

Of course, the appropriation of specific forms of theorizing never occurs in a vacuum. Currently, in the face

¹³"Traditionelle und kritische Theorie," in Max Horkheimer, Kritische Theorie: Eine Dokumentation, I, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1968), p. 190, my translation.

of the limitations on the well-being and autonomy of the members of the global polis identified in the first chapter - limitations posed by nuclear weapons, the ecological crisis, the systematic violation of human rights around the globe, and the growing disparity between rich and poor within an increasingly interdependent world economy - people have increasingly begun to search for a global perspective to guide them in their locally-based activities of organizing and resistance. In concrete terms, as the urban poor in underdeveloped countries have become increasingly aware that decisions made in International Monetary Fund boardrooms in Washington, D. C. have a profound impact on their daily struggle for survival, as workers in advanced industrial states have become increasingly conscious of the fact that the "globalization" of national economies has a direct bearing on job security and living standards, as peace, human rights, and environmental activists around the planet have become increasingly cognizant that militarization, environmental degradation, and human rights violations are inextricably linked to existing global structures, the demand for critical, emancipatory theory which incorporates a global perspective has grown in stride. It is this demand, emanating from a growing transnational constituency, for critical, emancipatory theory with a global perspective which provides the emerging critical international relations theory identified in this study with a concrete opportunity to realize itself - an

opportunity which may well not have existed even twenty years ago.

At the same time, this opportunity also draws our attention to the limits of the restructuring process that has been identified. For while it can be argued that significant changes are taking place at a meta-theoretical level, it must also be recognized that those changes have yet to be translated into significant gains in theoretical-empirical terms. The enterprise of erecting substantive analyses of, for example, inter-state conflict or global economic disparities, upon the meta-theoretical foundation of critical theory has hardly begun. In short, while the restructuring of international relations theory may be of discernable actuality at the level of meta-theory, at the level of theoretical analysis of concrete issues it remains little more than potentiality. Yet it is clearly crucial to carry out this enterprise if the promise held out by the meta-theoretical restructuring process identified in this study is to be fulfilled.

Inevitably, a critical theory of international politics which is committed to working for human emancipation, will, virtually by definition, come into conflict with "certain vested interests - intellectual, political, economic, social in general".¹⁴ Even so, there is no alternative. If

¹⁴Morgenthau, "The Nature and Limits," p. 22.

international relations theory is to remain "true to its moral commitment", the restructuring process now underway must be brought to its "subversive and revolutionary" conclusion.¹⁵ It is only in this way that the discipline of international relations can hope to make a meaningful contribution to the "Aristotelian project" of the "leading of a good and just life" in our global polis.

¹⁵Morgenthau, "The Nature and Limits," p. 22.

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