THE END OF A NEW BEGINNING:

THE CRISIS OF THE "THIRD DEBATE" AND THE POLITICS

OF POST-MODERN INTERNATIONAL THEORY

By

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Abstract

The discipline of International Relations is today pervaded by an almost debilitating sense of "crisis," perhaps even "entropy," where certainty in our theoretical constructs, research programs, intellectual motifs and disciplinary sense of purpose, has all but disappeared. Practitioners now readily rehearse the litany of ills that beset the discipline, lamenting an era free of dire proclamations that announce "crisis," disjuncture, division, and retrogression. The imminent end of International Relations, or at least pronouncements of its intellectual disarray, now serve both as an intellectual starting point for the study of international relations as well as an epitaph forewarning of the discipline's intellectual closure or impending collapse. Theoretical turmoil has become endemic, indeed part of the normal disciplinary discourse by which International Relations has come to be understood and identified.

This thesis addresses some of the causes of this "crisis" and the sense of intellectual malaise prevalent amongst students, theorists and practitioners alike. More generally, the thesis is a contribution to reclaiming International Relations from those who would wish its end and from those who actively seek its deconstruction. To that end, I question the utility of the latest, and seemingly perennial, bout of metaphysical reappraisal labelled the "Third Debate." More specifically, I explore the newest theoretical fad to hit International Relations, post-modernism, analyzing critically what this might offer international theory, or, more accurately, what it threatens to do to the discipline and theoretical endeavour.

Until now, most commentators have merely announced the arrival of the "Third Debate" and of post-modern theory, little understanding the epistemic leitmotifs of the debate or the epistemological and ontological issues at play amid the abstract interlocutions of positivists and

post-positivists. Post-modernist discourse, in particular, has tended to favour a somewhat obtuse and recondite form of self-expression, ostracising those not versed in its technical jargon and engaging in a level of debate not traditionally familiar to theorists of international relations. In this respect, this thesis might be understood as a *baedeker* to the "Third Debate" and post-modern theory more generally; an attempt to traverse the otherwise un-traversable subterfuge of post-modernist discourse in order to make sense of it and assess its worth and utility to the study of international relations.

It is in this spirit that I explore the writings of various post-modernists throughout the social sciences and humanities, and attempt to develop a series of heuristic typologies of post-modern theory in order to provide an overview of its various nuances and epistemic motifs. These categories are then applied, via a critical exegetic analysis, to the work of Richard Ashley, one of the discipline's leading champions and importers of a post-modernist perspective.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I sit down to write this very last page of script to be included in the introductory pages of my dissertation, it occurs to me how misplaced, indeed deceptive, is my personal sense of accomplishment. Mine was a sacrifice involving little more than self-absorption and perennial preoccupation! Of those around me, however, theirs was a much greater sacrifice that words alone cannot describe. What does one say to parents who paid for this, to the support of friends that never tired, and to the colleagues whose assistance never faulted? It is fitting, therefore, that of all the pages I have written, this one is proving to be the hardest. For it is written from the heart not the head, with feeling and gratitude so overwhelming that I fear any offering I make here can only be feeble in comparison to what has been given me.

First and foremost this thesis was made possible because of the unquestioned love and support of my parents, Jean and Stuart Jarvis, and my sister, Nichola. It is hard to contemplate the sacrifices they have made, the encouragement they have given, and the faith they always had that I would one day finish. I might have put the words on paper, but it is they who furnished me with the means, time, resolve, and sense to do so. Without Mum and Dad's encouragement to continue with my education, their good council that has always proven judicious, I doubt very much that I would have come this far. It is thus that I must correct a mistake I made in the acknowledgements to my Master's Thesis, when I noted that it would take a "life time to repay all that they had given me." I now see how wrong I was; even two life times would not be enough.

If the key to a successful dissertation lies with good parents, so too does it lie with good teachers. Indeed, despite the distance in space and years past, this thesis reflects the committed teachings of two people who nurtured me; Professors Cherry Gertzel and Hin Leng of the Flinders University of South Australia. As will always be the case, I am indebted to their countless hours of instruction and patience, and their encouragement which never faulted. So too, I must thank Professor Bill Brugger, also of the Flinders University of South Australia. It is with great fondness that I remember my time there, the camaraderie, support, and inspiration they provided me. It seems a long time ago now, but I would like them all to know how it was they who made it possible for me to be writing this today. Thank you.

In my move to Canada and the Department of Political Science at the University of British Columbia, new friends, colleagues and teachers have been no less instrumental in my completing this thesis. In particular, my enrolment in Professor Holsti's graduate course on International Relations Theory, along with my dear friend Terry O'Callaghan, set me off down new theoretical avenues. Despite both our flimsy attendance records at Professor Holsti's early morning classes — a fact that I am sure Professor Holsti will attest to! — both of us devoted untold hours to Professor Holsti's reading list and still more hours to debating those readings, all to the dereliction of our other courses. I think it fair to say that we lived, ate, and breathed international relations theory day and night. Thus must I thank Professor Holsti, in the first

instance, for not failing me on my attendance record, and secondly, for his thesis supervision that proved invaluable; an elegant mixture of prudent intervention and suitable distance that allowed me intellectual freedom but with the knowledge that I was being watched over and, when necessary, guided in the right direction.

So too must I thank Terry O'Callaghan for his "supervision." At great cost to both of us, our frequent and very lengthy international phone calls were priceless. Whether for a chat, joke, some serious scholarly advice, or a friendly ear to comment on ideas, drafts and re-drafts, Terry's help has been inestimable. Indeed, the completion of this thesis is, in no small measure, due to him. While words alone cannot express my gratitude, I am sure that in the years to come the whisky I intend to buy for him will!

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Professors Philip Resnick and Robert Jackson. Professor Resnick was extremely helpful, first as my Graduate Advisor upon my arrival to Canada, and then as a member of my thesis committee. And Professor Jackson offered some exceptionally insightful readings of my thesis that, without doubt, strengthened the final version. Needless to say, Professor Jackson's presence on my thesis committee was very much appreciated. To both of them, many thanks.

To Jim, many, many thanks. Apart from myself, there is perhaps no other person more relieved by the completion of this thesis than Jim Poon; an event that brings to an end his tireless and meticulous proof-reading of my many drafts. Were he to have demanded payment for such punishment I would have gladly paid, knowing that it was I who had found a bargain. But such was never in question, a fact that betrays his kindness and generosity for which I shall always remain indebted. As a final gesture I can but write the following; thhankyou veryy muuch!

I must also thank three very special friends, Sharon Solomons, Annie White, and Diane Padmore. Despite Sharon and Annie being from Edmonton, they proved to be wonderful people and do Alberta proud! As has always been the case, my affection for them all will be better expressed toward the end of a future evening, when, as we consume the last of many bottles of red, I can better toast their friendship, support, help, and love. I hope it is with great enthusiasm that they approach that evening, for the following day I shouldn't wonder that they curse me for the night before!

And last, but by no means least, I have to thank Robert Crawford. The jokes were appalling, the telephone conversations lengthy and frequent, and the fables extraordinary! This, I think, is what they mean by therapy, and it did the trick.

DSLJ Vancouver, September 1995.

To the loving memory of Irene and Leslie Allen

RIP

Introduction

Of the many thousands of words written about post-modernist perspectives and international theory, of the debates and disputes between the new converts to post-modernism and the defenders of modernity, Chris Brown's recent epiphany is perhaps the most informative, capturing the essence of this intellectual divide in a way that would seem to make stark the contrasts between them. Of post-modernism, he writes, "those that like this sort of thing will find this the sort of thing they like—those who do not, will not."[1] And this, perhaps, has been the extent of the "Third Debate" to date; an intellectual rift interspersed with ritual denunciations and affirmations of likes and dislikes. If the "Third Debate" was meant to bring clarity to a discipline otherwise congested with new approaches, issues areas and perspectives, then it has surely failed. The lexicon of post-modernism, its eclectic and discursive styles, has succeeded only in making more obtuse the issues, problems and debates afoot in the discipline. Indeed, for want of clarity the "Third Debate" has become little more than rehearsed statements of intransigence, spoken by those who announce and "celebrate" its arrival, and those who would forestall its colonization and spread. Beyond such declarations, however, the "Third Debate" exists in name only, having been neither explored in terms of its consequences, nor appraised critically in terms of its offerings and contributions.

Aims and Objectives

This thesis attempts such an appraisal by exploring critically the motifs of post-modern theory in International Relations. It does so out of a desire to make sense of the "Third Debate"

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[1] Brown, C., (1994), "Review of Campbell, D., & Dillon, M., (1993)(eds.), *The Political Subject of Violence.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, & Sjolander, C.T., & Cox, W.S., (1994)(eds.), *Beyond Positivism: Critical Reflections on International Relations.* Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner," *Millennium,* Vol.23.No.1, Spring, p.142.

and render it intelligible. Indeed, for many in the discipline the "Third Debate" and the subterfuge of post-modern theory have become somewhat of a malediction; a cumbersome exercise in semantic obfuscation that seems to cloud still further the subject of International Relations and lose it amid a continental vernacular. If only because of its abstruse nomenclature and penchant for inter-disciplinary travels, many in International Relations remain perplexed by the new interpretivism and the challenges it poses both to the discipline, its intellectual boundaries, and its theory. Hardly surprisingly, then, the "Third Debate" has become an ungainly domain of recondite theoretical locutions, outracing those not versed in its idiomatic vocabulary, and rendering enigmatic its precise dimensions, leitmotifs, and divergent strands of thought. Critical assessments of post-modern theory and the "Third Debate" have therefore been mute. Robert Gilpin, for example, can but lament the need for an "English translation" to such approaches and announce that, in the absence of one, he has "no idea what it means."[2] Thus, amid pronouncements of this "new beginning,"[3] among the debris of old theories and the invention of new ones, among new methodological perspectives, deconstructive strategies and post-modern theories, practitioners, theorists and students alike find themselves stumbling about with incertitude, lost in a discourse that prizes epistemological and ontological logomachy above clarity in communication. This is a "great debate" like none the discipline has ever experienced before.

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[2] Gilpin, R.G., (1986), "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," in Keohane, R.O., (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.303.

[3] Biersteker, T.J., (1989), "Critical Reflections on Post-Positivism in International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33,No.3, September, p.266.

This thesis therefore aims to construct a *baedeker* to the "Third Debate" and post-modern theory, in order that practitioners in the field might traverse the subterfuge of these debates and approaches and assess them critically for their utility to the study of international relations. In a sense, then, this thesis might be understood as an *operating manual* to the mechanics of post-modernist discourse, a means of glancing inside such theory to see its inner workings, suppositions, motivations, biases, aims and objectives. I do so, however, not to celebrate the language deracination endemic to post-modern perspectives, but so as to bypass it and thereby make transparent the ontological and epistemological foundations on which post-modern theory is itself constructed. The originality of the thesis therefore lies in its attempt to expose the politics of post-modern international theory, whereby certain varieties of post-modernist scholarship have been plundered and pillaged of particular motifs, imported into International Relations, and used in the pursuit of political ends. It is in this context that I also explore the unknown *continent* of post-modern scholarship generally, attempting to develop a series of heuristic typologies of post-modern theory in order that we might distinguish between those varieties otherwise useful to International Relations from those that are not.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for this undertaking, however, is not purely pedagogical but stems from a deep seated concern about the growing irrelevance and ethereality of theory in the discipline. Indeed, the discourse of International Relations has moved to a plateau so incorporeal as to make its relevance to the actualities of international politics and the people whose lives and concerns are the real stuff of international relations, extremely tenuous. Cries of "crisis," disjuncture, theoretical perspectivism, and the umbrage of a "Dividing Discipline," would seem

to be making meaningless those disciplinary boundaries that otherwise give us a sense of purpose or common project.[4] Theory in International Relations seems to be less about international politics than it does about metaphysical reflections of how it is that we have come to know of international relations. Arguably, the sociology of knowledge has become the defining motif of the "Third Debate," causing us to lose sight of the subject we once use to study. This thesis is thus an attempt to regain sight of the subject of International Relations, and a call to practitioners to return to theoretical endeavours that aim to *explain* and *understand* the phenomena of our subject matter.

More specifically, though, this thesis is also borne of a suspicion of post-modernism, at least in the context of its importations into International Relations. The growing popularity of post-modernist perspectives in the discipline, for example, the ready acceptance by many of the need to engage in "deconstructive practices," the allegations of moral improprieties and the imputation of disciplinary culpability in numerous horrors waged in the name of "modernity" and "science," wreaks of a political witch hunt not before seen in the discipline. Theory, while always a powerful tool that can be used in the service of specific rationalities, seems increasingly to be a political instrument, hijacked for its destructive potential and wielded in accusatory and threatening fashion. This thesis is thus a defense of the edifice of theory as "[o]ne of the crowning achievements of the past several centuries." Indeed, it is a defense of "...theory as an idea," as Nicholas Onuf put it, of "theory as an enterprise, theory

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[4] Holsti, K.J., (1985), *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory.* Boston: Unwin Hyman.

as an economic statement of what we think we know about the world and ourselves," and of "theory as the grounds for judgement."[5]

The Argument

Broadly conceived, then, this study is about what Thomas Biersteker calls this "new beginning," and what I shall argue is its fast approaching end. For despite the hopes for renewal, the pretensions to openness, the claims to perspectivism, despite the foray into interpretivism and the desire for new theoretical approaches and understandings, this thesis argues that post-modernist perspectives as they currently exist in International Relations have failed on all these counts. In fact, the crowning issues of the "Third Debate," epistemology and ontology, have, I shall argue, been expropriated by certain proponents of post-modernism and used as diversionary facades to hide an essentially ideological locution. Under this guise, post-modernism, if not the "Third Debate" generally, has become a vehicle not for suggesting new ways and methods to better our scholarship, but for dismantling the disciplinary basis of that scholarship while calling for, and contributing to, a new political order. To this end, I endeavour to develop a series of tools that might be applied exegetically to a critical reading of the discipline's foremost champion of a post-modern perspective, Richard K. Ashley. If only because Ashley pioneered "dissident" scholarship in the discipline, his work is singled out for special attention, emblematic of that variety of scholarship now endemic in the discipline, and for which Ashley, almost single handedly, has set the tone of the debate and delimited a "project" that has come to dominate post-modernism in International Relations.

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[5] Onuf, N.G., (1989), *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p.11.

The message of this thesis is therefore simple: amid the "Third Debate," ideology has gotten in the way of facts, discourse in the way of understanding, deconstruction in the way of theory, post-modernism in the way of progress, and the "Third Debate" generally in the way of studying international relations. However, I should forestall the impression that I oppose the "Third Debate" in its entirety and all post-modern theory. On the contrary, my concern is with a particular variety of post-modernism that, in International Relations, has come to dominate dissident scholarship to the exclusion of other post-modernist perspectives. As chapters three and four will more fully elucidate, I target what I call "subversive" postmodernism, exemplified in the writings of Richard Ashley and Robert Walker, for taking the discipline down an ideologically destructive road. Where the "Third Debate" might have proven a productive and highly valuable exercise in theoretical evaluation and intellectual renewal, its intellectual hijacking and subsequent embrace of subversive post-modernism, has caused its devolution into a meaningless and divisive exercise bent on destruction.

Organization and Method

Employing a critical exegetic methodology, this thesis begins with an historical overview of the development of the discipline and its attempts at theory construction. Chapter one is an effort at demonstrating the problem of "discipline" in International Relations, and of relating theory to that endeavour. So too is it an attempt at demonstrating the machinations the discipline and its theory currently experience, situating this in the context of its poor intellectual ancestry and, more recently, in the context of post-modernist theory and the rise of perspectivism.

Chapter two begins an exploration of the "Third Debate" and post-modern theory, not in terms of an exposition of its specific theoretical motifs, but of the effects of these motifs on the discipline and theoretical endeavour. I thus address some of the consequences of the "Third Debate" and the newest radical perspectivism.

In chapter three I turn to an analysis of post-modern theory in its entirety. In essence, I attempt both an understanding of post-modernism by offering two alternative readings and also by developing a number of thematic *ideal types* as a means of desegregating the monolith of theory labelled "post-modern." In part, chapter three is a taxonomical exercise, but also an exercise in revealing the different varieties of post-modernism in order that we might begin to evaluate their utility to International Relations.

Chapters four and five then apply these categories via a critical exegetic analysis to the work of Richard Ashley. The underlying epistemological and ontological basis of his "project" is addressed, critically questioned and explored in terms of its contributions to the discipline and theoretical endeavour.

Finally, chapter six addresses the legacy and implications of post-modernist approaches in the discipline, situating this in a discussion of the functions of theory in International Relations.

Introduction

The study of international relations, and the discipline more generally, is today in the midst of a "crisis." The role and purpose of theory, the aims, objectives and parameters of the discipline, the place of the scholar and practitioner, the advent of post-modern theory, and the increasing number of voices that cry discontented and engage in "deconstructive" practices, has begun a period of meta-theoretic reappraisal and introspective self-analysis. Indeed, International Relations stands at an intellectual crossroads amid innumerable choices, problems, issues, theories, agendas and paradigms. Theorists are now urged to "reinvent," "rearticulate" and "redefine" their project, to reexamine the scope and methods of the discipline.[1] These same theorists are beseeched to import exotic theories, to overhaul existing perspectives, dismantle old boundaries, approach new understandings, assess "new facts," and rebuild from the ground up their disciplinary knowledge. But what can we expect from such meta-theoretic reappraisal where all previous concepts, categories, and theories, if not the discipline itself, are now "essentially contested"?[2] Where do we go next to better understand the world and those forces that shape it? What should the discipline of International Relations look like, do, and concern itself with? And what should a theory of international relations focus upon, if indeed we can any longer aspire to the construction of "grand theory" in international politics?

I outline in this chapter both the historical and contemporary dilemmas of attempting to answer these sorts of questions. In the first section of this chapter I point out the obvious,

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[1] See, for example, Hoffman, M., (1991), "Restructuring, Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation: Four Voices in Critical International Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol.20,No.2, pp.169-185.

[2] Gallie, W.B., (1956), "Essentially Contested Concepts," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol.56, pp.167-198.

although often overlooked, fact that international political theory and the discipline are *atraditional* pursuits with no historical tradition on which to cement a disciplinary project. Put simply, there is little, if any, authoritative intellectual precedent to inform our current concerns and dilemmas. Rather, "International Relations" must be understood as a newly created intellectual space, albeit an awkward and ill-defined space that catches those unable to find a home elsewhere in the social sciences; those who dare to cross borders and concern themselves with the nebulous stuff of "international studies."

As a relatively new disciplinary invention, International Relations is experiencing adolescent bouts of crises, self-doubt and anxiety. The public displays of angst over disciplinary identity and self-image, and the heightened concern over epistemological parentage, render us conspicuously unrecognizable as a discipline and suffused with "theoretical invisibility" as Fred Halliday recently observed.[3] Unlike the established social sciences of history, economics, or psychology, for example, where even the uninitiated can easily map disciplinary and intellectual boundaries, few would hazard a guess as to what the study of "international relations" or "international political theory" entails, "let alone the issues involved." To the average observer, for example, the breadth of our disciplinary enterprise is often perceived to be no more than "a brisk combination of current affairs and common sense," intermingled with the "odd historical reference."[4] And while this is clearly unsatisfactory, lucid enunciations of our disciplinary boundaries are hardly forthcoming from professional participants, who situate International Relations somewhere between the study of history,

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[3] Halliday, F., (1991), "International Relations: Is There a New Agenda?" *Millennium*, Vol.20,No.1, p.66.

[4] *ibid.*

jurisprudence, economics, philosophy, geography and politics, and vaguely concerned with issues of sociology and psychology, but not indebted to anyone of these pursuits in particular. What we do, let alone the parameters of our rarely defined project, are as elusive to the uninitiated as they are to the many who count themselves as professional students of international relations.

Section one of this chapter thus attempts to demonstrate how much of this incertitude is a consequence of the poverty of our intellectual heritage. With few historical markers, few bequeathed works of significance, and with little historical definition as to our "project," aims, and objectives, International Relations continues to vacillate over its very being. If there is an historical pedigree to International Relations, it rests, I shall argue, in the historical absence of International Relations as a discipline and as a discrete intellectual concern.

In the second section of this chapter, I point out the theoretical and disciplinary flux occasioned by recent importations of continental philosophy. These, I argue, have caused yet further consternation for practitioners still in the midst of defining their disciplinary project let alone engaging in epistemological and ontological debates. The importation of deconstructionist theory, post-structuralism and the various theoretical vignettes of post-modernism, for example, while expanding "discourse" also threaten to destroy the discipline through theoretical fragmentation and destabilization. As Kalevi Holsti notes, International Relations is the "Dividing Discipline."[5] But even this is too generous a description when characterizing the extent and depth of incommensurate discourse that now predominates. More likely is the case

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[5] Holsti, K.J., (1985), *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

that we are now the *divided* discipline, disunited in focus, method, and scope, estranged from differing theoretical perspectives, intellectually segregated by specialized nomenclature, and sequestered by particular research interests, we are increasingly unacquainted with the expanding terrain of our own discipline and prone to parochialism. Where Holsti, for example, identified a nascent intellectual perspectivism in terms of three broadly conceived schools of thought (the Classical, Grotian, and Neo-marxist), he could still contain this perspectivism within a common disciplinary vessel; a united intellectual enterprise whose auspices concerned the aims, objectives, and methods of International Relations. Arguably, however, this is no longer the case as the second section of this chapter will attempt to demonstrate. Indeed, I differ from Holsti not only over his conception of a "classical tradition" that, in section one of this chapter, I argue never existed other than through retroactive intellectual constructions, but also in the degree to which we can continue to treat International Relations as a discipline. Contra Holsti's depiction, I argue that the disciplinary integrity of International Relations is being eroded by an increasing number of disunited perspectives, that share neither a common approach nor understanding, and that actually challenge the legitimacy of International Relations as a disciplinary enterprise. The second section of this chapter, then, narrates the consequences of the discipline's open door policy, where it has welcomed an increasing number of disparate intellectual approaches into its home, but by virtue of this liberality now runs the risk of being emasculated by its own tolerance for intellectual dissonance.

"The Saddest of Disciplines"

The perplexing problem of writing on international political theory, to use Mansbach's and Ferguson's adage, is that it remains an "elusive quest."[6] Indeed in some respects it is an oxymoron; how can one write on something that has not existed historically? As Martin Wight so aptly put it:

> Now the difficulties begin: it is easy to recognize political theory, but not so easy to recognize international theory, and one might suspect that historically there was no such thing. There is no obvious tradition of enquiry, or body of theory and speculation, about relations between states, and about the problems of obligations that arise in the absence of government. So the attempt to answer the question, 'What is international theory?' only poses a second one, 'Where is international theory?'[7]

Such an intellectual heritage few disciplines would envy, for unlike other disciplines it represents no heritage at all; merely footnotes and scattered references that make international theory "hard to discover."[8] There is no interconnected genealogy from which scholars can

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[6] Mansbach, R.W., & Ferguson, Y.H., (1986), "Values and Paradigm Change: The Elusive Quest for International Relations Theory," in Karns, N.P., (ed.), *Persistent Patterns and Emergent Structures in a Waning Century*. New York: Praeger, pp.11-34.

[7] Wight, M., (1991), *International Theory: The Three Traditions*. (edited by Cabriele Wight & Brian Porter), Leicester: Leicester University Press, p.1. Hans J. Morgenthau was of a similar conclusion, noting; "That men throughout the ages have thought little of a theory of international politics is borne out by the fact that but rarely an explicit attempt to develop such a theory has been made; as rare instances of such attempts, Kautilya and Machiavelli come to mind." See Morgenthau, H.J., (1958), *Dilemmas of Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.48.

[8] *ibid.* In contradistinction to Martin Wight's position, Torbjorn L. Knutsen has recently attempted to counter the "common assumption that the study of International Relations has no theoretical tradition," and that, in fact, it displays a "chain of classic texts" as much as does political theory proper. See Knutsen T.L., (1992), *A History of International Relations Theory: An Introduction*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.1. In a similar genre see also the work of Holzgrefe, J.L., (1989), "The Origins of Modern International Relations Theory," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.15,No.1, January, pp.11-26. See also, Lijphart, A., (1974), "The Structure of the Theoretical Revolution in International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.18,No.1, March, pp.41-74. Kalevi J. Holsti also argues of the existence of what he terms "the classical tradition," albeit that the hegemony it enjoyed for so long has now ended. See, Holsti, K.J., (1985), *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory*. Boston: Allen & Unwin.

define a lineage of theory concerned with international politics. And while most social scientists are able to "build on firm ground and strong foundations because these are deeded to them by their disciplines," the "theory" on which the study of international politics is conducted is a retroactive construct; reconstructed from scattered writings and references and from traditions of enquiry concerned with history, law and philosophy.[9] Historically speaking, this was necessarily the case. Only with the Peace of *Wesphalia* in 1648 did inter-state relations as constituted in the modern European era come into existence. And only since then have international relations been viewed the consequence of the "Reasons of state" rather than "the reason of nature of Grotius or the reason of humanity and religion of Erasmus."[10] Ours is a new discipline which, despite our readings of Thucydides and his observations of the Pelopennesian war, lacks disciplinary longevity and the deeding of concretized methodology and theory; this, after all, was a work of history, not a theoretical discourse.[11] Much of what

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[9] Onuf, N.G., (1989), *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations.* Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p.36. An instance of the retroactive reconstruction of "international theory" is provided, for example, in the elegant writings of Martin Wight, particularly his delineation of three "paradigms" of "international theory:" the Realists or Machiavellians, the Rationalists or Grotians, and the Revolutionists or Kantians. See Wight, M., (1991), *op.cit*, pp.30-48. See also, Porter, B., (1978), "Patterns of Thought and Practice: Martin Wight's International Theory," in Donelan, M., (ed.), *The Reason of States: A Study of International Political Theory.* London: George Allen & Unwin, pp.64-74. More obvious examples of the reinscription of historical texts with theoretical propinquity to International Relations would be the current approbation of Thucydides. Kenneth Waltz, for example, sees Thucydides one of the first to recognize "the anarchic character of international politics;" Robert Gilpin that "Everything that the new realists find intriguing in the interaction of international economics and international politics can be found in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*;" and Robert Keohane that Thucydides is an example of some of the fundamental assumptions of structural realism. See Garst, D., (1989), "Thucydides and Neorealism," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33, pp.3-27.

[10] Olson, W.C., & Groom, A.J.R., (1991), *International Relations Then and Now: Origins and Trends in Interpretation.* London: Harper Collins, p.9.

[11] See the comments by Wight, M., (1966), "Why is there no international theory?," in Butterfield, H., & Wight, M., (eds.), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics.* London: George Allen & Unwin, p.32. And Bull, H., (1991), "Martin Wight and the theory of international relations," in Wight, M., *International Theory: The Three Traditions.* (edited by Cabriele Wight & Brian Porter), Leicester: Leicester

we know of international politics, of diplomacy and war, has been "communicated less in the works of political or international theory than in historical writings." A consequence, one suspects, due not so much to a "kind of recalcitrance of international politics to being theorized about," but to a general disinterest in theorizing the *international* when political philosophy considered most that was important occurring *within* the nation-state.[12] Indeed, it "requires wide reading and considerable discrimination to elicit the principles or theories of international politics" from the philosophical discourse of the moderns.[13] This was the conclusion of F.H. Hinsley who noted that the study of international politics was "still in the state in which biology was before Darwin."[14]

For better or worse, the concerns of Enlightenment philosophy preferred to focus upon the obligations between monarch, state, and citizenry, reflecting the emancipatory ferment of rationalist thought and science as it struggled against feudalism. More obviously, however, our philosophical heritage reflects the "prejudice imposed by the sovereign state" upon Enlightenment philosophers, who assumed "the roots of man's being [to] lie in the separate state," and that what was "right and good for him" was "centred there." The concern with the

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University Press, p.*xxi*.

[12] Wight, M., (1966), *op.cit*, pp.32-33. Wight's assertion that international politics is anomalous, constituting a *sui generis*, is refuted by Roy Jones who maintains that Wight has incorrectly concerned himself "in detailed and elaborate ways with mythology." See Jones, R.E., (1988), "The Myth of the Special Case in International Relations," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.14,No.4, October, pp.267-274. Similarly, Jones had earlier argued, albeit rather beratingly, for the closure of the "English School," attacking Wight for a litany of apparent failings. See Jones, R.E., (1981), "The English School of International Relations: A Case for Closure," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.7, pp.1-13. An excellent rebuke to Jones' argument is provided by Grader, S., (1988), "The English School of International Relations: Evidence and Evaluation," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.14,No.1, pp.29-44.

[13] *ibid*, p.24.

[14] Hinsley, F.H., (1963), *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.6.

modern nation-state, of the obligations between it and those within it, made international politics a "wasteland between states."[15] Enlightenment philosophers were, subsequently, predisposed to a "juristic...belief in the sovereign state as the consummation of political experience and activity which," argued Wight, "has marked Western political thought since the Renaissance."[16]

Subsequently, not only did this "prejudice" circumscribe reflection on things *international*, but so too did it influence what little reflection there was. The state's bounded and territorializing rationality, for example, particularly its physical embodiment but also its contractual essence of rights and obligations, presupposed a pre-contractual understanding of the international sphere. Hobbes, in particular, assumed society a contractual outcome among moral agents, enforced via the authority of a common law. The international sphere, on the other hand, approached the *state of nature* where, in the absence of bounded authority and contractual obligations, the "...*condition of Man*" prevails; "...*a condition of Warre of every one against every one...*"[17] International society is "nothing;" it did not, nor could it exist in the absence of bounded authority, in the absence of the state. It was what international politics

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[15] Donelan, M., (1978), "The Political Theorists and International Theory," in Donelan, M., (ed.), *The Reason of State: A Study of International Political Theory*. London: George Allen & Unwin, pp.77.

[16] Wight, M., (1966), *op.cit*, p.21. See also the discussion by Jackson, R.H., (1990), "Martin Wight, International Theory and the Good Life," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.19.No.2, pp.261-272; Epp, R., (1992), "The Multiple Identities of Martin Wight," *Mimeograph*, paper delivered to the International Studies Association Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, April 1-4.

[17] Hobbes, T., (1968), *Leviathan*. (edited by C.B. Macpherson), Penguin, p.189.

were not, as judged by referents internal to the nation-state, that defined the so-called

"classical" tradition of international theory exemplified in the writings of Hobbes:[18]

> I put it for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restlesse desire
> for Power after power, that ceaseth only in Death. And the cause of this, is not
> always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, than he has already
> attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he
> cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without
> the acquisition of more. And from hence it is, that Kings, whose power is
> greatest, turn their endeavours to the assuring it at home by Lawes, or abroad
> by Wars.[19]

There was no community of states, only the pre-social existence of independent agents

who, because of the "Competition of Riches, Honour, Command, or other power" would be

"enclineth to Contention, Enmity, and War."[20] If any tradition of thought can be said to have

guided the study of international politics it is surely this one: the realist tradition, or more

ignominiously, the men of "blood and iron and immorality."[21] Of this tradition alone can we

trace a lineage of recurrent themes. In Hegel, for example, international politics was a

"...maelstrom of external contingency and the inner particularity of passions, private interests

and selfish ends, abilities and virtues, vices, force and wrong. All these," he said, "swirl

together, and in their vortex the ethical whole itself, the autonomy of the state, is exposed to

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[18] See the discussion in Holsti, K.J., (1985), *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, pp.15-40.

[19] Hobbes, T., (1968), *op.cit*, p.161.

[20] *ibid*

[21] Bull, H., (1991), *op.cit*, p.xi See also the excellent discussion in Waltz, K., (1965), *Man, the State and War*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.159-186. It is ironic to note, however, that Hobbes, while held in such high regard by international relations scholars, displayed remarkable brevity in addressing the subject of international politics. As Cornelia Navari observed; "Since Hobbes wrote so little about relations between states, it is odd that there should be a 'Hobbesian tradition' of international relations." See Navari, C., (1982), "Hobbes and the 'Hobbesian Tradition' in International Thought," *Millennium*, Vol.11,No.3, p.203.

contingency."[22] Still later do the writings of Morgenthau reaffirm Hobbes' dictum that: "...the state creates morality as well as law and that there is neither morality or law outside the state."[23]

Little wonder that the study of international politics became a residual exercise, understood as the "untidy fringe of domestic politics."[24] Few were disposed to reflect upon things international, which according to Olson and Groom, made the "period between *Westphalia* and the defeat of Napoleon" one "characterized neither by peace nor by any systematic theory of international relations."[25] Instead, ceded to us has been a philosophic pedigree that tended to reflect:

> ...on the future of relations among states either as philosophers of history certain of the direction history would take, or as reformers convinced that there were institutions, methods, and ideas which could ensure that harmony prevailed among nations and whose triumph it was necessary to insure.[26]

In such light we can understand the texts of the Abbe Saint-Pierre, later of Kant, Rousseau and Bentham, and still later of Woodrow Wilson.[27] But if they represent our

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[22] Knox, T.M., (1967), *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Clarendon Press: Oxford, p.215. See also Williams, H., (1992), *International Relations in Political Theory*. London: Open University Press, pp.92-104.

[23] Morgenthau, H.J., (1958), *op.cit*, p.81. Earlier Morgenthau wrote; "Above the national societies there exists no international society so integrated as to be able to define for them the concrete meaning of justice or equality, as national societies do for their members." See Morgenthau, H.J., (1951), *In Defense of the National Interest*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p.34.

[24] Wight, M., (1966), *op.cit*, p.21.

[25] Olson, W.C., & Groom, A.J.R., (1991), *op.cit*, p.22.

[26] Hoffmann, S., (1965), *The State of War: Essays on the Theory and Practice of International Politics*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, pp.3-4.

[27] See Bentham, J., (1974), "Plan for Universal and Perpetual Peace," in Jacob, M.C., (ed.), *Peace Projects of the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Garland, pp.11-44. Wilson, W., (1923), *Woodrow Wilson's Case for the League of Nations*. New York: Kennikat Press. Charles de Saint-Pierre, Abbe de Tiron, (1974), "A Shorter Project for Perpetual Peace," in Jacob, M.C., (ed.), *op.cit*, pp.1-61. Kant, I., (1957), *Perpetual Peace*. (edited by

heritage, much of their writing "...is largely repellent and intractable in form;" "...scattered, unsystematic, and mostly inaccessible..."[28] As Stanley Hoffmann noted, international theory was bequeathed little other than:

> ...the recipes of Machiavelli; the marginal comments on the state of nature by Hobbes'; Locke's and Rousseau's writings, some pages of Hume; two short and tantalizing essays by Kant, compressed considerations by Hegel, and oversimplified fragments by Marx.[29]

In large measure, philosophy has refused to exist outside the nation-state; how could it when the state represented the "ethical whole" and all exterior to it an amoral "vortex"?[30] This, of course, was an extension of the Hellenic tradition. Cicero, for example, argued that the interests of the *polis* and of those under its jurisdiction were above morality; Thucydides that the "strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept;" and Thrasymachus "that justice or right is simply what is in the interest of the stronger party."[31] Beyond the bounds of the state existed only the particularity of state interests where government was "a matter of particular wisdom, not of universal Providence."[32] But this is hardly a substantive inheritance in comparison to other social sciences, displaying an etiology

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Lewis White Beck), New York: Liberal Arts Press. Hoffmann, S., (1965), *op.cit*, especially chapter 3, "Rousseau on War and Peace," pp.54-87. Hoffmann, S., & Fidler, D.P., (1991) (eds.), *Rousseau on International Relations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. And, Rousseau, J.J., (1974), "A Project for Perpetual Peace," in Jacob, M.C., (ed.), *op.cit*.

[28] Wight, M., (1966), *op.cit*, p.20.

[29] Hoffmann, S., (1977), "An American Social Science: International Relations," *Daedalus*, Vol.1, Summer, p.41.

[30] The recalcitrance of the *philosophes'* of the Enlightenment to engage in speculation on international matters, in fact their hostility to it as manifested in their *anti-diplomacy*, is succinctly addressed in Der Derian, J., (1987), *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Estrangement*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp.160-167.

[31] Knox, T.M., (1967), *op.cit*, p.214., Knutsen T.L., (1992), *op.cit*, p.32.

[32] As discussed in Der Derian, J., (1987), *op.cit*, pp.102.

situated more in the speculative realm of *"what ought-to-be"* as Hegel put it; an endless

speculative project "since its actuality depends on different wills each of which is

sovereign."[33] Morgenthau was inclined to agree, noting that "Men" have generally "dealt with

international politics on one of three levels, all alien to theory: history, reform, or pragmatic

manipulation."

> That is to say, they have endeavoured to detect the facts and meaning of
> international politics through the knowledge of the past; or they have tried to
> devise a pattern of international politics more in keeping with an abstract ideal
> than the empirical one; or they have sought to meet the day-by-day issues of
> international politics by trial and error.[34]

Consequently, from Hobbes to Rousseau and from Kant to Bentham, there were few

systematic attempts at explaining and understanding the nature of international politics. In its

place observation and description were offered as poor substitutes for explanation, and the

bestowal of a theory of human nature and the will to power was hardly a sufficient basis for

the construction of theory concerned with an increasingly complex set of global phenomena.

Thus it is that international political theory, if by that we mean the "systematic study"

of international relations, is a relatively recent development.[35] Only in the Twentieth century

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[33] *ibid*, p.212.

[34] Morgenthau, H.J., (1958), *op.cit*, p.48.

[35] See, for example, the discussion in Hoffmann, S., (1965), *op.cit*, pp.3-21. Useful overviews of the development of the discipline are provided in Olson, W.C., (1972), "The Growth of a Discipline," in Porter, B., (ed.), *The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics 1919-1969*. London: Oxford University Press, pp.3-29. And, Bull, H., (1972), "The Theory of International Politics, 1919-1969," in Porter, B., (ed.), *op.cit*, pp.30-55. Very useful discussions can also be found in Thompson, K., (1952), "The Study of International politics: A Survey of Trends and Developments," *The Review of Politics*, Vol.14,No.4, October, pp.433-467. Fox, W.T., & Fox, A.B., (1961), "The Teaching of International Relations in the United States," *World Politics*, Vol.13,No.3, April, pp.339-359. Fox, W.T., (1949), "Interwar International Relations Research: The American Experience," *World Politics*, Vol.2,No.1, October, pp.67-79. Dunn, F.S., (1949), "The Present Course in International Relations Research," *World Politics*, Vol.2,No.1, October, pp.80-95.

can we begin to observe anything like a "tradition" of scholarship concerned with analyzing inter-state relationships and developing analytical and theoretical apparatus to explain these. However, it is not apparent that even our most recent past has served us well. While we now talk of a "discipline" of International Relations, often euphemistically since we typically feature as sub-fields of political science, history or law, the *quest* for theory, at least paradigmatic theory of the Kuhnian type, remains elusive.[36] And while histories of the theories of international politics have been constructed, "traditions" invented, the pages of political theory and philosophy reread duly noting references to things international, to war, and to the reason of state and diplomacy, we still have no Darwin, Durkheim, Smith, no Plato nor Aristotle upon whom to build theoretical foundations with certitude.[37] Try as we may, we can never make the parable of Rousseau's Stag Hunt, or the Kantian idealism of a single human republic tailored on Dante's *imperium mundi*, the foundational stuff of international political theory.[38] Thus, save for a few treatises, the poverty of our intellectual heritage makes ours the "saddest of disciplines."[39]

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[36] See, for example, the introductory comments in Ferguson, Y.H., & Mansbach, R.W., (1988), *The Elusive Quest: Theory and International Politics*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, pp.3-5.

[37] Obviously I do not insist that theoretical incertitude is unique to international political theory. The social sciences generally have long suffered from a theoretical "infancy" that has become somewhat of a platitude amongst biographers of the field. My point, however, is that this is perhaps more evident in international political theory than in the more established and intellectually defined pursuits of say economics, history, or sociology, for example.

[38] Wight, M., (1991), *op.cit*, pp.40-41.

[39] Donelan, M., (1978), *op.cit*, p.75.

The Deeding of Strong Foundations?

In many respects, this rather incongruous, if not dissymmetric ancestry prefigured recurrent problems the discipline of International Relations and its theory would experience. Martin Wight, for instance, argued that "international theory...[was]...marked, not only by paucity but also by intellectual and moral poverty;" hardly a robust foundation on which to construct a discipline.[40] In fact, debate over the founding of the first chair of International Relations in 1919 reigned as late as 1935, illustrative of the "lack of intellectual discipline" prevalent even throughout the inter-war years. Sir Alfred Zimmern, for example, then Chair of International Relations at Oxford, argued against a separate subject and instead urged a "world orientation" of sociology, politics and history.[41] As to what constituted the subject matter of international studies, Zimmern ecumenically advised that "'the indispensable nucleus of the subject' was contained in political science, political economy, international law, geography, history, sociology and political and moral philosophy."[42] Few disciplines can boast such a well defined beginning! Yet Zimmern's comments reflected not only how tenuous were

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[40] Wight, M., (1966), *op.cit*, p.20.

[41] The first chair in International Relations was named after Woodrow Wilson and established at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, in 1919. It was first held by Sir Alfred Zimmern for 2 years who then resigned later to become the first Montague Burton professor of international relations at Oxford in August, 1930. See the discussion in Olson, W.C., (1972), *op.cit*, pp.5,12-13. See also Markwell, D.J., (1986), "Sir Alfred Zimmern Revisited: Fifty Years On," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.12,No.4, October, pp.279-292. On the founding of the first chair in International Relations at Aberystwyth, see the discussion by Porter, B., (1989), "David Davies: a Hunter After Peace," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.15,No.1, January, pp.27-36. A useful discussion of the development of the discipline is also provided in Halliday, F., (1990), "The Pertinence of International Relations," *Political Studies*, Vol.38, pp.502-516.

[42] As quoted in Olson, W.C., & Groom, A.J.R., (1991), *op.cit*, p.90. See also the short introductory remarks by Zimmern, A., (1939), *University Teaching of International Relations*. Paris: International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, League of Nations, pp.6-13. The eclecticism which Zimmern thought entailed in the study of international relations is instructive of the disciplines' amorphous beginnings which, with hindsight, read as if a comic parody of our profession, especially given Zimmern's verbose and elegant style.

the discipline's foundations, but were prescient of how polymorphic its subsequent development would be. Consequently, for a long time the study of international relations remained subsumed among the disciplines of history and law, where the history of international relations and the "study of legal norms," which attempted to "order these relations," obviated enquiry into their *politics*.[43] This reflected the fact that only in the twentieth century was foreign policy "democratized." Diplomatic issues finally "moved from the calculations of the few to the passions of the many." Where previously international politics had been the "sport of kings, or the preserve of cabinets—the last refuge of secrecy, the last domain of largely hereditary castes of diplomats"—now it was debated in the public domain and amenable to analysis in the academic one.[44] International relations were thus politicised and an intellectual space made for their analysis; the catastrophes of the First and Second World Wars and the deaths of untold millions demanded no less. It was these concerns that motivated the writings of Carr and, more obviously, of Hans Morgenthau.[45] And the urgency of these concerns combined with the travesty of events made for the hasty formulation of theoretical models and a tendency toward empiricist methodologies.[46] The latter reflected not only Morgenthau's zest to reform, educate and "erect an empirical science opposed to the utopias of the international lawyers," but also the nature of the "subject matter" and, not least, the country in which these formulations were most obviously attempted, the United States. International Relations is, after

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[43] Hoffmann, S., (1965), *op.cit*, p.4.

[44] Hoffmann, S., (1977), *op.cit*, pp.42-43.

[45] See Carr, E.H., (1964), *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939*. New York: Harper Torchbooks. Morgenthau, H.J., (1967), *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Alfred Knopf.

[46] Hoffmann, S., (1965), *op.cit*, pp.4-5.

all, "[a]n American Social Science" as Hoffmann so elegantly told us; "[b]orn and raised in America."[47] Yet it was born and raised not so much from intellectual deeds, as from circumstance and need. In fact, we cannot separate the growth of the discipline from the role the United States played in global affairs after 1945.[48] Superpower status and the new-found role of "world policeman" demanded the input of expert guidance in America's dealings with foreign governments, ensuring government patronage of the discipline. Consequently, theoretical development in the discipline was drawn towards empirical analysis, reflecting the ease with which empirical theory could inform the conundrums of foreign policy, military preparedness, nuclear proliferation and strategic planning. This, combined with the post-war reaction to the ideological excesses of fascism and communism, made empirical theory attractive in that its purported neutrality supposedly offered a means of escaping dogmatism in the pursuit of knowledge. Whatever the case, empirical theory became the foundation stone on which international political theory would be constructed. For Hoffmann this seemed only natural, since "...the contrast between the precepts of law and the realities of politics was sufficiently greater in the international realm than in the domestic realm, to make one want to shift from the normative to the empirical.[49] On this perspective, Morgenthau easily defined the parameters of our discipline, noting that we must consider:

> The national interest defined in terms of power, the precarious uncertainty of the international balance of power, the weakness of international morality, the decentralized character of international law, the deceptiveness of ideologies, the

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[47] Hoffmann, S., (1977), *op.cit*, pp.41 & 59.

[48] *ibid*, p.47.

[49] *ibid*, p.42. See also Hoffmann, S., (1965), *op.cit*, pp.4-5.

inner contradictions of international organization, the democratic control of foreign policy, the requirements of diplomacy, the problem of war...[50]

It was these "phenomena and problems of international politics" that Morgenthau insisted "theory must take account."[51]

From these foundations, however, we cannot pronounce a discipline exuding theoretical certitude or, indeed, a consensus over its role, purpose and very existence. There is, as Paul Keal notes, increasing "dispute about how international relations should be interpreted and understood."[52] Incertitude in our ways of knowing and doing international political theory, of what is to be studied and how, is ever more prevalent. And, as if foretold in the story recounted above, the debate over empiricism and positivism, and the nature, role, and purpose of the discipline, now consumes much intellectual energy. Rather than strong foundations and the building of a robust stock of theoretical knowledge, international theory looks to be cracking at the edges; its foundations crumbling amid the onslaught of perspectivism and epistemological debate.

Wither the Foundations

The current machinations in international political theory are in marked contrast to only a few decades previous where James Rosenau, for example, could write of a "science" of international relations, noting:

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[50] Morgenthau, H.J., (1958), *op.cit*, pp.47-48.

[51] *ibid*, p.48.

[52] Keal, P., (1991), "Ethical Issues and International Relations," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (eds.), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives in an Evolving Discipline*, Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, p.164.

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.[53]

Rosenau reflected no more than conventional wisdom, prevalent since the founding of the discipline. Sir Alfred Zimmern, for example, had seen in "political science" the means to good scholarship contiguous with "precision and proof:"

> ...that politics can be studied in Universities, in as scientific a spirit as any other subject of study, whether human or natural, is a proposition which does not admit of discussion in a University such as Oxford, which has been a home of such studies since the days of Occam in the thirteenth century...[54]

The scientific method, under the auspices of the behaviouralist revolution and quantificationist techniques, would do for International Relations what they had for the natural sciences: provide certainty, foundations, and the basis on which to build cumulative knowledge. In science lay certainty and clarity, so much so that Zimmern, in his inaugural lecture at Oxford in February, 1931, spoke of "a Chair for the preaching of International Relations" to correct an age "exceptionally stupid" in character.[55] This "quest for certainty" made for an outburst of "premature theoretical formulation," and a despondency when certainty in our ways of knowing remained elusive. More conspicuously, however, it reified science in the discipline, unleashing a "desire to calculate the incalculable" with ever more data sets and "objective" methodologies.[56] In many respects, of course, this has proven a failed project.[57] The

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[53] Rosenau, J.N., (1980), *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy*. New York: Nicholas, pp.32.

[54] Sir Alfred Zimmern as quoted in Markwell, D.J., (1986), *op.cit*, p.289.

[55] Sir Alfred Zimmern as quoted in *ibid*, p.289. Carr, E.H., (1964), *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939*. New York, Harper & Row, p.39.

[56] Hoffmann, S., (1977), *op.cit*, p.57.

mounting attacks on empirical theory and positivism, for example, particularly the rise of reflectivist approaches, has made international political theory perspectivist. Arguably, this has nurtured a "more complex theoretical conspectus than has previously prevailed," one increasingly aware of the economic, technological, and environmental dimensions in international politics.[58] Greater theoretical complexity, however, has not been accompanied by increased theoretical clarity. Ideas and approaches have not been distilled so much as they have multiplied, leading to theoretical fragmentation if not outright confusion. International theory now resembles a complicated montage that houses a plethora of competing research agendas, academic interests, theories, methodologies and projects under the generic rubric of *International Relations*, or still more eclectically, *International Studies*. We seem to be a little bit of everything, but nothing in particular. Everything these days appears to be *globalized*: the environment, the economy, trade, investment, even such mundane things as television programmes, fashion, and consumer products. We "are engaged in international studies," remarks James Rosenau, "when the world is no longer organized along international lines," but instead is *transnationalized*, no longer "state-centered."[59]

At base, these arguments derive from what are perceived to be "new" realities that change systemically the "location of political [and economic] life." They represent a "crisis"

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[57] See the retrospective assessment of science and International Relations by Puchala, D.J., (1990), "Woe to the Orphans of the Scientific Revolution," *Journal of International Affairs*, Spring/Summer, Vol.44,No.1, pp.59-80.

[58] Higgott, R., (1991), "International Relations in Australia: An Agenda for the 1990s," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (1991), *op.cit*, p.397.

[59] Rosenau, J., (1980), *The Study of Global Interdependence: Essays on the Transnationalization of World Affairs*. London: Frances Pinter, p.11.

of sovereignty, where "accounts of political community formalized in the principle of state sovereignty are being rearticulated in response to profound structural transformations on a global scale."[60] Whether it be the proliferation of "international agencies and transnational organizations," the "increasingly complex political division of labor that cuts across national boundaries and blurs the dividing line between foreign policy and domestic politics," or the effects of technology, economic interdependence, and global production and markets, all these "call into question the traditional understanding of state sovereignty." Consequently, as Joseph Camilleri observes, it is not simply the "size of political entities or even the demarcation of their boundaries" that is important any longer, but rather that "the very meaning of boundaries" and of political domain makes illusionary the "notion of state sovereignty" and thus compels us to abandon our traditional theoretical categories and develop new ones.[61] The whole gambit of our enterprise, of what is to be studied and how, what theory should target for explanation and understanding, indeed what type of theory is appropriate, has become a veritable conundrum of competing interpretations and intransigent ideological battles.

In only a few short years we have come full circle, from a "science" of international politics and an optimism that certitude and theoretical foundations simply awaited intellectual discovery, to the current pessimism, or at least anxiety, where leading theorists now pronounce that "[i]nternational theory is in a state of disarray," that the discipline is divided and prone to

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[60] Walker, R.B.J., & Mendlovitz, S.H., (1990), "Interrogating State Sovereignty," in Walker, R.B.J., & Mendlovitz, S.H., (eds.), *Contending Sovereignties: Redefining Political Community*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp.7-8.

[61] Camilleri, J.A., (1990), "Rethinking Sovereignty in a Shrinking, Fragmented World," in Walker, R.B.J., & Mendlovitz, S.H., (eds.), *Contending Sovereignties: Redefining Political Community*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp.28,33,39. See also, Camilleri, J.A., & Falk, J., (1992), *End of Sovereignty?: The Politics of a Shrinking and Fragmenting World*. Brookfield, Vermont: Elgar.

the vestiges of parochialism.[62] Fred Halliday, for example, describes international political theory as beset by a "pervasive sense of entropy, and even of crisis."[63] For Mark Hoffman, the discipline is at a "major crossroads," caught within an intellectual malaise such that there is no "longer any clear sense of what the discipline is about, what its core concepts are, what its methodology should be, what issues and central questions it should be addressing."[64] Ashley, Walker, and Campbell tend to agree, seeing previously "marginalized voices" and intellectual "dissidents" fragmenting the hitherto dominant narratives of realism.[65] The resulting meta-theoretical ferment has forced international political theory into a self-imposed "epistemological critique" which, for James Der Derian, questions "the very language, concepts, methods, and history..." that have previously governed the "tradition of thought in the field." In fact, notes Der Derian, "International Relations is facing a variety of philosophical insurgencies," with most of them questioning the discipline's existing foundations and theory, and all of them responding to the "monologue of tradition" by revalorising a "dialogical approach."[66] For Yosef Lapid, this confirms his "lingering suspicion that something is still

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[62] Holsti, K., (1985), *op.cit*, p.1.

[63] Halliday, F., (1985), "A 'Crisis' of International Relations," *International Relations*, Vol.8,No.4, November, p.405.

[64] Hoffman, M., (1987), "Critical Theory and the Inter-Paradigm Debate," *Millennium*, Vol.16.No.2, Summer, p.231.

[65] See Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, September, pp.259-268. George, J., & Campbell, D., (1990), "Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference: Critical Social Theory and International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, September, pp.269-294.

[66] Der Derian, J., (1988), "Introducing Philosophical Traditions in International Relations," *Millennium*, Vol.17.No.2, p.189.

radically wrong with international theory."[67] The "theory question," as Lapid puts it, is again resonating throughout the discipline, marking perhaps the greatest interlocution of all the "great debates" the discipline has yet experienced.

Symptomatic of this meta-theoretical flux is the "lack of an agreed core to the subject."[68] Ferguson and Mansbach argue that this has made for "unprecedented disarray" in the "theories of international relations." As they sardonically note: "Like the walls that kept people apart, those separating schools of thought are also tumbling down, but, as a result, there may today be less anarchy in world politics than in theories about it."[69]

Redolent of this is the fact that, unlike previous theoretical debates, the current one lacks a central theoretical matrix. It is not that various theories battle with one another over what the relevant actors are in world politics, or over the appropriate "levels of analysis" that should be invoked to study them—although, of course, these still comprise a major debate in the discipline. Rather, "current developments in international theory constitute a shift of a much greater order and magnitude" than observed in the previous four decades, one that might be characterized as the "*search for thinking space*," to paraphrase Foucault.[70] George and Campbell perhaps better capture this depth of rupture, noting:

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[67] Lapid, Y., (1989), "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33,No.3, September, p.237.

[68] Hoffman, M., (1987), *op.cit*, p.231.

[69] Ferguson, Y.H., & Mansbach, R.W., (1991), "Between Celebration and Despair: Constructive Suggestions for Future International Theory," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.35,No.4, p.363.

[70] Hoffman, M., (1991), "Restructuring, Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation: Four Voices in Critical International Theory," *Millennium*, Vol.20.No.2, p.169, & George, J., (1989), "International Relations and the Search for Thinking Space: Another View of the Third Debate," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33.no.3, September, p.273.

The new dissent has been concerned with the discourse of international relations, supplementing concern about the subjects of international relations with a focus on the discourse of those subjects that makes them (and not others) historically possible.[71]

This "new dissent" in theorizing is not endemic to the discipline but reflective of a larger "disquiet" throughout the social sciences. As Richard Bernstein argues, it derives from a "growing sense that something is wrong with the way in which the relevant issues and options are posed" and represents a desire to change the "categorical structure and patterns within which we think and act."[72] And while, for Lapid, such an undertaking presupposes an excursion into an "intellectual labyrinth" it does, at the same time, invite "the serious student of IR" to "consider afresh the problem of how to picture world society" and to reconsider our modes of theory construction.[73] Consequently, as never before, questions of theory and methodology, particularly epistemological and ontological debates, have found a new "prominence...in the discipline's heartland, the United States."[74] As Higgott has noted, the consequence of this has been a reopening;

> ...of the speculative nature of international relations as a discipline in which our tools of trade—concepts such as balance of power, state-as-actor, sovereignty, national interest, security and so on—are not treated as givens and asserted but

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[71] George, J., & Campbell, D., (1990), "Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference: Critical Social Theory and International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, September, p.289.

[72] Richard Bernstein as quoted in *ibid*, p.270.

[73] Lapid, Y., (1989), "*Quo Vadis* International Relations? Further Reflections on the 'Next Stage' of International Theory," *Millennium*, Vol.18.No.1, p.77. Banks, M., (1985), "The Inter-Paradigm Debate," in Light, M., & Groom, A.J.R., (eds.), *International Relations: A Hand Book Of Current Theory*. London: Frances Pinter, p.8.

[74] Richardson, J.L., (1991), "The State of the Discipline: A Critical Practitioner's View," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (1991), *op.cit*, p.19.

seen...as 'essentially contested concepts' in need of continual redefinition, contextual location and explanation.[75]

Higgott, however, fails to appreciate the depth of rupture; it is not merely that structures and processes have been problematized and exposed to "continual redefinition," but that those knowledge systems which informed such definitions and explanations in the first place are now themselves contested. Indeed, for Hoffman, it is not simply "reinterpretation but a reinscription of what 'theory' is all about" that is needed: that is, what theory means and what its place and role are, should be critically assessed.[76] Consequently, international political theory is now "a fundamentally contested domain," where, says Michael Banks, it is "naive" to discuss international relations "on the basis of the facts."[77] The tradition of enquiry which answered Gabriel Almond's plea for scholarly "involvement through detachment:" "a passionate belief that the world...[could]...be improved through dispassionate enquiry," is now challenged via the importation of deconstructionism and semeiology into International Relations. Where knowledge systems were once considered benign investigative tools, now they are thought to be instruments of power; specific rationalities reified into what Rorty has called "Privileged Representations."[78] Theory construction and the discipline have lost their innocence, and

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[75] Higgott, R., (1991), *op.cit*, p.395.

[76] Hoffman, M., (1991), *op.cit*, p.178.

[77] T.J. Biersteker as quoted in Lapid, Y., (1989), *op.cit*, p.238. Banks, M., (1985), *op.cit*, p.7.

[78] G.A. Almond as quoted in Lapid, Y., (1989), "*Quo Vadis* International Relations? Further Reflections on the 'Next Stage' of International Theory," *Millennium*, Vol.18.No.1, p.81. See also Rorty, R., (1980), *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp.165-209. This position is taken from Foucault, who engages in a "*reversement* of traditional views of the intellectual," noting that the intellectual is always "determined by specific events" and part of a knowledge-power system. See, for example, the discussion in Barnet, E.T., (1989), *Structuralism and the Logic of Dissent: Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Lacan*. Hong Kong: University of Illinois Press, pp.170-183.

theory itself, not what it purports to explain, has become the battle ground. Subsequently, everything previous, from those accumulated "facts," learned wisdoms and inculcated "knowledge," from traditions of inquiry to various methodologies, are rendered problematic: such knowledge represents merely a derivative outcome of particular modes of thinking which are now "contested." The hope for "progress" in theory building has given way to a feeling of retrogression. Olson and Onuf, for example, argue that the last fifteen years of the discipline and its theory has betrayed an air of "uncertainty and slippage," and that its overall development has been antithetic to "a series of logical steps" leading to "greater discoveries and insights."[79] Grand theoretic traditions, long the aspirant of those in the discipline, appear to be withering. Increasingly, current wisdom seems to be toward contextuality where, notes Smith, "a variety of religions, cultures, moral and ethical systems and histories ensures that there can be no universal view of the main issues of international relations."[80] Apparently, argues Smith, the world looks sufficiently different from, "say, Calcutta than it does from Moscow, Kabal, Tehran or Kansas" so that "people in different countries will have contrasting views of what the most important issues are, and of how these are to be dealt with."[81] Meta-narratives, universal theory, or indeed, international theory, look to be doomed to the proclivities of individuation among countries and peoples. In fact, this is the explicit intention of the "post-structuralist practices of genealogy, deconstruction and intertextualism," which seek "to disturb, disrupt and challenge the universalist and rationalist claims and conventions, the

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[79] Olson, W., & Onuf, N., (1985), "The Growth of a Discipline: Reviewed," in Smith, S., (ed.), *International Relations: British and American Perspectives*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p.11.

[80] Smith, S., (1985), "Introduction," in Smith, S., (ed.), *op.cit*, p.*ix*.

[81] *ibid*

'natural truths,' the 'logocentrism' of existing schools of thought in international relations."[82]

The result, celebrated by some, is a "theoretical anarchy" and relativism which, for those so disposed to a *cartesian anxiety*, symbolises the death of objectivity, rationality, and the eclipse of hope in discovering truth.

Obviously, International Relations is in a period of metamorphosis; an evolution of sorts in which disciplinary boundaries are being questioned and re-defined, our object(s) of study re-analyzed and challenged, and our modes of theory construction subjected to critical reflection. The point at which the study of international politics begins and ends is ever more blurred; what constitutes the appropriate object(s) of study—the nation-state, the transnational corporation, or some other actors or combinations therein—is ever more contentious. How, for example, do we relate the growth in interdependence, the cobweb-like interlocking of inter-state relations through global finance capital, the internationalization of production techniques and the globalization of consumption patterns, to our traditional concerns with relations *between* nation-states, to the security problematic and war making? Are these questions any longer worthy of a central analytical focus in the discipline? Indeed, if we accept that the *discipline* of international politics is now a combinatorial regime of empiricists, practitioners, and theorists who, as James Richardson notes, have research interests that range from;

> ...the origins of the modern state system to threats to the survival of *any* social and political system, from nuclear strategies to global inequalities, from close analysis of decision-making to the most general concerns of the philosophy of science...[83]

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[82] Hoffman, M., (1991), *op.cit*, p.177.

[83] Richardson, J.L., (1991), *op.cit*, p.27.

how, then, can the term *discipline* be "anything more than honorific?"[84] Indeed, for Rengger,

this multiplicity and eclecticism in theoretical endeavours leads him to describe international

theory as the "Lernean Hydra: each time one conceptual head is lopped off, another two appear

in its place."[85] And, as if it were not enough that our discipline lacks a common core and

defined boundaries, that our theory is in chaos with paradigms and research agendas

multiplying seemingly exponentially, we are also goaded into believing that those structures

and processes we have traditionally studied have undergone profound transformation. To

paraphrase Einstein, everything has changed except our thinking. We are now confronted with

the "pervasive presence of transformations in global life" such that "international politics" or

"international relations" are "obsolete" terms according to James Rosenau. For Rosenau,

ruptures in global processes and structures compel us to look toward the idiom of the *post*:

> If the social sciences are now marked by analyses of postcapitalist society, postcivilized era, postcollectivist politics, posteconomic society, posthistoric man, postideological society, postliberal era, postliterature culture, postmarket society, post-Marxists, postmaterialist value system, postmaturity economy, postmodernism, postorganization society, post-Christian era, postscarcity society, postsocialist society, posttraditional society, and postwelfare society, as well as postindustrial society, surely it follows that profound changes in world affairs can be regarded as constituting postinternational politics.[86]

As Marx noted in his famous adage: "All that is solid melts into air." This, evidently,

is also true of those structures, processes and knowledge systems that have served us to

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[84] *ibid*

[85] Rengger, N.J., (1988), "Going Critical: A Response to Hoffman," *Millennium*, Vol.17,No.1, p.81.

[86] Rosenau, J.N., (1989), "Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Toward a Postinternational Politics for the 1990s," in Czempiel, E.O., & Rosenau, J.N., (eds.), *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s*. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington, pp.2-3.

date.[87] As Rosenau again notes; "much of what passes for theory in international relations today was designed for an era now passing into oblivion."[88] "Postinternational politics," it seems, has made for multiple realities that "coexist, collide, and interpenetrate."[89] The nation-state now exists as one among many transnational actors, "from multinational corporations to professional societies to international organizations to terrorists."[90] International relations have become a tangled muddle of numerous phenomena; the bi-polar world a multi-polar world; power, a multifarious phenomenon no longer confined to the barrel of a gun; and sovereignty, an increasingly antiquated phenomenon no longer impervious to the whims of global capital and financial markets or the taste cultures of global consumerism that sweep the globe via electronic images.

In a sense, then, these are the problems of international relations, problems that cause us consternation about where to begin our project, where to end it, how to understand, what tools to employ, what actors to focus upon, how to construct theory, what type of theory (universal, micro-specific, contextual, meso-level, constructivist or positivist), what role and purpose for theory, how to represent multiple realities and systemic change, whether to simplify or complicate, to narrow our theoretical referents or widen them, to particularise or generalise. These issues represent merely a few among many that cause us to experience a *crisis of contemplation*, where certainty in our methods of contemplation, of what in international

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[87] Marx, K., & Engels, F., (1977), *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, p.37.

[88] Rosenau, J.N., (1989), *op.cit*, p.5.

[89] Harvey, D., (1991), *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p.41.

[90] Rosenau, J.N., (1989), *op.cit*, p.5.

politics we should contemplate, in what style it should be contemplated, and for what purpose we contemplate, has evaporated. Despite the accolades of Nicholas Onuf, that "[o]ne of the crowning achievements of the past several centuries is the edifice of theory," this "edifice" is today under attack, its utility, role and purpose questioned, and its legitimacy challenged.[91]

Conclusion

This chapter has been an exercise in historiography, not for its own sake but to demonstrate the historical ambiguity of International Relations both as an intellectual exercise and an academic discipline. Its purpose has been heuristic, intending to illustrate the intellectual challenge posed in studying international relations. More than this, though, this chapter has attempted to contextualize the current "crisis" in International Relations within a "tradition" of scholarship itself suffused with ongoing incertitude as to its intellectual enterprise, purpose and parentage. To that end, I have endeavoured to demonstrate how the genealogical peculiarity of International Relations has precipitated not only a crisis of contemplation about its epistemological basis but also its "historical point of departure."[92] Indeed, that International Relations has suffered from sporadic bouts of self-doubt and reevaluation and continues to do so, are familial traits of heritage that, for better or worse, we remain genetically disposed to. And it is in this light that I suggest the latest "crisis" posed by the "Third Debate" be approached, not as a disjunctural event unusual in character, but as a distinctive recurrence endemic to the very discourse of International Relations. These themes are addressed in the next chapter.

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[91] Onuf, N. G., (1989), *op.cit*, p.11.

[92] Darby, P., & Paolini, A.J., (1994), "Bridging International Relations and Postcolonialism," *Alternatives*, Vol.19,No.3, Summer, p.373.

Introduction

In many senses, chapter one was only a prelude to the thesis, functioning not so much as an argument but a mood piece. It attempted to situate International Relations within a discourse that, historically, has not existed and only recently has been invented. And in doing so, chapter one attempted to relate the intellectual ambiguity upon which the study of international relations is founded, to the series of on-going intellectual machinations that have come to form the discipline's historical discourse. My point was surely obvious, that International Relations is an intellectual orphan, destitute of concrete historicity and intellectual lineage, and like all orphans in despairing search of epistemological parentage. Yet in highlighting the dearth of historical precedent and the recurrent attempts to secure one, chapter one also identified the historical "essence" of International Relations: the *search* for an epistemological pedigree in order that we can make sense of the history of events. The *history* of international theory thus resides in this repeated search for epistemological and ontological certainty, and the recurrent crises to which we seem prone, in the realization that certainty continues to elude us. This perhaps explains the periodic preoccupation with metaphysical investigations, a recurrent compulsion that International Relations will, inevitably, forever be condemned to.

It is in this context that chapter two begins an examination of the (re)current fixation on epistemological questions occasioned by the latest of crises, the "Third Debate." It does so from the perspective of a *baedeker* to the "Third Debate," specifically of what it means to the discipline and theory-construction. I would not be alone, for example, in suggesting that the

"Third Debate" remains an anathema to most who confront it.[1] Yet its effects are everywhere apparent, whether in the growing number of those preoccupied by its discourse, its increasing influence upon theoretical research, or in the rising popularity post-modern theory now enjoys in the academy. Consequently, chapter two introduces the "Third Debate," not in terms of an exposition of its specific theoretical motifs, but of the effects of these motifs on the discipline and theoretical endeavour. In this respect, my analysis is somewhat remonstrative, not towards the "Third Debate" but toward the vehicle the "Third Debate" has become in advancing certain political programmes that threaten the integrity and viability of International Relations. In fact, my analysis might be judged theoretically discursive, since it is both impressed by many of the theoretical innovations championed by the "Third Debate," but suspicious of their political intent and the image of theory they seek to propagate. Consequently, I problematize the very occasion of the "Third Debate," questioning the utility of this exercise to the well being of the discipline while attempting to contextualize it and its implications. The purpose of this chapter, as with the thesis more generally, should thus be understood as a contribution to reclaiming the discipline; reclaiming International Relations from its current ambiguity as "contested concept" and site of "crisis," so that the project of studying international relations can once again be resumed.

Problematizing International Relations: The Role and Challenge of the "Third Debate"

The distinguished scholar of International Relations, Stanley Hoffmann, concluded a recent autobiographical article with the following advice for graduate students:

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[1] See, for example, the comments in Kratochwil, F., (1986), "Errors Have Their Advantages," *International Organization*, Vol.38,No.2, Spring, pp.305-320. See also, Gilpin, R.G., (1986), "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," in Keohane, R.O., (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.301-321.

Avoid fads, resist the pressure to begin your career by showing your dexterity with grand theory, remember that theory is necessary only as a help to understanding, as a path to interesting questions, but that it can all to often become a hinderance or screen. Remember that much empirical research, of the sort that leads to further investigations and therefore, ultimately, to middle-range theory, does not need to start by leaning on the brittle crutches of grandiose models.[2]

Doubtlessly this is sound advice, and this thesis is all the more foolish for not having taken it! Yet any student who embarks upon the study of international relations today cannot help but stumble into the quagmire of theory. The "Third Debate" is upon us whether welcomed or not, and the issues that resonate throughout the discipline are distinctly meta-theoretical in nature. No longer can students of international politics look for neatly compartmentalized theoretical divides that dichotomise between two or three contending "schools of thought." The waters have become considerably more muddied, clouded with debates over universalism, foundationalism, post-modernism, relativism, interpretivism, and issues of representation.[3] And all this, arguably, before we even get to study those things called "international relations."

While Hoffmann might well be correct, these days one can neither begin nor conclude empirical research without first discussing epistemological orientations and ontological

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[2] Hoffmann, S., (1989), "A Retrospective," in Kruzel, J., & Rosenau, J.N., (eds.), *Journeys Through World Politics: Autobiographical Reflections of Thirty-four Academic Travelers.* Lexington Books, p.276.

[3] At the very outset of this chapter I want to dispel any notion of definitional precision in the lexicon of the "Third Debate." Concepts such as post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-positivism, interpretivism, and reflectivism, for example, are used interchangeably and obviously have much overlap. Accordingly, I have chosen to follow this practice, employing these concepts in interchangeable fashion and somewhat loosely, leaving, like Roger Spegele suggests, the context in which they are used to "firm up" their meaning. Having said this, though, I tend to favour the term *post-modernism*, simply because this is suitably nebulous enough and woefully imprecise as to apply to all those who count themselves as intellectual "dissidents." See spegele, R.D., (1992), "Richard Ashley's Discourse for International Relations," *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol.21,No.2, Summer, p.147.

assumptions. Like a vortex, meta-theory has engulfed us all, and the question of "theory" which was once used as a *guide to* research is now the *object of* research. Indeed, for a discipline whose purview is ostensibly outward looking and international in scope, and at a time of ever encroaching globalization and transnationalism, International Relations has become increasingly provincial and inward looking. Rather than grapple with the numerous issues that confront peoples around the world, International Relations since the early 1980s has tended more and more toward obsessive self examination.[4] These days the politics of famine, environmental degradation, underdevelopment, or "ethnic cleansing," let alone the cartographic machinations in Eastern Europe and the reconfiguration of the geo-global political-economy, seem scarcely to concern theorists of international politics, who in a self-styled manner have defined the "urgent" task of our time to be one of metaphysical reflection and epistemological investigation. Arguably, theory is no longer concerned with the study of international relations so much as the "manner in which international relations as a discipline, and international relations as a subject matter, have been constructed."[5] To be concerned with the latter is to be "on the cutting edge," where "novelty" has itself become "an appropriate form of scholarship."[6]

Such bouts of theoretical reappraisal are, of course, not new in International Relations. Theorists of international politics are, by nature, hermeneutical creatures, sporadically beleaguered by periods of self doubt, theoretical incertitude, reinvention, and rearticulation.

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[4] Cox, W.S., & Sjolander, C.T., (1994), "Critical Reflection on International Relations," in Cox, W.S., & Sjolander, C.T., (eds), *Beyond Positivism: Critical Reflections on International Relations*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, p.3.

[5] Darby, P., & Paolini, A.J., (1994), "Bridging International Relations and Postcolonialism," *Alternatives*, Vol.19,No.3, Summer, p.374.

[6] Holsti, K.J., (1989), "Rooms and Views: Perspectives on the Study of International Relations," in Kruzel, J., & Rosenau, J.N., (eds.), *op.cit*, p.34.

These episodes we usually celebrate as "great debates:" an optimistic terminology suggesting intellectual renewal, or at the very least, atonement. Indeed, International Relations has evolved a peculiar approach to theory; a general disinterest that every now and then erupts into incessant preoccupation. But as John Weltman notes, even these episodes have not been all that instructive:

> Methodological controversy and self-awareness have been endemic in international relations. Yet it is curious how little genuine debate this has engendered, if we understand by "debate" an arena in which arguments are joined rather than one in which assertions are juxtaposed. One has instead a number of separate guilds, each of which proceeds on the basis of its own indigenous premises, conscious of the work of other groups only as caricature.[7]

Amid this diversity in the scholarly activities of International Relations, Robert Rothstein is not alone in fearing the loss of "a shared goal" that might otherwise provide "a degree of unity for all these very different theoretical endeavours."[8]

Such sentiments, however, are historical echoes of the past, nostalgia for a discipline that once was. Instead, we are left today amid the rejectionists and deconstructionists, the latest bearers of "crisis," who not only question theoretical purpose and our disciplinary identity, but seek to make us non-existent as "authors" and "readers" by reducing us to so many more textual ramblings. The shibboleths of "discipline," knowledge, theory and progress, are no longer ours to enjoy but "modernist" fictions endemic to the "Eurocentrism of Western

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[7] Weltman, J.J., (1982), "On the Interpretation of International Thought," *The Review of Politics*, Vol.44,No.1, January, p.27.

[8] Rothstein, T.L., (ed.), *The Evolution of Theory In International Relations: Essays in Honor of William T.R. Fox*, Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p.*xvii*. See also, Holsti, K.J., (1971), "Retreat from Utopia: International Relations Theory, 1945-1970," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.4,No.2, June, p.172.

scholarship."[9] The "Third Debate" has arrived, and so it seems have new ways of thinking, doing, and being.

We should not be surprised, then, that the

> prevailing view concerning the development of theory in international relations is that the field is beset by a bewildering variety of theoretical approaches, models, and concepts—that it is "in as much of a state of change, chaos, and confusion as the contemporary world scene which it seeks to comprehend—and that theorizing on international relations is of only "fairly recent origin."[10]

What should surprise us, though, is that this assessment was written by Arend Lijphart some twenty years ago, indicating how incessant this sense of "crisis" has been to the normal discourse of International Relations. Fourteen years earlier, for example, Stanley Hoffmann made a similar lament, noting that, "[a]s a discipline, international relations are not in very fine shape" and disposed to splintering "parochial" approaches.[11]

Calamity has become a way of life for theorists of international politics who seem accustomed to episodes of depression whenever they turn to theoretical activity. In this context, it might be more appropriate to understand the "great debates" not as infrequent storms that occasionally blow away debris, remove dead foliage from the trees, old moss and dust from the branches so that we can see the forest again, but as a series of on-going climatic changes that, bit by bit, are killing the forest altogether. Arguably, this is the intention of the more

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[9] Darby, P., & Paolini, A.J., (1994), *op.cit*, p.375.

[10] Lijphart, A., (1974), "The Structure of Theoretical Revolution in International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.18,No.1, March, p.41.

[11] Hoffmann, S., (1960), "International Relations as a Discipline," in Hoffmann, S., (ed.), *Contemporary Theory in International Relations*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, p.6. See also, Halliday, F., (1985), "A 'Crisis' of International Relations," *International Relations*, Vol.8,No.4, November, p.405.

extreme proponents of the "Third Great Debate;" a levelling of the forest altogether to precipitate new growth and propagate new species.

This change in theoretical orientation has not gone uncontested. An endless Socratic conversation over the sociology of knowledge, many argue, will lead to "bottomless pits of epistemology and metaphysics."[12] Still others welcome this trend, arguing that epistemology "is one of the key remaining issues international relations has failed to examine."[13] Thomas Biersteker, for example, notes that "[t]he vast majority of scholarship in international relations...proceeds without conscious reflection on its philosophical bases or premises."[14] Ostensibly, the "Third Debate" attempts to correct this by addressing the meta-theoretical concerns of epistemology and ontology rather than "specific research programs and projects."[15] More specifically, the "Third Debate" is about *theory*: what it is, why we do it, what it is used for, who uses it, and what type of theory we should endeavour to construct. No longer is theory a benign investigative tool. According to the post-structuralists, theory is "power." The facts considered, the choices presented, the remedies suggested, and the views legitimated, are all considered outcomes of epistemology. Post-structuralists are therefore suspicious of, indeed hostile to, those epistemologies that, in their view, are used in the service of dominant interests, that silence certain "voices" while presuming to speak for "others." Where Hans-Georg Gadamer, for example, could argue that theory was "rendered anonymous"

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[12] Holsti, K., (1993), "International Relations at the end of the Millennium," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.19,No.4, October, p.407.

[13] Cox, W.S., & Sjolander, C.T., (1994), *op.cit*, p.4.

[14] Biersteker, T.J., (1989), "Critical Reflections on Post-Positivism in International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33,No.3, September, p.265.

[15] Cox, W.S., & Sjolander, C.T., (1994), *op.cit.*

by virtue of the objective detachment of the enterprise itself, critical theorists insist that "[t]heory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose."[16] Consequently, post-modernists contend that there can be no commensurability in theory, knowledge, or purpose. These dissipate amid a montage of differing interests, opposing views, contrasting perceptions, and dissimilar cultural enclaves, and makes theory a latent tool of those who wield it.[17] The acts of theory construction, diagnosis and prescription, thus become impossible, since post-structuralists equate these with the imposition of values, the silencing of minorities, and the marginalization of dissenting voices. Those engaged in certain types of theory, whether modernist, empirical, realist, or problem-solving-technical theory, in short those engaged in the disciplinary pursuits of studying international relations, are denied the efficacy of their enterprise, its objectivity, purpose, progress, and legitimacy. Rather, as post-structuralists see it, we stand today "over the ruins of the positivist project" and at the beginning of a new "season of hope."[18] Again, it seems, we are witness to "yet another preface to a major project...yet another call to a new beginning, another meta-theoretical debate for the consumers of international relations theory."[19]

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[16] Brown, R., (1993), "Introduction: Towards a New Synthesis of International Relations," Bowker, M., & Brown, R., (eds.), *From Cold War to Collapse: Theory and World Politics in the 1980s*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, p.11. Cox, R.W., (1986), "Social Forces, States and World Order: Beyond International Relations Theory," in Keohane, R.O., (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.207.

[17] The question of cultural difference as it relates to international relations theory is eloquently addressed in Rengger, N.J., (1989), "Incommensurability, International Theory and the Fragmentation of Western Political Culture," in Gribbins, J.R., (ed.), *Contemporary Political Culture: Politics in a Postmodern Age*, Sage Modern Politics Series, Volume 23, London: Sage Publications, pp.237-250.

[18] Lapid, Y., (1989), "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33,No.3, September, pp.236-237.

[19] Biersteker, T.J., (1989), *op.cit*, p.266.

Appearances, however, are deceptive, and pleas for "a new beginning," for theoretical (re)evaluation and metaphysical reflection, are made suspicious by the political advocacy that invariably accompanies them. Despite such calls, the crowning issues of the "Third Debate," epistemology and ontology, have not been used to evaluate and strengthen the quality of theoretical endeavour in the discipline so much as they have been expropriated by certain proponents of post-modernism as weapons of de(con)struction. Indeed, such idioms have become token and wholly diversionary facades to hide a thinly disguised ideological locution opposed to the current constellation of theory, meaning, and interpretation in the discipline. In the hands of deconstructionists, for example, epistemology has become a medium by which to challenge the notion of "discipline," and ontology a means of rendering problematic its objects of study. Where the "Third Debate" might have proven valuable for suggesting new ways and methods to better our scholarship, under the auspices of certain varieties of post-modern theory it has become a means of dismantling the disciplinary basis of that scholarship while calling for, and contributing to, a new political agenda. All too predictably, "deconstruction" has become a political instrument, used to efface International Relations of purpose, theory, method, and legitimacy, while suggesting the efficacy of a new post-modern politics. Contrary to its claims, then, this is not a "Great Debate" centred around meta-theoretical reflection, but a campaign to undo such reflection by circumscribing scholarship for partisan ends. The aim, and perhaps even the effect, has been to make problematic International Relations by rendering the discipline, and its theory, a site of radical "undecidability," disenabling decision by smuggling in specious "theory" that portends to the conclusion of relativism, anti-

foundationalism and perspectivism, as "a necessary condition for identifying and combating the totalitarian risk."[20]

The consequences of the "Third Debate" are therefore twin edged; on the one hand it represents a genuine opportunity for theoretical and disciplinary self-analysis, while in actuality it threatens the theoretical and disciplinary basis of that scholarship because of the political instrument it has become to those who seek an end to International Relations. Navigating between the quagmire of genuine theoretical revisionism and the series of political campaigns that masquerade as theoretical innovations, has thus never been more difficult nor more important.

Reclaiming International Relations: Purpose, Theory, and Method

For the outside observer it must seem extraordinary, if not bizarre, that those preoccupied with "international relations" still consume themselves not with their study, but with their definitional parameters and with the nature, role, and purpose of theory. What it is we do, or should be doing, and how we should do it, are perennial ruminations that seem to haunt us with each additional "Great Debate." Yet again it seems necessary to (re)consider theory and to rearticulate what it is we mean by the study of international relations. But definitions, as should be obvious by their continual dispute and revision, are problematic devices at best, perspicacious only to the extent that their capricious imposition atop arbitrary phenomena makes apparent an otherwise obtuse area of investigation. As Hoffmann notes, "[t]he function of a definition is to indicate proper areas of inquiry, not to reveal the essence

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[20] Jacques Derrida as quoted in Campbell, D., (1994), "The Deterritorialization of Responsibility: Levinas, Derrida, and Ethics After the End of Philosophy," *Alternatives*, Vol.19.No.4, Fall, p.469.

of the subject."[21] Indeed, the imposition of a rigid definition is counterproductive, presupposing not only the end of history but the end of theory. Definitions can only ever capture perceptions in time of processes that are constantly changing. "How," asks Hoffmann, "could one agree once and for all upon the definition of a field whose scope is in constant flux, indeed a field whose fluctuation is one of its principal characteristics?"[22]

Clearly, however, some "operational definition" is necessary if we are to reclaim the disciplinary integrity of International Relations from the deconstructionists of the "Third Debate," and delineate a disciplinary basis from which scholarship and theoretical endeavour may proceed. Accordingly, I offer the following, not to distil an "essence" to the subject of International Relations, but to indicate, like Hoffmann, "what I think we should investigate."[23]

Unlike the more extreme proponents of the "Third Debate," I remain convinced of the need for constructive theory, that theory has purpose, and that this resides in the notion of "discipline." International theory and the discipline of International Relations are concerned with the study and understanding of the interactions between nation-states and various multinational and transnational actors; the reasons, rationales and motivations that propel them, and the consequences, effects, and fall-out of these interactions. For Hoffmann, this translates into a disciplinary concern focused upon those "factors and...activities which affect the external politics and the power of the basic units into which the world is divided."[24] But to what extent

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[21] Hoffmann, S., (1960), *op.cit*, pp.5-6.

[22] *ibid*, p.6.

[23] *ibid*.

[24] *ibid*.

has Hoffmann defined tautologically the study of international relations to be concerned with the study of international relations? Indeed, if this is an attempt to render more apparent precisely what it is we should be studying, then it succeeds only in demonstrating how broad and ill-defined are the disciplines concerns. We are, after all, concerned not with a single "unit" but numerous units, and not with a finite but an inordinate number and combination of "factors" and "activities" which can affect directly or indirectly, and in different degrees and various circumstances, the "activities" and "power" of those historically contingent "basic units" whose form, function, and dimension are constantly changing. If considered carefully, Hoffmann's definition is really no definition at all, but a call to perform the inauspicious task of "gathering facts" by cataloguing those "factors" and "activities" causally related to inter-unit politics.[25] There is, in effect, no problematique on which to base this fact gathering enterprise, only a directive that we should do so. But "gathering facts is not enough" if, in the absence of robust and meaningful theoretical parameters, we have failed first to formulate those questions we most want answered.[26] Indeed, facts are mostly irrelevant to the study of international relations if encountered in the absence of an overarching problematique that otherwise inscribes purpose and meaning to the act of studying international relations. Empirical and middle range theory, for example, are useful only to the extent that questions have been asked to which these epistemologies have then been directed. Thus, while I tend to agree with Hoffmann, there is

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[25] *ibid*, pp.8-9.

[26] The words of Joseph Frankel are most instructive here. "The so-called 'facts,'" he notes, "are mere artificial constructions abstracted from complex and interwoven reality by means of arbitrary definitions and classifications. They are selected from the profusion of real life on the basis of implicit or explicit theories about what is important." What is important, therefore, are not facts, but "the ideas which determine our interpretation" of them. See Frankel, J., (1969), *International Politics: Conflict and Harmony*. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, p.17.

really nothing to agree about since he fails to articulate a precise problematique on which to situate the discipline and scholarly activity. Without purpose, International Relations would be a vacuous activity, facile and devoid of meaning. Scholarship would be conducted, but with no aim in mind. Facts would be gathered, but for no purpose other than satisfying bibliophiles fond of reading facts. And of themselves, these "facts" would reveal no knowledge or understanding, but testify only to their own appearance. As Kenneth Waltz notes;

> If we gather more and more data and establish more and more associations...we will not finally find that we know something. We will simply end up having more and more data and larger sets of correlations.[27]

The point, Waltz urges, is to "get beyond 'the facts of observation,'" and look deeper toward the aetiological basis of facts if we wish an understanding and explanation of them.[28] Implicitly, Waltz is suggesting that facts are meaningless other than in the context of epistemological constructs, and that in order to approach an understanding of them, and ascribe meaning to them, it is not facts that need to be understood but the epistemological and ontological orientations that underlie their interpretation. Put another way, we need recognise that while we gather facts, we do so only in the context of reflective purpose. "Purpose," notes Carr, "whether we are conscious of it or not, is a condition of thought."[29]

> We cannot study even stars or rocks or atoms...without being somehow determined, in our modes of systematisation, in the prominence given to one or

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[27] Waltz, K.N., (1986), "Laws and Theories," in Keohane, R.O., (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.30. Similarly, Joseph Frankel observes: "[The] great advance in our knowledge of detail does not, however, add up to an understanding of the whole field; on the contrary, the detailed information available is sometimes excessive since it chocks the channels of communication and cannot be easily digested by individual scholars or even teams of them." See Frankel, J., (1969), *op.cit*, p.18.

[28] *ibid*, p.33.

[29] Carr, E.H., (1964), *op.cit*, p.3.

another part of our subject, in the form of the questions we ask and attempt to answer, by direct and human interests.[30]

This "interest" not only gives facts meaning, but, more obviously, renders the study of international relations an inherently normative enterprise. International Relations came into being "in response to a popular demand;" a "passionate desire to prevent war."[31] And this desire remains central to the study of international relations, albeit that it now exists as one among many "interests" that the discipline attends to. Definitions thus become sensible only to the extent that they help define, or clarify, the purpose to which we wish press our energies. Indeed, to the extent that we are able to agree upon a common set of questions and concerns (a problematique), this is all that will ever define us amid an otherwise undefinable discipline. Stipulating, through definition, the direction of theoretical investigation in International Relations is therefore impossible. Serendipity, premised upon purposive reflection, will lead genuine intellectual exploration in no firm direction.

To talk about an "operational definition," then, is really to talk about "purpose," a set of questions which informs a problematique for which we wish answers. And this is really the hub of our enterprise; one that might tentatively be defined this way: how some 6 billion people through the formation of culture and community, the abstraction of geographical territory and the imposition of social, political, and economic space, interact, organize, regulate, govern, trade, travel, communicate, peacefully coexist, and on occasion, collide and make war.

Within this problematique there are, to be sure, contending approaches, different epistemologies and ontological disputes over what the most important actors, issues, and

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[30] As quoted in *ibid.*

[31] *ibid*, pp.2 & 8.

structures are, and the most appropriate form(s) of theory to best explain and understand these phenomena. But amid these disputes we find the "essence" of our enterprise, if indeed the notion of "essence" is warranted. After all, as Philip Windsor notes, while International Relations "literally considers the fate of the world" and is therefore "comprehensive by virtue of its preoccupation...it can not be unitary because of its preoccupation."[32] The bounds of our disciplinary concerns are necessarily diverse and consequently so are the theoretical approaches used to study them. Theory, therefore, will always be a messy, contentious, discursive, and provocative affair, eliciting the bridled passions of the profession as we collectively strive to understand. Moreover, theory in International Relations will always be an endless activity if only because what we study is fluid, in the sense of being socially constructed and therefore prone to the vestiges of change. Some of our most cherished disciplinary tools of analysis like anarchy, nation-state, sovereignty, power, and the demarcation between domestic and international society, for example, are problematic concepts rather than naturally inscribed attributes of the global arena. And while such concepts are staples for theorists of International Relations, at best they represent nebulous inscriptions imposed atop a sea surface of constant movement and redefinition. While we might recognize, for example, that "statesmen act and think in terms of interest defined as power" as Hans Morgenthau did, we must also recognize as Hoffmann points out that, while this is true, it is true "only at a level of generality that is fatuous."[33] Consequently, while international theory can often be conclusive, in the sense of

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[32] Philip Windsor as quoted in Rengger, N., & Hoffman, M., (1992), "Modernity, Postmodernism and International Relations," in Doherty, J., Graham, E., & Malek, M. (eds.), *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*, Hong Kong: Macmillan, p.127.

[33] Hans Morgenthau as quoted in Hoffmann, S., (1987), *Janus and Minerva: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, p.71.

identifying important actors, recurrent patterns and themes and defining normative objectives, it can never be concluded. We are, in this sense, condemned to theory, not because it is the object(ive) of our study, but because it is a necessary consequence of our disciplinary pursuits.

As for the "purpose" of this enterprise, I hold this to be self-evident, albeit in need of rearticulation in this time of the "Third Debate." Theory development and scholarship ultimately have purpose: scholarly gratification, understanding, diagnosis and prescription. We do theory not only to know and understand and advance knowledge, but also so that we might diagnose and solve problems. As Hoffmann noted, "[t]heory is no more than 'a set of tools whose usefulness is tested in their ability to solve concrete problems.'"[34] Yet as Edward Carr reminds us, theory is both normative and empirical, situated amid the wish to understand and the wish to change what is understood. "Political thought," he wrote, "is itself a form of political action. Political science is the science not only of what is, but of what ought to be."[35] And herein lies the complexity of theoretical endeavour in International Relations, the juxtaposed ambition of wanting to understand, to explain, to elucidate reality, while concerned with the prospects of changing that reality for a better one. Reality, in other words, has a way

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[34] Hoffmann, S., (1960), *op.cit*, p.8.

[35] Carr, E.H., (1964), *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939*. New York: Harper & Row, p.5. Hoffmann also recognizes these mutually exclusive strands within theory, labelling them; 1.) *"normative"* theory; 2.) *"empirical"* theory; and, 3.) *"policy"* science theory. Moreover, he also notes, like Carr, that "it is impossible to keep completely apart the three kinds of theory which we distinguished analytically from the viewpoint of purpose." See Hoffmann, S., (1960), *op.cit*, p.9. For a related discussion of this issue, see Crawford, R.M., (1994), "Irreconcilable Differences? Idealism, Realism and the Problem of Discipline in International Relations", *Unpublished Doctoral Thesis*, The University of British Columbia, and Brown, C., (1992), *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches*. Hertfordshire, England: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp.1-2.

of intruding into our disciplinary concerns and of making apparent the purpose of International

Relations as an academic pursuit.[36]

The development of theory in International Relations has thus often been prescriptive

and purposive, aspiring to contribute to the avoidance of war and peaceful relations, the

aversion of international crises, the mediation of disputes, the maintenance of security, the

development of international resolution procedures and negotiating forums, and the

establishment of institutional and legal apparatus for the peaceful administration of international

politics. Frederick Dunn probably expressed it best when he wrote that, because "the questions

with which IR deals arise primarily out of social conflicts and adjustments, its approach is in

large part instrumental and normative in character."[37] International Relations, Dunn noted;

> ...is concerned primarily with knowledge that is relevant to the control and
> improvement of a particular set of social conditions. Its goal is not merely
> knowledge for its own sake but knowledge for the purpose of molding practical
> events in desired directions.[38]

We have, perhaps, lost sight of this, or rather is the case that these concerns and this

image of theory, are now dismissed as reflecting a particular moment in the history and theory

of the discipline that no longer represents the "true" scope, nature, and realities, of international

relations. Post-modernists, for example, not only dismiss this conception of theory, but think

the image of global politics it validates cursory to modernist theories obsessed with control and

technical-problem-solving. Practitioners in the discipline are now admonished for ignoring "the

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[36] See, for example, the discussion in Shearman, P., (1993), "New Political Thinking Reassessed," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.19,No.2, April, p.145.

[37] Dunn, F.S., (1960), "The Scope of International Relations," in Hoffmann, S., (ed.), *op.cit*, p.14.

[38] *ibid.*

degree to which...theories themselves do not simply provide the means for describing, discussing and directing phenomena, but help to constitute such phenomena."[39] In other words, the image of global politics represented in realism, for example, is itself accused of being responsible for realist power politics. As Richard Ashley argues, "the modern sovereign state is never more than an effect of realist practices..."[40] Realists make realism, they don't benignly observe it but partake in its rituals and create it:

> The state of the discipline is a fiction imposed in time, a misrepresentation of what is really present, a misrepresentation that owes its power to the fact that it is misrecognised and made to count as a horizon of truth and meaning in itself.[41]

International Relations theory, specifically modernist-realist-positivist theory, is thus attacked on two fronts: the first for being out of touch and out of date with the "true" realities of contemporary international relations; and the second for being responsible for those realities it purports to be objectively studying. Well might one ask, however, how realism can be out of date while its practices are alleged responsible for the contemporary configuration of global politics.

Disparaging the Discipline: The "Third Debate"

The "Third Debate" thus embroils us in a strange paradox, a want to litigate realism for the structure, practices, and horrors that emerge from a world of sovereign states who practice

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[39] Rengger, N., & Hoffman, M., (1992), *op.cit*, p.131.

[40] Ashley, R.K., (1991), "The State of the Discipline: Realism Under Challenge," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (eds.), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives on an Evolving Discipline.* Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National University, p.67.

[41] *ibid*, p.43.

realism, but also a desire to repudiate realism on the grounds of its congenital inability to theorise the state, account for the practices of global politics, or the new realities of transnationalism and globalization. More obtusely, post-modernists want to conduct this litigation at the level of philosophy and meta-theory, indicting not realism *per se*, but its intellectual mentors, positivism and modernity. This is what makes the "Third Great Debate" so distinctive, as well as misnamed. Where the previous "Great Debates" were contributions to the discipline, to theory, to the advancement of knowledge and understanding through their efforts to delineate "better avenues to scholarship," the "Third Debate" shuns this and challenges the very legitimacy of the discipline, implicating it in the modernist project and the crimes of cultural exclusivity, oppression, and domination.

Thus, rather than a contribution to the discipline, the "Third Debate" has become an orchestrated attempt to destroy it. However, it attempts to do so in subtle, clandestine ways by chipping away at the epistemological and ontological foundations of the discipline. Rather than directly rebuking or falsifying the purpose, intent, and project of International Relations on its own terms, post-modernists assault International Relations by making its practitioners theoretically impotent. By ridiculing objectivity, for instance, by suggesting the culpability of positivism and realism to oppression and marginalization, by implicating the role and purpose of theory in the expansion of dominant and culturally specific interests, and in decrying the attributes of progress, purpose, and knowledge, post-modernists have attempted to "deconstruct" International Relations by depriving practitioners of the necessary certitude to conduct their enterprise. Many orthodox theorists are now reticent to make assertions or engage in theory construction on the mistaken belief that there no longer exists firm ground on which to base

values, projects, methods, and thus construct theory and realize conclusions. Certainty in method, let alone purpose, has been systematically eroded by the soothsayers of the new relativism. Instead, post-modernists would have us rejoice at the prospects of a multifarious intellectual pluralism, or what some might characterise as "an intellectual life without standards."[42]

One of the major consequences of the "Third Debate" has thus been the discipline's hijacking. Core concepts and issues, along with modernist knowledge systems that, hitherto, informed the epistemological orientations of the discipline, have been unduly dismissed as illegitimate forms of intellectual enquiry, while relativism has become the new methodological yardstick by which to promote interpretivism and perspectivism in International Relations. Consequently, practitioners in the field have been eviscerated of judicious criteria that otherwise allow evaluations to be made about the utility of certain theories and research agendas; evaluations that are necessary to the operation of International Relations as an academic — disciplinary — enterprise. Indeed, it has become an increasingly arduous task, and for post-modernists a wholly illegitimate one, to establish evaluative criteria that allow judgements to be rendered about what is "good" and "bad" theory, about what constitutes the "core" issues of the discipline or appropriate research areas, and thus to proceed with the construction of superior, more insightful theories that better explain and help ameliorate the problems inherent in international relations. The discipline, in other words, for the first time in its history is faced with the prospects of intellectual stagnation and indecision rather than theoretical progress. As Cox and Sjolander are forced to admit, while the "Third Debate" has

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[42] Holsti, K.J., (1989), "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Which Are the Fairest Theories of All?," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33, No.3, p.261.

"revealed the existence and importance of political projects and related metatheoretical presumptions, unlike its predecessors" it has proven incapable of offering "a clear path to choice."[43] How, for example, amid the "methodological pluralism" of post-positivist scholarship, do we differentiate, evaluate, and organize the babel of competing voices, theories, research agendas, concepts and paradigms, that comprise the study of international politics? Are all perspectives to be thought of as equivalent in utility, explanation, diagnosis and prescription? As Thomas Biersteker asks;

> Once liberal toleration yields to the production of alternative interpretations and understandings, how are we to choose from the abundance of alternative explanations? How are we to judge whether interpretation A is to be preferred to interpretation B in a post-positivist era? How are we to ensure that post-positivist pluralism, in the absence of any alternative criteria, will avoid legitimizing ignorance, intolerance, or worse?[44]

It is not enough that post-modernists simply dismiss these concerns as trite, as modernist theory disposed to a *Cartesian anxiety*. International Relations cannot afford the luxury of imprecision in theory and judgement. To suppose that the study of war or the maintenance of peace can be left to the imprecision of perspectivism and relativism, is not only reckless to the integrity of the discipline but, more importantly, to those people who must ultimately pay the price for ill conceived theory, poor diagnoses and inappropriate prescription. Yet this is exactly what is being asked by post-modernists. David Campbell, for example, argues that, "[w]ith regard to the Balkans (and other such conflicts)," deconstruction "is a necessary condition for thinking about a solution." Indeed, he offers us the outrageous assertion that, "without deconstruction there might be no questions of ethics, politics or responsibility...[W]ithout

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[43] Cox, W.S., & Sjolander, C.T., (1994), *op.cit*, p.4.

[44] Biersteker, T.J., (1989), *op.cit*, pp.265-266.

deconstruction there would not be politics."[45] But what does this mean and how precisely does "deconstruction" promise to solve the atrocities of "ethnic cleansing" in the Balkans? To those involved in politics that comes from the barrel of a gun, are we really to suppose that "deconstruction" speaks to them? While academics are apt to get excited over new theoretical developments, it is plainly supercilious, if not pretentious, to assume that those in the field, those engaged in killing, and those attempting to stop from being killed, will be remotely interested in the advice of far away academics on the merits of "deconstruction;" a word whose meaning must seem as meaningless as that of peace.

Thus, one of the more impoverishing consequences of the "Third Debate" concerns the seeming irrelevance of much theoretical research and the arcane discourse that accompanies it. We have, I want to suggest, wandered so far afield that we threaten to become completely redundant, or at best indifferent, to the actual realities of international relations and the people whose lives, concerns, and struggles are the real stuff of international politics. Increasingly, International Relations speaks only to itself, ostracising those not versed in its specialist nomenclature. This is especially true of the overly recondite theoretical offerings to stem from post-modernist discourse, that speak less to the policy maker, student, or common observer, than to other post-modernists. As Holsti notes, International Relations is in danger of becoming inaccessible to "all but the few who inhabit the rarefied sanctuaries of the universities."[46] But even here, the assumption of a common theoretical language, shared and understood by members of the academy, is far from accurate. Mastery of the post-modernist lexicon requires

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[45] Campbell, D., (1994), *op.cit*, p.470.

[46] Holsti, K.J., (1993), *op.cit*, p.408.

considerable specialty, and, for the most part, remains enigmatic and little understood. Indeed the unique and wholly invented vernacular of the "Third Debate," while expanding the vocabulary of the discipline, has also disenfranchised and estranged most theorists from engaging in productive dialogue and responding to the increasing number of crimes alleged against them. Amid imperceptible nomenclature, specialized discourse, and philosophical ruminations, mainstream theorists too have found themselves ill equipped to grapple with the cryptic complexities of post-structuralist theory.

This partly explains the remarkable rise of post-modernist perspectives and their encroaching presence in International Relations. Unlike previous theoretical innovations, post-modernism has enjoyed virtual immunity from intellectual investigation precisely because of its abstruse inaccessibility. The "Third Debate" has thus evolved in relative isolation, as a debate *between* post-modernists who, when they have spoken to the discipline, have done so more in terms of a disparaging condemnation amid announcements of the arrival of post-modernist perspectives.

Likewise, post-modernists are fond of the charge that "dissident" scholarship is "more often attacked than read."[47] Richard Ashley and Robert Walker, for instance, charge that serious commentary on dissident scholarship is marginalized, and:

> ...typically encountered in a footnote, a review essay, a contribution to the occasional symposium on the discipline's future, a reading seminar, or the banter and sideplay of professional conferences. Rarely is it encountered as the main

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[47] Gregory, D.U., (1989), "Foreword," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, pp.*xiii*.

theme of a refereed journal article or a formal research presentation at a professional meeting. In brief, such commentary is offered as parenthesis.[48]

However, the "marginalization" post-modernists allege is largely self-inflicted, reflecting not only the extremity of "dissident scholarship" but its intrinsic ambiguity. And as for the paucity of commentary on post-modernist scholarship, Ashley and Walker forget the relative brevity of such scholarship upon which to comment. Apart from perennial announcements of the "arrival" of post-modernist perspectives and the "Third Debate," the literature itself displays remarkable paucity as to its core concepts, issues, and theoretical methodology. For want of more tangible offerings, most orthodox theorists have found little meat in which to sink their teeth. Nowhere in the literature, for example, will one find attempts to operationalize "dissident" approaches and yield research findings. How, for example, do we go about constructing a post-modern theory of international relations, presupposing, of course, that the question itself is not oxymoronic? How do we *do* post-modernist international theory, or is it a question of *un-doing* theory? And what referents are we to use in the construction of post-modern international theory? Do we forget the "state" altogether as yet another social construction whose reality is manifest only because we think it? What precisely should we focus on, analyze, and ply our trade to?

If these questions make problematic the prospects of post-modern international theory, then well they should. After all, there exists "no overwhelming consensus that the postmodern age has arrived," indicating that the so-called "postmodern condition" might be more imagined

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[48] Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, p.370.

than real, and post-modernism "more a philosophical [problem] than an empirical one."[49]

According to Andrew Cutrofello, for example, there is a "double eschatological gesture in this discourse: some sort of present end of modernity is affirmed, but as something yet to be confirmed or realized in its own right."[50] Post-modernity is thus said to exist, but only in the future—as prophecy. Indeed, Cutrofello identifies what others have missed, how the fiction of post-modernism as an objective condition is made "real" by setting it within a futuristic presence. In other words, post-modernism is a "reality" fabricated in theory by post-modernists, who then speculate about the objective parameters of post-modernism as a future reality. The sleight of hand or the "double eschatological gesture" comes when post-modernists situate themselves in this future, and then from this futuristic vantage point look back on the age of modernity and denounce it retrospectively. Post-modern theory thus becomes a vicarious dialectic "about whether there is such a thing as post-modernity at all," and conducted esoterically with frequent trips "back to the future" in order that we can know the nature of an age yet to be realized and comment on the end of an age yet to happen![51] Time space distanciation, it seems, makes real time travel for post-modernists, who, as fortunetellers of the future, are able to dismiss the present as the past.

As clever as this may be, however, it is hardly sustainable. The use of smoke and mirrors scarcely counts as a scholarly exercise in International Relations. Rather it begs an

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[49] Lee, R.L.M., (1994), "Modernization, Postmodernism and the Third World, *Current Sociology*, Vol.42.No.2, Summer, pp.11,6. See also, Harvey, D., (1991), *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

[50] Cutrofello, A., (1993), "Must We Say What 'We' Means: The Politics of Postmodernism," *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol.19,No.1, Spring, p.93.

[51] *ibid.*

obvious question: are post-modernists responding to objective changes in the nature, scope, and realities of international relations, or are they imagining what the scope, nature, and extent of these "new" realities might be in a future that we cannot know? And on the basis of this unknowable future, to what extent are post-modernists simply engaged in a premature deconstructive exercise, more politically motivated than objectively warranted? Well might post-modernists engage in a reflective project that reconsiders current (modernist) realities by reinscribing them in new conceptual boxes with new labels and theories, but to do so on the basis of an *assumed* foreknowledge of the imminent end of these realities is no more sound than capnomancy. Indeed, to prophesize "new realities" amid a "post-modern age" that remains unrealized, is to confuse *what is* for what *might be*. This is as nonsensical as writing about the past before it has occurred, or of announcing the "end of history" in the middle of it. Yet this is not to countenance against a political imagination contemplative of "what ought to be" as Carr put it. "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at."[52] Rather, my point is that past, present, and future should not be confused, and that time travel to the future to declare the end of the present, is pure absurdity.

Obviously, eristic discourse of this nature is not pursued for its logical eloquence, but for the effect it has upon existing theory. Indeed, while pronunciations of a "new age" remain extremely problematic and not at all in evidence, they nonetheless serve a political function, challenging the proficiency of existing theory in the discipline.[53] Orthodox, modernist theory

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[52] Oscar Wilde as quoted in Booth, K., (1991), "Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice," *International Affairs*, Vol.67,No.3, July, p.527.

[53] See, for example, Roberts, A., (1991), "A New Age in International Relations?," *International Affairs*, Vol.67,No.3, July, pp.509-525.

that fails to articulate, or celebrate, the advent of a "new age" is, by default, characterised as outdated, old-hat, and redundant. Only theoretical innovation replete with new taxonomic methods, new deconstructive strategies and nomenclature, are said to be able to grapple with the complex realities of a world rapidly changing and transposing itself. Failing to ride the crest of the "new" "post" wave, is thus to forfeit any hope for understanding current realities. Innovation has itself become a goal for International Relations, and those who refuse this impulse run the risk of being derided as gerontologists of "past" approaches, concerns, and issues.

Traditional concerns are now "old" concerns. Orthodox theory "outdated" theory. Epistemologies and theoretical orientations that fail to approximate the "new" reflectivist trends in theory, are quickly disparaged as either positivist, empirical, totalitarian, modernist, or some other suitably derogatory term that signifies their closure as useful approaches. Yet, more than any other concern, the problem of war and the relative distribution of power amid the search for security (all broadly conceived in relation to economic, social, and political criteria), remain central to the study and understanding of international politics. Such concerns explain why many in the discipline remain disposed to modernist/rational and technical problem-solving theory. The latter, especially, remains an important tool for addressing the numerous *practical* problems that are endemic to the very nature of international politics. Epistemology might be currently fashionable, but the problem of war has not vanished. Nor, indeed, have international politics transposed themselves into some globally homogenous affair where the problem of scarcity amid competition is so trite as to allow us the luxury of reflecting metaphysically. But precisely because some of us would resist such metaphysical absorption, ours is an approach

now derided. Rengger and Hoffman, for example, insist that such theoretical dispositions are outdated, demonstrating how "international relations is...a reactive area of study...lagging behind important intellectual debates in other areas by 10-20 years."[54] Similarly, for Richard Higgott, it indicates a certain "methodological smugness that has...dominated the discipline of international relations..."[55]

These conclusions, though, are mistaken and typical of those who, through myopia, view progress solely in terms of theoretical innovation. We "lag behind" precisely because those issues deemed important originally continue to persist, and because many of the theoretical approaches developed to deal with these issues endure in their ability to guide and inform us. We cannot afford to abandon issue areas just because of the dictates of faddism; epistemology might be all the rage but this does not mean that those who continue to focus on traditional areas of concern, those who aspire to peace and the avoidance of war, are "lagging behind." To suppose that each "new" phase and fad requires the wholesale junking of previous approaches, concerns, or issue areas, is outright absurdity. Those self-professed beacons of light who would claim "new" theories, "new" ages, "new" breakthroughs and the suspension of all past knowledge and wisdom, are often unbeknowningly the modern mouthpieces of historical echoes, restating old facts and theorems in "new" ways.

It is thus that this thesis is suspicious of those who claim "new" theory, radical disjuncture, or, who through the prefix *post*, imply that they operate on new intellectual plains

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[54] Rengger, N., & Hoffman, M., (1992), *op.cit*, p.145,*n.*13.

[55] Higgott, R., (1988), "Realism and International Relations: Towards a Multi-Dimensional Critique," in Higgott, R., (ed.), *New Directions In International Relations?: Australian Perspectives*, Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, p.3.

unconnected to those of the Enlightenment. This should not be taken to imply, however, that I admonish the notion, or importance, of change. But rather, that change should be contextualized amid the genealogical unfolding of history, where "new" is not detached from social and historical moorings but located firmly within them and understood as an interrelated consequence of the past. Conversely, this thesis is not a call for the reinstatement of "old" knowledge and theory. Rather, it is a call for a return to theory, a return to the project of studying international relations and a continuation, rather than deconstruction, of this enterprise. My reticence to embrace the "Third Debate" and endorse its concerns, methods, and objectives, rests on this very point; that post-modernism in certain of its varieties is not a theoretical approach to the study of international relations, but a polemic against International Relations and an attempt to realize intellectual disjuncture.

There are thus some very real, and potentially detrimental, consequences to the "Third Debate" that need to be reckoned with. On a practical level, for example, we need question the opportunity cost of these intellectual distractions. They are not benign. To what extent, for instance, does reflecting about post-modernist realities that might exist tomorrow distract us from the problems of today? Can we really afford metaphysical reflection amid continuing inequality, war, famine, and underdevelopment? Is "deconstruction" a more important task than an expose on, say, North-South trade relations or the Lomé Conventions? Should we devote more energies to a textual analysis of game theoretic approaches and less to regime theory? Is a study of the logocentric practices of rational actor models of greater urgency than scholarship into the politics of development? In light of the "Third Debate" it seems no longer possible to establish a hierarchy of issues in international relations, or a "core" to our subject.

Perspectivism disparages the idea of a centre and makes relative the issues that we consider. War is no more important an issue area than is the study of regimes, and regimes no more central to international relations than is feminist theory or the Rio agreement on the global environment. The new egalitarianism makes the scope of International Relations so wide that it no longer has a focus, nor indeed, a sense of place and purpose among other disciplines. Yet this is not to make "illegitimate" certain approaches to the study of international relations. I am not attempting to sanction certain methodologies and censure others. Rather, what I am attempting to demonstrate is that some issues are more important than others, and that if the notion of discipline as an organizing principle of scholarly activity is to have any meaning, then we must recognize that there is a "core" set of issues that must take precedent over others.

One of the consequences of the "Third Debate," then, has been to dilute our sense of discipline to the point where we threaten to become unrecognizable. To what extent, for example, is an intertextual analysis of Andre Malraux's novel, *Man's Fate*, Arthur Koestler's, *Darkness at Noon*, Stanley Kramer's film, *The Defiant Ones*, and the "sexual favours" sought by Casanova, germane to an appreciation of the literature on the prisoner's dilemma?[56] Where do we draw boundaries to demarcate the beginning and end of those factors, issues, topics, strategies, and theories that reasonably fall within the scope of International Relations? Or is it sufficient that a stream of consciousness in the form of a discontinuous narrative may now constitute research in International Relations?[57]

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[56] See the discussion in Hurwitz, R., (1989), "Strategic and Social Fictions in the Prisoner's Dilemma," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, pp.119-124.

[57] See, for example, the rather bizarre offering by James N. Rosenau (1993)(ed.), *Global Voices: Dialogues in International Relations*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

These problems are not merely semantic and definitional quibbles, but questions that challenge the very essence of post-modernism as a logical, coherent, and intelligible treatise useful to International Relations. Indeed, we might conclude that the "Third Debate" is not a "true debate" at all, if only because it has proven incapable of "advancing criteria that would permit a choice between paradigms."[58] If the "Third Debate" was meant to help clear the waters and make more apparent those issues, factors, and theoretical approaches that should comprise the kernel of International Relations, then it has surely failed to do so. Instead, we threaten to become emasculated by perspectivism, intertextualism, relativism, and vapid debate whose only purpose seems to be the obliteration of "boundaries between literature and other disciplines" in order to reduce "all modes of thought to the common condition of writing."[59] The intellectual liberality of International Relations that allows the "importation" of as much theory as it invents, has flung open the disciplinary doors to all who would make a home in International Relations. Susan Strange, for example, is not alone when she notes that "[i]nternational relations stands as the one social science with barriers to entry so low that anyone can jump them."[60] The problem, of course, is that all and sundry jumping aboard ship

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[58] Cox, W.S., & Sjolander, C.T., (1994), *op.cit*, p.4.

[59] Zagorin, P., (1990), "Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations," *History and Theory*, Vol.24,No.3, p.271.

[60] Strange, S., (1989), "I Never Meant to Be An Academic," in Kruzel, J., & Rosenau, J.N., (eds.), *Journeys Through World Politics: Autobiographical Reflections of Thirty-four Academic Travelers*. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, p.435.

threatens to make meaningless those barriers that otherwise give us a sense of disciplinary identity. As Stanley Hoffmann warned, "a flea market is not a discipline."[61]

Much like an overburdened sea vessel, International Relations is in danger of floundering amid inclement theoretical weather. The thunderclaps of theoretical reinvention, the fog banks of metaphysics, and the winds of the "Third Debate," are whipping up the seas amid an approaching storm. But rather than batten down the hatches and make ready to ride out bad weather, International Relations continues to fish, reeling in yet more agendas from the depths of the sea. Other ships have headed for fair skies; we, on the other hand, continue to drag our nets, running the risk of losing sight of land altogether and of drifting aimlessly without purpose, direction, and definition. In the process, the streamlined concerns of our disciplinary ship have been transformed into that of a cumbersome barge. No longer do we race toward some defined goal so much as list awkwardly upon an increasingly turbulent ocean. Where once it was simply a matter of setting sail, of traversing the empirical seascape and charting new landmarks, now it is a matter of keeping the bow line above water as yet more souls hastily clamber aboard. Consequently, not only is our disciplinary barge proving harder to steer, but we face the more immediate risk of being lost at sea; capsized by our own goodwill and intellectual tolerance.

However, it is not merely inclement theoretical weather that should concern us. Adrift on the high seas, International Relations finds itself at the mercy of those whom it has helped aboard. As those below deck continue the task of empirical workmanship and maintain the

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[61] Hoffmann, S., (1960), "International Relations as a Discipline," in Hoffmann, S., (ed.), *Contemporary Theory in International Relations*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, p.6. For a related discussion see Bull, H., (1972), "International Relations as an Academic Pursuit," *Australian Outlook*, Vol.26, No.3, December, pp.251-265.

stock of cargo integral to International Relations, there are those newly arrived above deck who would mutineer and head us toward the rocks. The fog horns of warning might be sounding, but the discipline it seems is reluctant to heed to the lighthouse of rationality. Even those in the crows nest appear blinded by the fog of post-modernism, whose thick veil of nomenclature and insipid bouts of deconstruction, renders ineffectual the discipline's sense of direction and alertness. Without radar, the navigational hazards of perspectivism and the exponential growth in theories, research agendas and issue areas, makes it near impossible for those at the helm to decide whether sea, land, or yet another mirage lie ahead. Those on the bridge are baffled. Do we let the sea-change of theoretical innovation and post-modernism fill our disciplinary sails and take us blindly to new oceans, or do we resist these tides and hope the seasonal trade winds return us to charted waters? Navigating between "islands of theory," the reefs of irrationality and the icebergs of deconstruction, has never been more treacherous. Thus, we must ask ourselves whether we wish to continue indefinitely a sea voyage that will take us to yet more islands, or whether we should dock, tie up ship, and begin the cultivation of a particular island and its theory. Where to dock ship, however, what island port to choose, what criteria we use, and who captains the helm, are questions for which answers have never been more illusive.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide some preliminary comments on the consequences of the "Third Debate" and the newest radical perspectivism. As should be obvious, the "Third Debate" is a multifaceted and vexatious affair, housing numerous, often diverse, critical reflections that challenge the sanctity of International Relations as traditionally constructed.

Within this ambit, the "Third Debate" poses challenges, opportunities and dangers for the discipline of International Relations. Yet by virtue of the diverse constellation of approaches it houses, a precise understanding of the "Third Debate" and its possible consequences remains obscure. Indeed, for the most part, the "Third Debate" has been heralded not by inquisitive comprehension but banal announcements of its arrival. Few have attempted to dissect systematically the "debate," comprehend its parameters and understand its consequences. That it has arrived is now obvious; less so, however, is what it means to the discipline, what it might do to theory, and whether or not this is beneficial. As Chris Brown notes, "[a]s yet, there is little critical literature on postmodernism in IR," that is, apart from "the criticisms postmodernists have of each other."[62] This chapter has therefore been a contribution to this dilemma, albeit rudimentary. Moreover, the remainder of this thesis addresses this very project, attempting a critical understanding of post-modernism in International Relations.

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[62] Brown, C., (1994), "Critical Theory and Postmodernism in International Relations, " in Groom, A.J.R., & Light, M., (eds.), *Contemporary International Relations: A Guide to Theory.* London: Pinter, p.62.

Introduction

If, as Nicholas Onuf argues, the "edifice" of theory is today under attack, and if, as John O'Neill observes, "words and things have come unstuck," then this chapter is a contribution to understanding the parameters of this *crisis* as it emerged with the arrival of post-modern theory.[1] My intent is not to contribute to that genre of literature but to attempt an understanding of it, at least in proportions which will allow us, in subsequent chapters, to assess critically its implications for international political theory. To that end, this chapter explores the intellectual strategies of a number of contemporary post-modernists, in part to provide some conceptual clarity to the monolith of theory labelled *post-modern*, and secondly, to demonstrate the abundance of *different* perspectives housed under the singular lexicon *post-modernism*.

The chapter is divided thematically into two major sections. The first attempts to situate, contextualize and make sense of the phenomena[2] of post-modernism. I do this by offering two interpretive discussions of the leitmotifs of post-modern theory as popularly understood: post-modernism as *deconstruction*, and post-modernism as *epochal change*. These discussions provide a brief overview of the aims, issues, and concerns of post-modernists and illustrate the scope of the post-modernist "project." Broadly conceived, the aim of the first section is to make sense of post-modernism and locate it in relation to its modernist counterpart. The second section develops a series of heuristic typologies or, more accurately, *thematic "ideal types."*

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[1] Onuf, N.G., (1989), *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p.11. O'Neill, J., (1990), "Postmodernism and (Post)Marxism," Silverman, H.J., (ed.), *Postmodernism — Philosophy and the Arts*. New York: Routledge, p.78.

[2] This is deliberately plural since I will insist that post-modernism is not a singular concept but multifarious and anointed of many constituencies.

These I employ as ordering categories that, in subsequent chapters, are used in the construction of a critical genealogical account of the way certain post-modernist theories have been expropriated, imported, and applied to the study of international relations and in the construction of international political theory. In this sense, these categories are developed for purely analytical purposes; to demonstrate that international political theory surrendered *carte blanche* to post-modernist idiolects, represents not only a step backwards but a step into the abyss. My intent throughout the next three chapters, then, is to argue the case for judicious reflection and scholarly circumspection in the importation of Continental philosophy into International Relations. In particular, I will seek to demonstrate how only certain post-modernist perspectives have utility for International Relations, that some have no utility at all, and still others are detrimental to the discipline and theoretical endeavour.

Two Interpretations of Post-modernism: Post-modern Theory as Deconstruction

It is hard to know what to make of the idioms and idiolects of the *post*: post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-positivism, or post-marxism, for example. These so-called "discourses" now constitute much of contemporary language and theory, eliciting both praise and scorn. Harry Levin, for example, abjures post-modernism for its anti-intellectualism. Irving Howe thinks it a mass cultural phenomenon "impatient with mind." And John Gardner describes it as hyper-intellectualism.[3] As to what constitutes the laconically labelled *post-modern*, few agree, noting as does Dick Hebdige that:

> It becomes more and more difficult...to specify exactly what it is that "postmodernism" is supposed to refer to as the term gets stretched in all

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[3] Newman, C., (1985), *The Post-Modern Aura: The Act of Fiction in an Age of Inflation*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, p.31.

directions across different debates, different disciplinary and discursive boundaries, as different factions seek to make it their own, using it to designate a plethora of incommensurable objects, tendencies, emergencies.[4]

Indeed, despite its proliferation throughout the social sciences and humanities, *post-modernism* remains a curious lexeme of hotly contested ideas, meanings and political agendas. Post-modernist writings, for example, can only be described as an intellectual maelstrom, and the post-modernist movement a diverse collection of followers who, ostensively, are neither united in intent, similar in focus or method, nor canonized in terms of theoretical precision. Charles Newman, for example, thinks post-modernism is a kind of incomplete non-idea that exists neither as a "canon of writers, nor a body of criticism."[5] In fact, post-modernism is not so much a statement of principles, a political doctrine, a methodological formula or a grand theory, as it is a cathartic apostasy; a renunciation of faith in modernism, rationality, science, technology and the philosophy of presence (representation).[6] Subsequently, the post-modern lexeme has been adopted in seemingly disparate milieus: emblematic, at one and the same time, of the assemblage of stylistic expressions in architecture; the landscape of political-economic changes in the nature of production and consumption; the mediascape of images comprising the simulacra; the crisis of representation and the allegoric tendency toward sign and symbol; the transformation of time-space dimensions with the revolutions in communications and transportations; the deconstruction of text and subject and the rise of intertextualism and intersubjectivity; and the repudiation of modernist philosophy seen as atonal, logocentric,

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[4] Hebdige, D., (1988), *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things*. London: Routledge, p.181.

[5] Newman, C., (1985), *op.cit*, p.5.

[6] Collins, J., (1992), "Post-modernism as Culmination: The Aesthetic Politics of Decentred Cultures," in Jencks, C., (ed.), *The Post-Modern Reader*. London: Academy Editions, p.104.

instrumentalist, and rationalist. Thus might we conceive of post-modernism not as a theory or theories but, as Hebdige argues, "a space, a 'condition'...where competing intentions, definitions, and effects, diverse social and intellectual tendencies and lines of force converge and clash."[7]

Since the late 1970s, few disciplines have been untouched by the temerity of post-modernist writings and readings. Philosophy, politics, music, film, sociology, geography, literary criticism, development studies, as well as International Relations, all display post-modernist intrusion.[8] This perhaps explains why those attempting to define *post-modernism* are almost always presaged to failure. Post-modernism is, after all, cryptic in form, enigmatic and amorphous, its conduit protected by language deracination and fecundity in dimensions. As Donald Kuspit notes, post-modernists are "protected by mystique," their writings "rhapsodic," "elusive," "exhilarating" and "used with licence." Like a panacea, post-modernist literature is rich with linguistic parody, irony, meaning and insight. Yet as Kuspit also notes, these very qualities dispose the intellectual content of post-modernist writings to disintegrate

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[7] Dick Hebdige as quoted in Reimer, B., (1989), "Postmodern Structure of Feeling: Values and Lifestyle in the Postmodern Age." in Gibbins, J.R., (ed.), *Contemporary Political Culture: Politics in a Postmodern Age*. London: Sage Publications, pp.110-111. A useful introduction that provides some background to the modernist and post-modernist labels is found in Smart, B., (1990), "Modernity, Postmodernity and the Present," in Turner, B.S., (ed.), *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*. London: Sage Publications, pp.14-30.

[8] Indeed, in the case of geography, for example, Edward Soja has gone as far to argue that the discipline has undergone a comprehensive "postmodernization," reconstituting its "tapestry" in ways that have disintegrated its traditional concerns and boundaries. See Soja, E., (1987), "The Postmodernization of Geography: A Review," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Vol.77.No.2, pp.289-294. See also Billinge, M., Gregory, D., Martin, R., (1984) (eds.), *Recollections of a Revolution: Geography as a Spatial Science*. London: Macmillan, and Marden, P., (1990), "Deconstruction and Interpretivism: A Critical Appraisal of the Post-Structuralist Tendencies of Postmodern Geographies," *Working Paper*, No.32, Department of Geography and Environmental Science, Monash University, Australia.

"on direct contact with reality."[9] Indeed, post-modernists prefer the ether of the unspecified to the vexed realities of inscribed practices, disciplinary specialization, or concision in method and technique. Their ease in depreciating science and fixity in meaning, interpretation and knowledge, and destabilising the very idea of theory, has no equal voracity when it comes to building a constructive discourse. Instead, post-modernists prefer to disparage modernist rationalism as instrumentalist, dismiss epistemology as foundationalist, and reject ontology as positivist. As the cherished centre pieces of Enlightenment thought and Western rationalism, these critical-intellectual tools are summarily dismissed as no longer useful and no longer legitimate. In their place, post-modernists appeal to an as yet unspecified set of "other" criteria as the appropriate vehicles for understanding post-modern theory. Consequently, traditional theorists like Christopher Norris or Alex Callinicos, display bewilderment at the ethereality, theoretical brevity and reluctance of post-modernists to enunciate their epistemic motif beyond the errant practices of deconstruction.[10] Above all they are disenchanted at the unwillingness of post-modernists to abide by established rules for intellectual engagement: how does one rationally assess post-modern theory when post-modernists eschew all references to rationalist discourse?

Post-modernist writings are also confusing if only because of their predilection for eclecticism and tendency to divaricate into numerous, seemingly unrelated issue areas. It is not unusual, for example, for post-modernism to be understood synchronously a means of reading

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[9] Kuspit, D., (1990), "The Contradictory Character of Postmodernism," in Silverman, H.J., (ed.), *op.cit*, p.54.

[10] See Norris, C., (1990), *What's Wrong With Postmodernism: Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Callinicos, A. (1989), *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

texts, a method for theoretical deconstruction, a form of political-economy, a variant of feminist writings, an epitaph to modernism, a post-*avant-garde* post-expressionist form of aesthetics, as well as a new hyper-consumer culture riven by image.[11] The transient discursiveness of post-modern theory makes its place of origin, and its meaning, almost aeolian. Indeed, the very word *post-modern* has became a"floating signifier," penetrating all facets of social theory by virtue of its imprecise dimensions and thus ability to assume innumerable meanings dependent upon the context in which it is employed. This accords with the conclusions of Andreas Huyssen, who argues, less than kindly, that the use of eclecticism is a thinly disguised facade that spares post-modern theory the embarrassment of revealing its theoretical impression and meaningless nature. In fact, Huyssen has gone so far to denounce post-modern theory as an "aesthetic simulacrum: facile eclecticism combined with aesthetic amnesia and delusions of grandeur."[12]

Huyssen might well be correct. Leading post-modernists like Fredric Jameson, for example, on the one hand question whether post-modernism "even exists in the first place," but on the other proceeds to define the objective parameters of capitalism and its cultural logic and label these post-modernist! [13] Not surprisingly, such self-reflective, idiosyncratic and eclectic styles have earned post-modernists the spurious title of the "anything goes" movement. This is not an altogether inappropriate characterisation given the ubiquitous nature of post-

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[11] See the discussion, for example, in Rose, M., (1992), "Defining the Post-modern," in Jencks, C., (ed.), *The Post-Modern Reader*. London: Academy Editions, pp.119-136.

[12] Huyssen, A., (1984), "Mapping the Postmodern," *New German Critique*, No.33, Fall, p.8.

[13] Jameson, F., (1984), "The Politics of Theory: Ideological Positions in the Postmodern Debate," *New German Critique*, No.33, Fall, p.53.

modernists to transgress disciplinary boundaries and engage in deconstructive language games and ethereality.[14] However, the latter of these tendencies is better understood as a statement of political resistance rather than a theoretical innovation; a means of stepping outside the established practices of scholarship and infusing it with critical insight. The incorporeal nature of language destabilization, for example, allows post-modernists to attack the rigidities of modernist discourse, particularly the sanctums of logic and reason, and escape the victimization which they argue has led to their "exile," "marginalization" and "disempowerment." Ethereality therefore becomes a political act of non-conformity, and textual deconstruction a way of "undoing" and challenging the power hierarchy of modernist theory that presupposes conformity in method, logic, knowledge and interpretation.

One of the primary objectives of much post-modernist scholarship thus concerns itself with a form of deconstructive pluralism, deliberately designed to destabilize, or at least to challenge, the system(s) of knowledge premised upon Western rationalism and derived from the Enlightenment. Where the project of modern political theory might be said to concern itself with the "good society," to inventing rules, norms, standards, and defining objectives on the basis of some master-blueprint or universal grand-strategy, post-modern theory might be said to be its arch rival, committed to seeing an end to this (modernist) project. Yet the alternatives it offers are all but invisible, especially when its aetiological basis is hidden beneath a complicated developmental historiography punctuated only by a disposition toward continental philosophy (in particular, French post-structuralist theory). Hardly surprisingly, then, the very hubris of post-modern theory continues to suffer from ill-defined parameters that betray an

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[14] Collins, J., (1992), *op.cit*, p.119.

incomplete conception of itself, and which inclines it to self-contradiction, discursiveness, irreverence, and complicated forms of expression and self-explanation.[15]

However, these qualities should not be confused with great complexity or intellectual depth, but more so with linguistic and semeiotic intimidation. In fact, post-modern theory displays a central matrix remarkably simplistic and myopic in its theoretical and practical intent: the theoretical intent of *negation*, and the practical intent of *resistance*. The post-modernist "project," for example, is readily defined by its perfunctory rehearsal of the litany of horrors and injustices carried out in the modernist era. Jim George, for instance, argues that post-modern theory is able to connect "the nightmarish dimensions of the Enlightenment dream" with the rise of the "rational subject" and "the experiences of Hiroshima and Auschwitz." "The point," he notes, "is that a celebration of the age of rational science and modern society cannot simply be disconnected from the weapons of mass slaughter or the techniques of genocide:" the "language and logic of liberty and emancipation," cannot be "detached from the terror waged in their names."[16] In this guise, post-modernism is understood as a deconstructive practice: "a textual activity, a putting-into-question of the root metaphysical prejudice which posits self-identical concepts outside and above the disseminating

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[15] Further to this, Hugh Silverman notes that "postmodernism has no place of origin — it can inscribe itself in different places, at various limit points." Silverman, H.J., (1990), "Introduction: The Philosophy of Postmodernism," in Silverman, H.J., (ed.), *op.cit*, p.4. And Jean-Francois Lyotard has gone even further, insisting that post-modernist knowledge treats its own development "as discontinuous, catastrophic, and irrevocably flawed." As discussed in Scherpe, K.R., (1986-87), "Dramatization and De-dramatization of 'the End': The Apocalyptic Consciousness of Modernity and Post-Modernity," *Cultural Critique*, No.5, p.102.

[16] George, J., (1993), "Of Incarceration and Closure: Neo-Realism and the New/Old World Orders," *Millennium*, Vol.22,No.2, Summer, pp.216.

play of language."[17] The post-modernist project becomes an exercise in linguistic relativism through deconstruction; an attempt to tear apart and *negate* modernity and demonstrate the centrality of language in the construction of knowledge and truth. We can see this, for example, in the derisive language employed by post-modernists, who aim to repudiate "oppositional and relational thinking," "deconstruct logocentric practices," engage in "transformative ontologies," disparage "master narratives," make for a "polyvocal understanding," "revalorise dialogical approaches," "map new taste cultures," present "counter hegemonic" views, and "transfigure monological" interpretations. This is a theoretical-textual process of "undoing," and a political process of *resisting* modernist practices, modernist theory, values and interpretations.[18] Theory-knowledge, the precepts of truth, right and wrong, just and unjust, and other logocentric combinations, along with master-narratives premised upon rationalist argument, are not merely questioned but de-legitimised. This is not simply an attack upon discrete theories waged from an alternative theoretical standpoint, but a deconstructive effort to undo the activity of Enlightenment theory and knowledge.

One of the central theoretical matrices of the post-modernist project, then, is a repudiation of *organonist* thought systems: an attempt to deconstruct inscribed means of reasoning and logic indicative of Western philosophy. This, undoubtedly, is what makes post-modernists so conspicuous, and their project both tenacious and tenuous. For while post-modernists are patently anti-modernist, their very rationality and purpose is prescribed by the

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[17] Christopher Norris as quoted in Rose, M.A., (1992), *The Post-modern and the Post-Industrial: A Critical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.41.

[18] Indeed, Hal Foster argues that despite its apparent discursivity, post-modernism "is singular in its repudiation of modernism." Foster, H., (1983), "Postmodernism: A Preface," in Foster, H., (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, p.xii

logic of modernity, whether as an alternative to it or a reaction against it. Thus, the anti-logic

on which post-modern theory is founded can itself be seen the binary opposite logic of

modernity, entrapping post-modernists within modernist logic if only because of their own anti-

logocentrism. Consequently, this makes post-modern theory vulnerable not only to criticism

that it is unable to escape the very logic it chastises, but also because those criticisms it levels

against modernist discourse invariably repudiate post-modern theory too. As Kate Manzo

observes;

> ...even the most radically critical discourse easily slips into the form, the logic,
> and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest, for it can
> never step completely outside of a heritage from which it must borrow its
> tools—its history, its language—in an attempt to destroy that heritage itself...[19]

I return to a discussion of these contradictions in subsequent chapters. Suffice it to say

at this juncture, that post-modern theory as deconstruction suffers under its own obtuse logic.

Post-modern Theory as Epochal Change

While we often think of the post-modern project as largely a deconstructive effort

inspired by Continental theorists like Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault, *post-modernism* as

a periodizing category and the theories it engenders are not so easily classified. What of those

who claim the arrival of a *post-modern era* and a different set of sensibilities? Things are

surely changing; we no longer inhabit an era understood as simply modernist, but one where

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[19] Manzo, K., (1991), "Modernist Discourse and the Crisis of Development Theory," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol.26,No.2, Summer, p.8.

hyper-activity in communications, transportations, trade and electronic images, presupposes a "new" set of realities.[20]

Since the late 1970s it has become common parlance to speak the language of "new," "changed," "transformed" or "re-ordered" realities. The world is now understood to be composed of "new" economic, political, and spatial configurations. Various authors write of the restructuring of global industry, the rise of transnational finance capital, the new international division of labour, the new international economic "disorder," the end of "Pax Americana" and the rise of "Pax Nipponica," the emergence of "global civil society" and the "re-ordering of world capitalism."[21] Along with these pronunciations of "new" and "transformed" realities, new theoretical methods have emerged whose aim is to understand these transformations in light of the workings of either capitalism, culture, consumption, aesthetics, production, representation, or some combination therein.[22] Many of these

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[20] For discussions about the "changed" realities of world capitalism, relations of production, technologies, communications, and thus in the political-economy of global relations, see the following: Andrews, B., (1982), "The Political Economy of World Capitalism: Theory and Practice," *International Organization*, Vol.36.No.1, Winter, pp.135-163. Drucker, P.F., (1986), "The Changed World Economy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.64,No.4, Spring, pp.768-791.

[21] See the following literatures: Frobel, F., Heinrichs, J., & Kreye, O., (1978), "The New International Division of Labour," *Social Science Information*, Vol.17,No.1, pp.123-142, Thrift, N., (1986), "The Geography of International Economic Disorder," in Johnston, R.J., & Taylor, P.J., (eds.), *A World in Crisis?*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp.12-67, Caporaso, J. A., (1981), "Industrialization in the Periphery: The Evolving Global Division of Labour," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.25.No.3, September, pp.347-384, Andreff, W., (1984), "The International Centralization of Capital and the Re-ordering of World Capitalism," *Capital & Class*, No.22, Spring, pp.58-80, Peet, R., (1983), "Introduction: The Global Geography of Contemporary Capitalism," *Economic Geography*, Vol.59.No.2, April, pp.105-111, Lipschutz, R.D., (1992), "Heteronomia: The Emergence of Global Civil Society," *Mimeograph*, Paper prepared for the International Studies Association Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, March 31 - April 4, Leaver, R., (1988), "Restructuring in the Global Economy: From Pax Americana to Pax Nipponica?," *Mimeograph*, Peace Research Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University.

[22] Of these "new" theoretical forms the most obvious and successful has been the introduction of a spatial dialectic into social theory and political-economy. See, for example, the writings of Jezierski, L., (1991), "The Politics of Space," *Socialist Review*, Vol.21,No.2, April-June, pp.177-184, Gregory, D., (1978), "Social Change

innovations are to be welcomed, deepening our theoretical understanding and knowledge. Yet to suppose the dawn of a "new age" or that this "new age" is manifestly different from the past, is at best premature and at worst mis-conceived.

Most generations are apt to be consumed with their own self importance and their sense of difference from previous generations. But "difference," "transformation," or "change," does not necessarily equate with "new." If we are in a "new" post-modern era, to what extent is this merely the consequence of the modernist epoch maturing, growing, and expanding? The notion of "new," often expressed by the prefix "post" signifying disjuncture and breakage, is specious. Social processes, economics, politics, and the human condition, have not suddenly reinvented themselves in the space of a few short decades. Rather is the case that they have been subtly altered and affected by changing scientific innovations, technological progress, and attendant reorientations in knowledge and understanding. This is the way Anthony Giddens explains the so called "post-modern" age, not as a new era but part of the unfolding tapestry of modernity, where the radicalization and universalization of modernity now make its consequences manifest.[23] Processes otherwise claimed as evidence of a post-modern condition, then, are more appropriately explained as the consequences of modernity that, through reflexivity, continually transposes its form, effects, and style. Thus, for example, the "new" forms of

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and Spatial Structures," in Carlstein, T., Parkes, D., & Thrift, N., (eds.), *Making Sense of Time*. Volume One, New York: John Wiley, pp.38-46, Gregory, D., (1989), "Presences and absences: Time-space relations and structuration theory," in Held, D., & Thompson, J.B., (eds.), *Social Theory of Modern Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.185-214. Also, the development by Anthony Giddens of structuration theory (the reflexive understanding of structure and agency in both spatial and historical contexts) has also radically transformed much social theory. See, for example, the excellent introductions: Bryant, C.G.A., & Jary, D., (1991)(eds.), *Giddens Theory of Structuration: A Critical Appreciation*. London: Routledge, Giddens, A., & Turner, J., (1987), *Social Theory Today*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, Giddens, A., (1984), *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[23] Giddens, A., (1991), *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, p.3.

cultural expressionism that post-modernists claim are a reaction against the monism of modernist universality, are more likely the logical consequence of technological innovations that make the mass transmission of ideas possible. Likewise, the fragmentation of political movements and the growth of special interest groups that post-modernists insist represents a new political sensibility that "celebrates diversity," might also be explained by the increasing spread and acceptance of liberal ideas that reject absolutism while embracing tolerance. Similarly, the "new" styles and objectives of literary texts which have been coterminous with challenges to traditional conceptions of the role and purpose of theory, are likely not instances of "post-modernist" theory as they are a reflection of the depreciation of Western influences through greater cross-culturalism due to global advances in literacy, communications and travel. And finally, the advent of hyper-consumerism that post-modernists claim is a result of the "simulacra" and the fixation with image and style, is more obviously caused by materialist saturation, mass consumption and marketing techniques, and fabricated by the availability of the mass electronic and print medias. In other words, talk of a post-modern age is merely talk of the *consequences of modernity*, particularly developments in its constituent parts, namely: liberal democracy, industrialism, capitalism, technology, and science. What post-modernists mistake as "new" cultural forms, or as "new" modes of production, are really consequences of old and well established modernist practices: a case of old wine in new bottles.

In their zeal to proclaim a "new" epoch, post-modernists have thus been inclined to myopia and ahistoricism, forgetting how instrumental and interrelated is the past to the present. As David Harvey notes, while many now employ the popular idiom of post-modernism, "the conditions of postmodernity are still very much tied to [the] historical-geographical workings

of capitalism's inner logic." But as he also warns, this makes the "rhetoric of postmodernism...dangerous for it avoids confronting the realities of political economy and the circumstances of global power."[24] Indeed, for post-modernists who stress deconstruction, what is "new" about the post-modern epoch is not the centrality of power or production, but the devolution of a central, sovereign and authoritative centre of interpretation and meaning. As Richard Ashley notes, European "peoples and places;"

> ...long certain of their absolute presence as a centre of meaning and origin of authority, [have] had to accommodate their situation in a wider world of contesting cultures that at once effectively resist and effectively penetrate the European territory of truth.[25]

This, for Ashley, is the essence of a "new" post-modern sensibility, a kind of relativistic-plural world full of competing interpretations with no sovereign centre. Yet this too might also be viewed a stage in the development of modernity: the effects of modernization, for example, that colonizers increasing parts of the global political-economy and changes the spatial dimension of geographic, economic and cultural relationships.

Regardless, my point should be obvious, that post-modern theory is considerably more complex then a simple "deconstructive" reading would suggest. As I will demonstrate shortly, the assumption of epochal change and *new* realities has spawned a whole series of theories also variously labelled "post-modern." Most obviously, notions of a "post-modern era" have engendered new ways of "doing theory." Issues previously thought unimportant have become

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[24] As quoted in Marden, P., (1992), "The Deconstructionist Tendencies of Postmodern Geographies: A Compelling Logic?," *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol.16,No,1, p.46.

[25] Ashley, R.K., (1991), "The State of the Discipline: Realism Under Challenge," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (eds.), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives on an Evolving Discipline*. Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National University, p.48.

central, conceptions of time and space are changed, new sets of questions and issues have been raised, and a whole host of theories have arisen to address these issues.

This process has been common enough in the social sciences: a movement away from essentialist grand-theoretic narratives towards multi-theoretical perspectivism and "islands of theory." Arguably, this eclecticism in theoretical approaches and ideas itself constitutes a "post-modern" sensibility: the notion that things are too complex to be grasped by any one theoretical account. The late-modern world is now variously understood to be composed of interpenetrating and multiple realities, where complexity in social, economic, and political relationships are further compounded by a multitude of electronic images, disparate cultural influences, and changes in the dimensional referents of time and space due to advances in transportations and communications. What this represents for post-modernists is "a profound shift in the *structure of feeling*" in the "culture of advanced capitalist" societies.[26] As Jane Flax observes:

> Something has happened, is happening to Western societies...Western culture is in the middle of a fundamental transformation: a "shape of life" is growing old. The demise of the old is being hastened by the end of colonialism, the uprising of women, the revolt of other cultures against white Western hegemony, shifts in the balance of economic and political power within the world economy, and a growing awareness of the costs as well as the benefits of scientific "progress."[27]

For post-modernists, the complexity of these realities discounts the utility of mono-theoretical (essentialist) accounts. Instead, it suggests the need for multiple theoretical analyses

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[26] As quoted in Harvey, D., (1991), *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p.39.

[27] Jane Flax as quoted in George, J., (1993), *op.cit*, pp.215-216.

that avoid reflection on any one dimension in favour of a reflexive understanding of relationships *between* social, political and economic dimensions.

This trend is generally constitutive of the new forms of post-modern theory in political-economy. These tend to; a.) subsume disciplinary boundaries; b.) concern themselves with techno-scientific change and their economic, political and social consequences in theses of the "post-industrial society;" c.) integrate into theories of commodity production and consumption a theory of aesthetics and cultural forms; d.) problematize claims and suppositions and expose them to critical analysis; e.) contextualize knowledge claims, and in the context of deconstruction theory; f.) attempt to "obliterate the boundaries between literature and other disciplines" and reduce "all modes of thought to the common condition of writing."[28]

Thus, if we are to approach an understanding of post-modernism, we must first realise that no one understanding is sufficient. Certainly its dominant constellations exist as deconstructive anti-modernist efforts, but this is not true of all post-modern theory or post-modernists. Increasingly, those who claim a post-modern heritage are not easily slotted into a deconstructionist mould, but concern themselves with objective changes in technologies, economics, political organization, culture and their reflexive effects upon such things as inter-state relations, interdependence, or consumption and production patterns. Consequently, the *post-modernist* lexicon is best understood as a generic shell that houses numerous commentaries on the condition of late-modernity; some from a deconstructionist standpoint, others from a position of documenting change. What unites these forms of analysis is that all of them are reacting to the modernist project and the latent processes of modernization;

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[28] Zagorin, P., (1990), "Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations," *History and Theory*, Vol.24,No.3, p.271.

whether this be a political commentary on the "nightmarish dimensions of the Enlightenment dream," the consequences of changing social and political sensibilities in the era of mass communications, or on the end of the industrial era and the rise of a post-industrial one.[29] In short, these commentaries are both a *postscript* to the modernist era and a *preface* to the consequences of that era which are now becoming evident.

A reading of post-modern theory as "epochal change" thus proves instructive. In this context, post-modern theory acts as a sequential marker or periodizing category, a metaphor that is both emblematic of changes in culture, history, society, and thought, while perhaps also contributory to them.[30] Whether such changes are real or imagined, the point is moot. What is imagined today becomes tomorrows reality, and a great deal of post-modern theory is directed toward capturing this sense of change in the "structure of feeling" which itself has reflexive implications for the way social and political relations are actually practised. The uniqueness of post-modern theory therefore resides in its reflexivity; its ability to offer commentary on these changes and make them real. My quibble with post-modern theory does not reside in these observations, but the extent to which these "changes" are the result of modernist attributes wrongly ascribed to a post-modern reality and detached from historical and genealogical moorings. To this extent, post-modern theory is oxymoronic, since the realities, changes, and sensibilities it deals with are themselves modernist in origin. Thus, while the two readings I have offered have obvious utility, by themselves they are unable to capture the depth

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[29] In this genre, see, for example, Berman, M., (1988), *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. Penguin.

[30] See the discussion in Best, S., & Kellner, D., (1991), *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*. New York: Guilford Press, pp.29-31. See also, Connolly, W.E., (1988), *Political Theory and Modernity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

of epistemological diversity within post-modern theory, or the peculiarity of its inconsonant nuances. For this, a more substantial taxonomical system is required.

Four Typologies of Post-modern Theory

If post-modernists grapple with the modalities of late-modernity, they do so in multifarious ways, many of which seem unrelated and dissimilar. As Pauline Rosenau observes, there are "as many forms of post-modernism as there are post-modernists," making post-modern theory a diverse amalgam of contending interests and approaches.[31] Any classificatory scheme that attempts to order post-modern theory is thus prone to the dangers of oversimplification, not least because it will invariably reduce the breadth and diversity of post-modern theory to a few cursory categories. However, if we are to gain a systematic understanding of post-modernism and its diversity, then such typologies are not only heuristically necessary but indispensable.

The application of Weberian "ideal types" to post-modern theory is not new. Hal Foster, for example, schematically divided post-modern theory into two categories: a "Neoconservative" and "Post-structuralist" variety. Similarly, Pauline Rosenau wrote of "Affirmative" and "Skeptical" post-modernism; Richard Rorty of deconstructionist and "bourgeois postmodernism;" and Mark Hoffman of "critical" and "radical interpretivism."[32] While classifications of this nature are useful they also betray a number of problems inherent

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[31] Rosenau, P.M., (1992), *Post-modernism and the Social Sciences*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p.15.

[32] See Foster, H., (1983) (ed.), *Recordings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics*. Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, pp.121-137. See also, Foster, H., (1984), "(Post)Modern Polemics," *New German Critique*, No.33, Fall, pp.67-78. Rosenau, P., (1992), *op.cit*, Rorty, R., (1980), *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, Hoffman, M. (1991), "Restructuring, Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation: Four Voices in Critical International Theory," *Millennium*, Vol.20.No.2, pp.169-185.

in the construction of schematic "ideal types." First, most "ideal types" rely on simple dichotomized categories that are restrictive and exclusionary (as with the above). Theories and theorists are never as neatly compartmentalized or clearly defined as many historiographical-epistemological narratives would suggest. And still fewer intellectual movements, let alone the post-modern one, can be captured adequately by single variable categories like "post-structuralist" or "bourgeois." Intellectual discourse and the manner in which ideas emerge, develop and are employed, and of how they reflexively interact with other theories and change their systemic structure, are notoriously complicated questions. Moreover, the inscription of particular theorists and theories into discrete intellectual boxes is an activity far from objective, and often infused with subjective bias and interpretation.

I do not pretend to offer any alternatives to these dilemmas, but simply to acknowledge the weaknesses implicit in the construction of classificatory schemes. These weaknesses, however, do not detract from the overall utility of schematic typologies as heuristic tools. Their continued use throughout the social sciences bears testimony to this. Indeed, classificatory schemes and processes of theoretical taxonomy, are pedagogically indispensable if we are to appreciate the constituent parts of theories, assess their usefulness and utilize them. For this reason, I also intend to employ a classificatory scheme that identifies *thematic* "ideal types" in post-modern theory. My reasons for this are fivefold.

First, the use of *thematic* criteria as a basis for classification is a more nuanced means of differentiating between post-modern theories. It avoids the pitfalls of developing and applying rigid and overly restrictive criteria that would otherwise detract from the diversity apparent in post-modern theory. It also avoids the problem of inscribing theories into discrete

boxes and allows post-modern theories to occupy simultaneously a number of categories. This merely acknowledges the fact that post-modern theories typically deal with concurrent themes and are not mono-thematic.

Second, the use of thematic classifications will assist in disentangling post-modern theory into manageable categories that, in subsequent chapters, can be assessed individually and critically.

Third, it will complement the idea of post-modern theory as multifarious and complex rather than hermetically unified: that is, composed of many facets that are not reducible to a single core.

Fourth, for purposes of this thesis, it will allow the identification in subsequent chapters, of those forms of post-modern theory that are useful to international political theory from those that are not.

And *fifth*, it will allow for the construction of a critical-genealogy of post-modern theory in the discipline of International Relations; particularly the way in which certain post-modern theories have been imported, the nature of their application, and an assessment of their usefulness.

While the criteria for the construction of ideal types are often subjectively derived, in the case of post-modern theory a number of dominant thematic issues immediately suggest themselves. First, I have already identified the theoretical intent of some post-modern theories to *negate* and *resist* modernist discourse. Second, I have identified the use of post-modernism as a periodizing category denoting change in such things as culture, technology, science, politics, and economics. Third, I also indicated that new forms of theoretical analysis have

arisen in response to these "new" post-modern realities; theories which attempt an understanding of post-modern dynamics and why they came about.

These expressed concerns allow for the identification of three broad, and by no means inclusive, categories of post-modern theory. These I have called; i.) *Subversive* or *Deconstructive post-modernism*, reflecting the themes of negation and resistance; ii.) *Technological* or *Productionist post-modernism*, reflecting the themes of techno-scientific changes and their reflexive social, political and economic effects, and; iii.) *Epistemological post-modernism*, reflecting the growth of new theoretical mediums and new ways of doing theory, particularly those concerned with assessing critically foundational propositions and contextualizing knowledge. There is, I would argue, also a fourth type of post-modern theory, although one that again is not discrete but captures a *theme* apparent in post-modern literature. This is the theme of despair or nihilism. Thus, the fourth category of post-modern theory I term *Nihilistic post-modernism.*[33]

The four thematic categories identified here, can be briefly summarized:

i.) *Subversive - Deconstructive Post-modernism.*

Subversive post-modernism displays a thematic concern with negation and resistance to modernist practices and discourse, primarily via a deconstructive-textual analyses of logocentric practices, modernist knowledge systems and language. In particular, subversive post-modernists attempt to demonstrate how all knowledge is mediated by language, and how

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[33] Naturally, I do not insist that these categories constitute discrete boundaries. Rather, I use them as typologies or, in the Weberian sense, as "ideal types" for heuristic purposes in disentangling the assemblage of literature labelled *post-modernist.* Moreover, I recognise that such typologies are liable to be confusing since many so called "post-modernists" straddle the typologies presented, easily slipping into two or more of these categories simultaneously.

the modernist referents of "reality," "truth," "reason" and "logic," are fictive socio-linguistic constructs that act as mechanisms of social and individual control. Subversive post-modernism, through deconstruction, attempts to erect a "structure of resistance," attacking what might be broadly called the Western-Judaeo intellectual tradition and the politics of the Enlightenment.[34]

ii.) *Technological or Productionist Post-modernism.*

Technological or productionist post-modernism has a thematic matrix concerned with objective changes: that is, as a *consequence of modernity* and the spread and advance of science and technology, the traditional modernist dialectics of production and consumption, labour and capital, state and market, etc., have been transposed with reflexive effects upon cultural forms, economics and politics. These effects are represented, for example, in theories of the post-industrial society, post-materialist society, or post-class society.

iii.) *Epistemological Post-modernism.*

Epistemological post-modernism seeks to expose the foundationalist assumptions on which meta-theoretical knowledge systems are constructed. It is a relatively benign form of post-modernism whose genealogy can be traced directly to the critical social theorists of the Frankfurt school.[35] Because of this, it is closely associated with many of the debates

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[34] In a similar fashion to Derrida, Hal Foster writes of the construction of a *culture of resistance.* See Foster, H., (1985), *op.cit*, pp.157-179.

[35] For background see Tar, Z., (1988), *The Frankfurt School.* New York: Schocken Books. See also, Horkheimer, M., (1972), *Critical Theory: Selected Essays,* (Matthew J. O'Connell: Trans.), New York: Herder & Herder. Held, D., (1989), *Introduction to Critical Theory.* Berkeley: University of California Press. See also the various essays in Bronner, S.E., & Kellner, D.M., (1989) (eds.), *Critical Theory and Society.* London: Routledge. On the connections between "critical theory" and "post-modernism," see the discussion in Best, S., & Kellner, D., (1991), *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations.* New York: Guilford Press, pp.215-255.

concerning the crisis in Marxist theory and post-marxist discourse. Epistemological post-modernism is also concerned with the relationship between aesthetics and cultural forms and modes of production, attempting to construct a unified theory of aesthetics and culture within a marxist epistemology (the work of Antonio Gramsci, for example).[36]

    iv.) *Nihilistic Post-modernism.*

Nihilistic post-modernism presents a pessimistic and gloomy assessment of the post-modern age, one that suffers from malaise, fragmentation, meaninglessness, and the absence of sociality. This is the dark side of post-modernism; Nietzschean in nature where the politics of despair, the death of the subject, and the impossibility of representation and truth, reign supreme.[37]

Employing these categories, I argue in subsequent chapters that technological post-modernism is useful in the study of international relations and predominately operative in the now burgeoning literature on international political-economy. However, as far as international political theory is concerned, epistemological post-modernism, while useful, has only limited applications, and subversive post-modernism is wholly detrimental, albeit currently popular. Similarly, nihilistic post-modernism does not speak directly to international political theory, but has in various instances contributed to, and in darker moments defined, debates in International Relations: as prophets of finitude and impending gloom in the Club of Rome and the environmental "crisis," for example, or in the doomsday politics of imminent nuclear annihilation and the soothsayers of the apocalypse.

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[36] See, for example, Morrow, R, A., (1991), "Critical Theory, Gramsci and Cultural Studies: From Structuralism to Poststructuralism," in Wexler, P. (ed.), *Critical Theory Now*. London: Falmer Press, pp.27-69.

[37] Rosenau, P., (1992), *op.cit*, p.15.

I will return to these themes in later chapters, but first I develop these motifs.

Excursions into the Post-modernist Labyrinth: The Motifs of Post-modern Theory

In this section I want to turn to a critical exposition of these four motifs as they occur in the writings of a number of leading post-modernists. However, as I have already mentioned, this task is made discursive if only because post-modernist writings are rarely thematically discrete, but tend to operate amid a series of contending motifs by virtue of their penchant for eclecticism. Consequently, I intend to treat these motifs as porous codifications rather than mono-thematic categories into which post-modernists might then be slotted. These motifs are therefore advanced for purely analytical and heuristic reasons, in order that the epistemological and ontological constructions which underlie them might be explored and assessed critically.

Post-modernism as Technological Change

When writing about post-modernism, Fredric Jameson offers the mystic observation that it is both a new age as well as an inverted form of intellectual reflection. Post-modernism, he notes, "is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good."[38] It reflects an indulgent attempt at "theorizing its own condition of possibility, which consists," notes Jameson, "in the sheer enumeration of changes and modifications."[39]

The post-modern concept is used to denote change, difference, and historical movement, and also to denote new forms of intellectual reflection, new theoretical issues, and new forms of theory. Historical or epochal change and the new forms of theory that have arisen, are not mutually exclusive but, as Jameson insists, causally connected: the latter consequent on the

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[38] Jameson, F., (1992), *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, p.ix.

[39] *ibid.*

former. Indeed, Jameson betrays his marxist bias, particularly his reductionist penchant of seeing intellectual change the product of changes in the nature of capitalist relations of production. Subsequently, for Jameson, the post-modernist era becomes not so much a new era detached from the previous, but, like Giddens' understanding, an era consequent on the manifestations of modernity; particular those transformations evident in capitalism, science and technology. In fact, Jameson writes of a "third stage" in the development of capitalism; a mature capitalism that displays an inner logic and whose rationality is defined by accumulation. This "third stage" incorporates into the marxist production matrix culture and aesthetics, whereby there has occurred "some fundamental mutation of the sphere of culture in the world of late-capitalism, which includes a momentous modification of its social function."[40] Values, ideas, theory, production, class, and thinking itself, are transformed by techno-scientific advances, allowing late-capitalism to transpose itself into a truly global phenomenon in which the referents of time, space, place, and cultural difference, are obliterated under its universalization.

Jameson approaches what I have termed a technological or productionist post-modernist: where post-modernism denotes a periodizing category expressing objective changes in technology, culture, society and politics as a consequence of the modalities of late-capitalism. For Jameson, this constitutes

> a moment in which not merely the older city but even the nation-state itself has ceased to play a central functional or formal role in a process that has a new quantum leap of capital prodigiously expanded beyond them, leaving them

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[40] *ibid*, pp.47-48.

behind as ruined and archaic remains of earlier stages in the development of this new mode of production.[41]

The post-modern era is one of new configurations, not least of them spatial, which transposes social orders, the role and power of the state, and affects cultural and political sensibilities.

However, it would be naive to suppose Jameson only a technological post-modernist. He also displays a keen understanding of how theory is transformed in the post-modern epoch. For example, he is intimately involved in transforming Marxist theory from its reductionist and essentialist economism, into a reflexive theoretical understanding of the connections between cultural forms and political and economic structures. Thus, we can also see his writings contiguous with the motifs of epistemological post-modernism, particularly his attempts to integrate a cultural-aesthetic dimension into (post)marxist theory and continue the critical theoretic tradition of the Frankfurt school. In fact, Jameson's project is readily understood as epistemological through his continued commitment to marxist categories like "class," "mode of production," and "capitalism." In Jameson's writings, these categories still assume a central ontological position as sub-structural and foundational elements responsible for social relations. These categories, as in all marxist theory, remain central analytical tools in Jameson's effort to uncover the foundational elements responsible for post-modern life and to explain historical movement and transformation. Because of this, he insists that post-modernism "should not be thought of as purely a cultural affair."[42] Rather, he urges;

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[41] *ibid*, pp.412.

[42] *ibid*, p.3.

...I must remind the reader of the obvious; namely, that this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror.[43]

Jameson's response to the post-modern era, then, is to infuse marxist theory with an understanding of culture and aesthetics while integrating them into a theory of the modes of production. This, for Jameson, explains not only the dynamics of capitalist accumulation and of technological and scientific innovation, but ultimately reveals capitalism and its economic-social matrix to be the driving force of history.

Scott Lash takes a slightly different perspective from that of Jameson. For Lash, post-modernism represents the cultural subterfuge of post-industrial society, particularly the "deepening of commodification." Here, post-modernism is a cultural phenomenon with economic and political consequences: where commodified images are performative of accumulatory practices for capitalism and where the transvaluation of image and aesthetics "displace class culture."[44] For Lash, the result is the transfiguration of the universal *proletarian* into a *cognitariat*, displacing its political activism with spectatorism that pluralises left political culture.[45] Class culture ceases to exist, the dialectics of class and capital no

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[43] *ibid*, p.5.

[44] A similar thesis positing the deepening of consumer society and the reflexive effects of culture, technology and economics upon one another, is found in Jameson, F., (1983), "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in Foster, H., (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, pp.111-125.

[45] Lash, S., (1990), *Sociology of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, pp.21,23,30,37-52. On the rise of the *cognitariat* see Jencks, C., (1986), *What is Postmodernism?* London: Academy Editions, p.43. On the end of class and universalism, see the post-marxist expositions of Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C., (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. (Winston Moore & Paul Cammack: Trans.), London: Verso. Contra the post-marxist thesis, see Geras, N., (1990), *Discourses of Extremity: Radical Ethics and Post-Marxist Extravagances*. New York: Verso.

longer "drive" history, and those social agents previously thought central in the historical dialectic are superseded in the post-modern age.

Charles Jencks has drawn similar conclusions but argues that different mechanisms have been responsible for these outcomes. Jencks, for example, conflates post-modernism as a cultural phenomenon with *post-fordism*, an economic phenomenon, and reflexively implicates each in the other's change. Here, the post-modern condition represents "kaleidoscopic and simultaneous" changes;

> from mass production to segmented production; from a relatively integrated mass-culture to many fragmented taste cultures; from centralised control in government and business to peripheral decision-making; from repetitive manufacture of identical objects to the fast-changing manufacture of varying objects; from few styles to many genres; from national to global consciousness and, at the same time, local identification...[46]

This position is similar to Jameson's, locating the dynamic of post-modernity within techno-scientific changes that have reflexive cultural and aesthetic implications. Jameson, for instance, understands the post-modern era as merely a new mode of production[47], where production enters the ether of image, aesthetics, symbol, sign and space:

> What has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods (from clothing to airplanes), at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation.[48]

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[46] Jencks, C., (1986), *op.cit.*

[47] Variously depicted by Jameson as "late-capitalism." See Jameson, F., (1992), *op.cit.* See also the conversation in Stephanson, A., (1988), "Regarding Postmodernism — A Conversation with Fredric Jameson," in Ross, A., (ed.), *Universal Abandon?: The Politics of Postmodernism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.3-30.

[48] Jameson, F., (1992), *op.cit*, p.4

Jean Baudrillard goes further, declaring that the dawn of the post-modern era with its technological implications, marks "[t]he end of labour;" the "end of the era of production;" "[t]he end of political economy."[49]

Thus, for technological post-modernists, objective changes in information, computer, communication and production technologies, coupled with "new" taste cultures and political movements, have transposed power relations, the workings of capital, relationships between states and the importance of knowledge. This, for example, is the conclusion of Lyotard, who notes: "Our working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age."[50]

Post-modernism as Nihilistic Despair

Unlike Jameson or Lash, Dick Hebdige understands post-modernism as nihilistic, viewing the post-modern age as modernist but "without the hopes and dreams which made modernity bearable."[51] Following Walter Benjamin's writings, post-modernity is what comes after an age of illusion, optimism and certitude; an age where the omnipotence of Faustian technology and its grounding in reason, science and industry, made possible the writings of grand-narratives and emancipatory projects: Marxism, Freudianism, Liberalism, new moral and social orders. The age of modernity was the age of *illusion*. Post-modernity, however, is the age of *disillusion*, bewilderment and cynicism. Post-modernists now attack the "age of reason,"

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[49] As quoted in Kellner, D., (1989), *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, p.61. See also his related discussion on the development of post-modernism in Kellner, D., (1988), "Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems," *Theory, Culture and Society,* Vol.5.Nos.2-3, June, pp.239-269.

[50] Lyotard, J.F., (1991), *op.cit,* p.3.

[51] Hebdige, D., (1988), *op.cit,* p.195.

critique Enlightenment thought, and react to the "excesses" of utopian reason founded on the simplistic themes of "Truth, Justice and Right."[52] Jean-Francois Lyotard, for example, insists that post-modernism constitutes a "libidinal history" that "refuses to indulge" in the "complacency of knowledge," asserting instead that there exists "*no privileged standpoint for deciphering*" truth.[53] Post-modernists no longer see the pursuit of knowledge a means to "truth" and "certitude," but an intellectual mode of production used for legitimation that masks the power it wields and those whom it serves.[54] Behind Lyotard's words lurks *The Will to Power* of Friedrich Nietzsche and the nihilism inscribed in the *fin-de-millenium*.[55] This is an epoch that comes at the end of history, a "twilight time of ultramodernism," for Kroker and Cook, where "the death of the grand referent of God" which so preoccupied Nietzsche, anticipates the ruins of the "postmodern condition"—nihilism; that "lightning-flash" which illuminates the sky for an instant only to reveal the immensity of the darkness within."[56]

Metaphors of this hue betray the pessimism inherent in the "Postmodern Scene," one symbolic of a new dark age in the "dying days of modernism...as western culture runs down

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[52] *ibid.*

[53] Lyotard, J.F., (1993), *Toward the Postmodern*. (Robert Harvey and Mark S. Roberts, eds.), London: Humanities Press, p.91.

[54] Lyotard, J.F., (1991), *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* (Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi: Trans.), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.36.

[55] Nietzsche, F., (1968), *The Will to Power*. New York: Random House. On the resurgence of Nietzschean philosophy, especially as it relates to post-modernism, see Redding, P., (1990), "Nietzschean Perspectivism and the Logic of Practical Reason," *The Philosophical Forum*. Vol.22,No.1, Fall, p.72-88.

[56] Kroker, A., & Cook, D., (1987), *The Postmodern Scene*. Montreal: New World Perspectives, pp.8-9.

towards the brilliant illumination of a final burnout."[57] Nihilistic post-modernists thus encapsulate what Scherpe terms an "eschatological consciousness of the apocalypse," since they contemplate the "end" of modernity, the rise of cynicism and the triumph of nihilism in the face of declining identity, purpose, and meaning.[58] This is the "age of *posthistorie*, the end of the world."[59]

The defining moment for nihilistic post-modernists is the relentless advance of technological society and the subsumption of all forms of human and scientific rationality unto its logic. Arthur Kroker, for example, writes of the "possessed individual;" one entrapped in an eerie simulacra of virtual reality where all original experience has evaporated. For Kroker, post-modernism is a commentary on technology. It refuses "the pragmatic account of technology as freedom," progress, liberation and development, and instead represents the "tragic description of technology as denigration."[60] The hitherto dominant dialectics under modernity — technology, alienation, class and emancipation, are now displaced: hope is gone.

Post-modernism as Critical Epistemology

Raymond Morrow rejects all these interpretations and argues that post-modernism is an intellectual mirage that masks a critical (leftist) form of epistemology. Indeed, for Morrow, post-modernism is "what remains in the shambles of the Marxist and neo-Marxist theoretical

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[57] *ibid*, pp.vi-vii. On the "crisis" in Western culture see Hobsbawm, E., (1992), "The Crisis of Today's Ideologies," *New Left Review*, No.192, pp.55-64. See also Eagleton, T., (1992), "The Crisis of Contemporary Culture," *New Left Review*, No.196, pp.29-41.

[58] Hebdige, D., (1988), *op.cit*, p.201.

[59] Scherpe, K.R., (1986-87), *op.cit*, p.95.

[60] Kroker, A., (1992), *The Possessed Individual: Technology and the French Postmodern*. Montreal: New World Perspectives, pp.2-3.

positions, the best of what is left of the left."[61] Alex Callinicos explains the post-modernist

discourse in similar terms, seeing contemporary post-modernists the leftovers of the "political

odyssey of the 1968 generation." That generation, he argues, has now entered middle age, the

middle class, middle management, administrative and university positions, "with all hope of

socialist revolution gone—indeed, often having ceased to believe in the desirability of any such

revolution."[62] As Callinicos argues;

> This conjuncture—the prosperity of the Western new middle class combined
> with the political disillusionment of many of its most articulate
> members—provides the context to the proliferating talk of postmodernism...[and]
> the *acceptance* by quite large numbers of people of certain ideas.[63]

Callinicos dismisses post-modernism as a feel-good movement by those who wish to

accommodate their political feelings with the excesses of their "overconsumptionist" lifestyle.

By turning to the politically benign spheres of culture and aesthetics, Callinicos thinks post-

modernism a veiled and pathetic attempt to rid the leftovers of the "1968 generation" of their

consumer guilt. Post-modern theory thus attempts to depict the consumption of cultural goods

as a process of individuation, an individual act of uniqueness, difference and dissimilarity, and

a means of political disassociation from modernist mass production and conformity in style and

design. But for Callinicos, this is only capitalism in a different form, and post-modernists the

embourgeoised ex-radicals of the 1980s. They are, in Callinicos' understanding, old guard

traitors who grasp at an "aesthetic pose based on the refusal to seek either to comprehend or

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[61] See Morrow, R.A., (1991), "Critical Theory, Gramsci and Cultural Studies: From Structuralism to Poststructuralism," in Wexler, P., (ed.), *Critical Theory Now*. London: Falmer Press, p.27.

[62] Callinicos, A., (1989), *op.cit*, p.168.

[63] *ibid.*

transform existing social reality."[64] The consumption of cultural goods becomes the palatable political act of resistance commensurate with a middle class lifestyle: "[r]esistance is reduced to the knowing consumption of cultural products."[65] Thus, as Callinicos argues;

> The discourse of postmodernism is best seen as the product of a socially mobile intelligentsia in a climate dominated by the retreat of the Western labour movement and the "overconsumptionist" dynamic of capitalism in a Reagan-Thatcher era. From this perspective the term "postmodern" would seem to be a floating signifier by means of which this intelligentsia has sought to articulate its political disillusionment and its aspiration to a consumption-orientated lifestyle. The difficulties involved in identifying a referent for this term are therefore beside the point, since talk about postmodernism turns out to be less about the world than the expression of a particular generation's sense of an ending.[66]

While I have sympathy with this interpretation, I also think Callinicos' position belittles much post-marxist literature and the insights it offers. Indeed, while I also think the "1968 generation" germane to an understanding of leftist post-modernism, I would explain events differently. First, we need to distinguish between those conservative and pro-consumptionist post-modernists who celebrate discursive styles and materiality and whom Callinicos makes the target of his criticism, from those who I have here identified as epistemological post-modernists. These post-modernists continue a leftist tradition of critical interpretivism under the banner of post-marxism; particulary in their writings on capitalism and, more recently, on the politics of aesthetics and culture. Where I disagree with Callinicos is that I do not see the "turn" to aesthetics and cultural forms as something "new," but rather the contemporary equivalent of the Frankfurt school of critical social theorists operative during the 1930s: those

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[64] *ibid*, p.170.

[65] *ibid.*

[66] *ibid*, pp.170-171.

who retreated from the practical politics of socialist revolution because of disillusionment at the rise of German national socialism. The same is apparent of the "1968 generation:" disillusionment at the failure of socialism and the triumph of capitalism, as Callinicos correctly points out, but not a moral ambiguity and resignation to consumptionism so much as a turn to theory and a theoretical critique of these phenomena.

Thus, I prefer to understand epistemological post-modernists as (post)Marxist political emigres deprived of their historical destiny due to the triumph of neo-liberalism and capitalism. Subsequently, these theorists have turned their attentions to articulating critical social and political theories that attempt to uncover the epistemic structures responsible for post-modern social, political and economic life.[67] And just as the critical social theorists of the Frankfurt school did it by turning to the politics of aesthetics and culture, so epistemological post-modernists do the same today.

The distinguishing feature of epistemological post-modernists is their movement away from any praxiological intent toward theoretical endeavours: a position that Callinicos sees as an abrogation of moral responsibilities. This movement toward theory was partly necessitated by the various post-structuralist critiques of marxist theory that emerged during the late 1960s and 1970s. In particular, marxist meta-theory was attacked vigorously for its reductionist, essentialist, determinist and structuralist ontologies. The ensuing in-house debates, coupled with rapid changes in the global political-economy and the rise of diverse social movements, cast still more doubt over the ability of marxist meta-theory to explain contemporary phenomena.

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[67] From this definition my use of the term "epistemological post-modernism" should be apparent. Unlike subversive or nihilistic post-modernism, epistemological post-modernism is not adverse to "truth" claims or foundationalist propositions but, in fact, looks for such systemic properties in order to explain the configurations in social, political and economic life.

The result, however, has been a theoretical reformulation of marxist theory through critical epistemological and ontological debates. Post-marxists have been at the forefront of these re-theorizations, attempting a continuation of marxist and critical theoretic traditions, but via new theoretical forms.[68] Subsequently, as Raymond Morrow has pointed out, the theoretical project of post-marxism was re-conceived as a fourfold project;

> to regain a sense of the empirical importance of economic structures and state mediation, without relapsing into instrumentalist or structuralist reductionism; to develop a theory of cultural struggle which challenges static conceptions of hegemony and domination; to articulate a theory of cultural forms which could draw upon advances in semiotic theories of communication; and to provide an approach to the subject which preserved the agency structure dialectic and incorporated a theory of resistance...[that does not rely on]...expressivist conceptions of totality and related understandings of ideology and subjectivity.[69]

Epistemological post-modernists, then, attempt to integrate into their theoretical conduit a theory of cultural forms and aesthetics, while shedding the reductionism and structuralism of marxist theory. For Perry Anderson, this was a reactive project illustrative of how the fortunes "of theoretical work on the left" are inversely related to "the fortunes of left-wing

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[68] For example, see the debates in; Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C., (1987), "Post-Marxism without Apologies," *New Left Review*, No.166, November-December, pp.79-106. Mouzelis, N., (1988), "Marxism or Post-Marxism?," *New Left Review*, No.167, January-February, pp.107-123, Chilcote, E.B., & Chilcote, R.H., (1992), "The Crisis of Marxism: An Appraisal of New Directions," *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol.5,No.2, Summer, pp.84-106, Szymanski, A., (1985), "Crisis and Vitalization in Marxist Theory," *Science and Society*, Vol.49,no.3, Fall, pp.315-331, Kumar, A., (1990), "Towards Postmodern Marxist Theory: Ideology, State, and the Politics of Critique," *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol.3,Nos.3-4, Fall-Winter, pp.149-155, Graham, J., (1991), "Fordism/Post-Fordism, Marxism/Post-Marxism: The Second Cultural Divide?," *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol.4,No.1, Spring, pp.39-58. Callinicos, A., (1985), "Postmodernism, Post-Structuralism, Post-Marxism?," *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol.2,No.3, pp.85-101.

[69] Morrow, R.A., (1991), *op.cit*, p.36. On the "crisis" in Marxism see Linday, J., (1981), *The Crisis in Marxism*. Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire: Moonraker Press.

politics" at large.[70] Indeed, Callinicos was correct to suppose that epistemological post-modernism was born from the failure of left radicalism of the "1968 generation."[71] Those very conditions which made for a crisis in Left-wing politics were, in retrospect, the making of Leftist theory, channelling creative energies toward theoretical innovation and an interrogation of hitherto dominant narratives. Consequently, as Laclau and Mouffe have observed;

> Left-wing thought today stands at a crossroads. The "evident truths" of the past — the classical forms of analysis and political calculation, the nature of the forces in conflict, the very meaning of the Left's struggles and objectives — have been seriously challenged...[A] question-mark has fallen more and more heavily over a whole way of conceiving both socialism and the roads that should lead to it.[72]

Critical thinking has been transformed. The simple slogans of "class struggle" and revolutionary emancipation, have given way to more complex theoretical undertakings that challenge notions of patriarchy, gender, linguistics, science and power. The patriarchal elitism of an all male vanguard leading male workers from the factories to freedom, is now understood as both hollow and just another form of domination: the sweatshops erected in Soviet Russia in the name of socialism, for example, were no different from those during the English

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[70] Perry Anderson as quoted in Norris, C., (1990), *What's Wrong With Postmodernism: Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p.1. Moishe Gonzales is even more scathing in his assessment of cultural theory and post-modernism, seeing critical theory the product of "[f]rustrated radicals who have managed, over the last 20 years of chaotic growth and revolutionary restructuring of higher education, to translate their...[revolutionary rhetoric]...only into tenured academic positions." Critical theory, for Gonzales at least, is arm chair theorising, suitably de-radicalized by now well heeled and tenured academics. Gonzales, M., (1984-85), "Kellner's Critical Theory: A Reassessment," *Telos*, No.62, pp.206-210.

[71] The developmental linage of French philosophy, the impact of French radicalism and its culmination in the May, 1968 uprisings, and of their influence on post-structuralist and post-modernist philosophy, is traced in Ferry, L., & Renaut, A., (1990), *French Philosophy of the Sixties: An Essay on Antihumanism*. (Mary Schnackenberg Cattani: Trans.), Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

[72] Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C., (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. (.Winston Moore & Paul Cammack: Trans.), London: Verso, p.1.

industrial revolution. This does much to explain the current character of Leftist post-modern theory that, by and large, has championed the politics of "inclusion." Totalizing meta-narratives conferring ontological centrality on certain key groups (the white-male working class, for example), have been abandoned in recognition of the "proliferation" of social movements that now constitute the spectrum of left politics (feminists, ethnic and religious minorities, sexual minorities, ecological activists, human rights activists, the disabled, etc.).

Despite Callinicos' conclusions, then, epistemological post-modernists remain faithful to classical varieties of critical thought, but extend their purview to cultural and linguistic forms of analysis. The result is a more eclectic and less centred critical theory that assaults not just the practices of capitalism but the entire modernist edifice that valorizes such practices (cultural practices, aesthetics, patriarchy, etc.).[73] This is the sense in which Zygmunt Bauman conceives of post-modernism; "modernity conscious of its true nature" and reactive to its "diseased state," particularly universalizing meta-narratives *exclusionary* of marginal voices and the suffocating mental straitjacket of scientific logic. The political compass of epistemological post-modernism is thus *inclusionary*, and "marked by a view of the human world as irreducibly and irrevocably pluralistic, split into a multitude of sovereign units and sites of authority, with no horizontal or vertical order."[74] Consequently, contemporary critical theory abandons the pretensions of objectivity and refutes the existence of a realm of residual "truth" and "meaning." Instead, the post-modern enterprise;

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[73] The shift in critical theory from its more economistic moments to its current concerns with culture, aesthetics, art, and representation, is addressed by Anderson, P., (1990), "A Culture in Counterflow — II," *New Left Review*, No.182, July/August, pp.85-138.

[74] Bauman, Z., (1992), *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge, pp.187-188. See also Bauman, Z., (1988), "Is There a Postmodern Sociology," *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol.5.Nos.2-3, pp.217-237.

...reveals the world as composed of an indefinite number of meaning-generating agencies, all relatively self-sustained and autonomous, all subject to their own respective logics and armed with their own facilities of truth-validation.[75]

This position implicitly defines the relationship of epistemological post-modernists to radical politics, for they challenge the precepts of modernist discourse that, through "objective" and "universal" standards, inscribes inequality; the distinction between mass culture and the *avant-garde*, for example, the hierarchies of class and meritocratic practices, or the value patterns that reify science over the humanities, men over women and facts over values. And it is these themes that feed directly into the epistemic motifs of subversive post-modernists and lead to the practices of deconstruction.

Post-modernism as Subversion

Subversive post-modernists attempt to dismantle these value-hierarchies, and beliefs that universalization can bestow justice through instrumental rationality.[76] They do so through the politics of inclusion, or in more radical contexts, through deconstructing logo-centric practices, binary logic and the presumption that we can speak for the marginalized (other). These deconstructive practices I have attributed to subversive post-modernists since they attempt to dismantle *Organonist* knowledge systems that, by and large, have been the hallmark of the Western intellectual tradition.[77] The champion of the American post-modern movement, Ihab

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[75] *ibid.*

[76] Contrary to my position, Bryan Turner argues that the relationship of post-modern theory to radical politics is problematic depending on how one views the modernist project and its relationship to traditionalism. See Turner, B.S., (1990), *op.cit*, p.10.

[77] The term *Organonist* I use derivatively from the Greek word *Organon*; referring to the body of writings by Aristotle of the same title. Aristotle used the word to refer to a process or series of steps leading toward knowledge, particularly the "problem of knowledge: what is it, how it is acquired, how it is guaranteed to be true, how expanded and systematized." Aristotle's Organon, then, developed a system of reasoning or logic as an instrument of thought which became the basis of the Western intellectual tradition and valorized in "reason" and

Hassen, for example, argues that the intent of subversive post-modernists is the destruction of

the Western *cogito*:

> It is an antinomian moment that assumes a vast unmasking of the Western
> mind—what Michel Foucault might call a postmodern *episteme*. I say
> "unmasking" though other terms are now *de rigeur*: for instance, deconstruction,
> decentring, disappearance, dissemination, demystification, discontinuity,
> *difference*, dispersion, etc. Such terms express an ontological rejection of the
> traditional full subject, the *cogito* of Western philosophy. They express, too, an
> epistemological obsession with fragments or fractures, and a corresponding
> ideological commitment to minorities...To think well, to feel well, to act well,
> to read well, according to this *episteme* of unmasking, is to refuse the tyranny
> of wholes; totalization in any human endeavour is potentially totalitarian.[78]

This project attempts an "explosion of the modern episteme, in which

reason..[is]...blown to pieces."[79] Consequently, the entire modernist edifice that is valorized

by reason and rationalist discourse is challenged. Subversive post-modernists, for example,

celebrate difference, discursive practices, and repudiate ideas of universal truth claims,

rationality, or representationalism. Rather, the world is seen from a relativist position, with no

single arbiter or knowledge system able to judge between truth claims. This assaults modernist

theory and destabilises the idea of logic and reason as the road to truth, fact, knowledge, and

ultimately to certitude in our understanding of the physical and social worlds. Faith in science

and theory-knowledge is eroded. For subversive post-modernists, truth is in the eye of the

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"logic." See Tendennick, H., & Forster, E.S., (1938)(eds.), *Aristotle: Organon*. London: William Heinemann.

[78] As quoted in Wellmer, A., (1985), "On The Dialectic of Modernism and Postmodernism," *Praxis International*, Vol.4,No.4, January, p.338.

[79] *ibid*.

beholder, not the test tube of a scientist, the theory of a mathematician, or the methodology of rational argument.[80]

This extreme position is evident in the unruly mixture of Continental post-structuralism and American philosophical pragmatism that emerged throughout the 1980s. Richard Bernstein notes that this made for an era filled with "suspicion" towards "reason, and of the very idea of universal validity claims that can be justified through argument." The entire Enlightenment project and its legacy have come under attack, where in post-modernist circles there is a "rage against humanism" and a movement seeking the "delegitimation" of "European modernity."[81] David Harvey maintains that this movement seeks an end to the age of reason, and rejects "any project that...[seeks]...universal human emancipation through mobilization of the powers of technology, science and reason."[82] For subversive post-modernists, these modernist referents are not the agents of liberation, but things to be liberated from.

The deconstruction of modernist discourse, logic, and reason, are thus the major occupations of subversive post-modernists. Richard Rorty attributes these deconstructive practices to the "Cartesian-Kantian" traditions of philosophy. These, Rorty argues, "attempted to escape from history" by externalizing and objectifying reality in order to erect a

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[80] Ryan, M., (1988), "Postmodern Politics," *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol.5,Nos,2-3, June, p.559. Rabinow, P., & Sullivan, W.M., (1979), *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.1.

[81] Bernstein, R., (1988), "Introduction," in Bernstein, R., (ed.), *Habermas and Modernity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.25. Wellmer, A., (1985), *op.cit*, p.341.

[82] Harvey, D., (1991), *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, p.41. See also the article by Bernstein, R.J., (1986), "The Rage Against Reason," *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol.10, pp.186-210. See also the excellent collection of essays in Hollis, M., & Lukes, S., (1982)(eds.), *Rationality and Relativism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

foundationalist transhistorical knowledge.[83] Antithetic to this tradition, post-modernists have

rediscovered contextualism and, like Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger before them, attempt

to teach a "historicist" lesson: that knowledge in all forms and varieties is contaminated by the

language used to describe it, by ideology, by historical milieu and culture.[84] Modernist

narratives of the universal and transhistorical genre are, accordingly, rejected. Lyotard, for

instance, argues that we can no longer "organize the multitude of events that come to us from

the world...by subsuming them beneath the idea of a universal history of humanity."[85]

Totalizing narratives not only exclude marginal voices but they also assume the ontological

centrality of certain groups, creating a theoretical exclusivity in the way specific groups are

made the *targets* of emancipation or the objects of narratives.[86] Feminists, for example, point

out that the history of humankind has been told as the history of "Mankind," North American

Indians that "American history" has only narrated the history of white European settlement of

"un-occupied" lands, and peoples of the Southern Hemisphere, that so called "World history"

has been told from the perspective of eurocentric narratives of European expansionism and

colonization. Modernist theory is therefore charged with becoming overly myopic, where the

exclusivity of theoretical categories like working class or white males, for example, become

the *sine qua non* for "justice" and "liberation," or the privileged subjects of historical

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[83] Rorty, R., (1980), *op.cit*, pp.9-13. See also Margolis, J., (1986), *Pragmatism Without Foundations: Reconciling Realism and Relativism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

[84] Trimbur, J., & Holt, M., (1992), "Richard Rorty: Philosophy Without Foundations," in Sills, C., & Jensen, G.H., (eds.), *The Philosophy of Discourse: The Rhetorical Turn in Twentieth-Century Thought*. Volume 1, Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann Books, p.73.

[85] Lyotard, J.F., (1989), *The Lyotard Reader*. (Andrew Benjamin, ed.), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p.314.

[86] This, indeed, is a central theme not only in the work of Lyotard but, more obviously, Michel Foucault. See Foucault, M., (1984), *The Foucault Reader*. (Paul Rabinow, ed.), New York: Pantheon, pp.32-75, 239-256.

narratives.[87]   The project of subversive post-modernists has thus been to deconstruct privileged representations, totalizing emancipatory projects and meta-discourses. Instead, they have championed discontinuities and sought to include otherwise marginalized voices in multifarious discourses that are tempered through relativity in language, interpretation, culture and history. Post-modern theory thus becomes "the infinite task of complexification" and not, as with modernist theory, a process of simplification and meta-theoretic generalization.[88] Universalism is abandoned for particularism, *macro*-theory for *micro*-theory and micro-politics, and the dimensional referent of *time* (history) is now interspersed with *place* and *space* to emphasise complexity and contextuality.[89]

Contextuality, particularism and relativism, become the analytic nostrums that separate the grand designs of modernist discourse from the specificities of post-structuralism. This has enormous consequences for the way post-modernists engage in, utilize, and understand the aims of theoretical activity, and in the way they conceive of, and explain, for example, the workings of power, capitalism, oppression, or emancipation. Unlike the structural monism of much marxist and neo-marxist literature, post-modernists view the modalities of power and oppression as intricate, localized and divergent. Michel Foucault, for instance, combined a post-structuralist account of power and oppression with a post-modernist critique of rationality and science, and abandoned grand narratives for particularistic *historical genealogies*. Unlike his

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[87] A category, incidentally, that post-modernists often see the preserve of "white males", exclusionary of ethnic, religious, linguistic minorities and women, etc.

[88] Holub, R.C., (1991), *Jurgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere*. London: Routledge, p.143. Wellmer, A., (1985), *op.cit*, p.339.

[89] Best, S., & Kellner, D., (1991), *op.cit*, p.4. On the emergence of a *spatial dialectic* see Soja, E.W., (1990), *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso.

structuralist predecessors, Foucault depicted power as "irreducibly plural," thriving at the microcosmic levels of society. And grappling with the "modalities of power" and discourse politics, he argued, was the problem that had "to be solved."[90] Foucault's work, then, was an attempt at understanding the "political status of science and the ideological functions which it could serve."[91] And his historical genealogical documentaries were extensions of this project; attempts at demonstrating "how objectifying forms of reason (and their regimes of truth and knowledge) have been made:" that, in fact, they are historically contingent rather than naturally inscribed.[92] His genealogical accounts of power in the prison and asylum, for example, re-oriented political theory away from an *a priori* assumption of its imposition, to a precise account of *how* "power" is made, matures, and infects. This is theory from the bottom up; genealogical, meticulous, and incisive of the workings of power in institutional, societal and individual bodies. So too, it is subversive, both in its political ambitions and its implications for modernist theory, seeing "truth" and "knowledge" as socially constructed and performative of oppressive tasks. This is what Lyotard meant when he wrote of the "terror of theory;" theory used as power, "knowledge" used to oppress, "truth" used for legitimation.[93]

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[90] Foucault, M., & Kritzman, L.D., (1988), *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984.* (Lawrence D. Kritzman: Trans.), New York: Routledge, p.104. Despite this statement, Foucault was at pains to point out later in his work that his project was *not* concerned with the "phenomena of power," but rather, he wrote, "[m]y objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. My work has dealt with three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects." See Foucault, M., (1984), "The Subject and Power," in Wallis, B., (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation.* New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art & David R. Godine, p.417.

[91] Foucault, M., (1984), *op.cit,* p.51. See also, Foucault, M., (1980), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977.* (Colin Gordon, *et al,* Trans., ed.), Brighton, England: Harvester Press.

[92] Best, S., & Kellner, D., (1991), *op.cit,* p.57.

[93] Lyotard as quoted in Hebdige, D., (1988), *op.cit,* p.199.

Given this conception of theory, it is hardly surprising that faith in theory-knowledge has been eroded and its deconstruction sought, principally through linguistic analyses and the pejorative use of *language games*. Indeed, language has proven the ultimate weapon for subversive post-modernists, enabling the "destabilization" of the very nexus of representation and communication that otherwise makes theory-knowledge possible. Consequently, theory itself is now problematized by subversive post-modernists, as textural analysis acquires a political utility in its demolition of modernist theories of representation.[94]

This demolition has proceeded along two avenues. First, subversive post-modernists have inverted the classical *subject-object* divide upon which modernist-scientific enquiry proceeded to represent "reality;" a simple process of problematizing the role of the subject as neutral and of the *a priori* existence of the object (reality). As Michael Ryan notes, the post-modern movement has discovered "that what were thought to be effects in the classical theory of representation can be causes; representations can create the substance they supposedly reflect."[95] In other words, the observatory act is no longer considered neutral but proactive, which, for post-modernists, inevitably changes the significance and political capacity of theory.

Secondly, assumptions of communicative rationality have been challenged by destabilising language and attacking the possibility of accurate representation and communication. Modernists like Habermas, for example, insist upon the fixity of meaning in language and upon "communicative rationality," where speaker and hearer are rationally

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[94] Ryan, R., (1988), *op.cit*, p.560.

[95] *ibid.*

committed to the task of reciprocal understanding.[96] Similarly, Robert Brandom argues that "the essential feature of language is its capacity to represent the way things are," to "take truth to be the basic concept in terms of which a theory of meaning, and hence a theory of language, is to be developed."[97] Subversive post-modernists, however, reject this and see language as socially constructed, at best a partial and imperfect intermediary between subjects. Language is unstable: "no statement ever has a determinate meaning," no word a fixed denotation, all referents are transient, and meaning is an interpretive enterprise that varies from subject to subject.[98] The "authorial point of view," for deconstructionists, cannot be related to readers, since text and subject are not as one but separate, and the act of reading, as of writing, is an intertextual and intersubjective process that is multi-layered and unique to each text and reader.[99] As Harvey notes; "[w]riters who create texts or use words do so on the basis of all other texts and words they have encountered, while readers deal with them in the same way." Acts of reading and writing become a "series of texts intersecting with other texts, producing more texts," such that this "intertextual weaving" takes on "a life of its own."[100] The "post-modern condition," then, is one where universal language is dead and sites of specialized languages have emerged; the university, the workplace, the bureaucracy, so that "effective

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[96] Holub, R.C., (1991), *op.cit*, p.135. Harvey, D., (1991), *op.cit*, p.52. See also, Habermas, J., (1984), *The Theory of Communicative Action*. (Thomas Mccarthy: Trans.), Boston: Beacon Press.

[97] As quoted in Rorty, R., (1991), *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*. Philosophical Papers, Volume 1, New York: Cambridge University Press, p.151.

[98] As quoted in Donougho, M., (1992), "The Derridean Turn," in Sills, C., & Jensen, G.H., (eds.), *The Philosophy of Discourse: The Rhetorical Turn in Twentieth-Century Thought*. Volume 2, Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, p.71.

[99] Rose, M., (1992), *op.cit*, p.41.

[100] Harvey, D., (1991), *op.cit*, p.49.

communication" can never be guaranteed and "radical misunderstanding" results.[101] A crisis

of representation ensues.

Subversive post-modern theory, thus;

> provides a critique of representation and the modern belief that theory mirrors
> reality, taking instead "perspectivist" and "relativist" positions that theories at
> best provide partial perspectives on their objects, and that all cognitive
> representations of the world are historically and linguistically mediated.[102]

In North America this position is best exemplified in the work of Richard Rorty, where

knowledge approaches what Rorty calls a "post-philosophical culture;" a post-representational

view of knowledge that is propositional and *non*-foundationalist.[103] Knowledge, particularly

that type of knowledge generated in the social sciences and humanities, is not approached as

a confrontation between the "knowing subject and the object of inquiry"(knowledge simply

seen as the mirror of nature, for example), but as an ongoing conversation between "knowing

subjects." In other words, knowledge is rooted in a socially constructed discourse, and attempts

to move beyond this, as with the Cartesian-Kantian traditions of inquiry that established

"Western philosophy-as-epistemology," are fallacious.[104]

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[101] Norris, C., (1986), "Deconstruction Against Itself: Derrida and Nietzsche,: *Diacritics*, Vol.16,No.4, Winter, p.63.

[102] Best, S., & Kellner, D., (1991), *op.cit*, p.4.

[103] An excellent account of Rorty's position, particularly his mixture of post-structuralism and philosophic pragmatism, is found in Richard Wolin's chapter entitled, "Recontextualizing Neopragmatism: The Political Implications of Richard Rorty's Antifoundationalism". See Wolin, R., (1992), *The Terms of Cultural Criticism: The Frankfurt School, Existentialism, Poststructuralism*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.149-169.

[104] Trimbur, J., & Holt, M., (1992), *op.cit*, pp.80-83. Rorty, R., (1980), *op.cit*, pp.158-159,163. See also, Rorty, R., (1982), *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.3-18. Notice that Rortyean post-modernism does not eschew rationality or logic, but embraces it as a means of conversation and a yard-stick by which participants in the conversation engage in on-going enquiry, discourse, rebuttal, and the generation of new theory-knowledge. In fairness to Rorty, this position distinguishes him form the more virulent subversive post-modernists of the Continental school — a position that Rorty, himself, is keen to point out, calling his variety of post-modernism "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism". See Rorty, R., (1983),

The abandonment of accurate representation "as the touchstone of knowledge" is, to say the least, "unsettling," repudiating the modernist habit of assuming a realm of "reality" and "truth" outside the subject and our language. Post-modernists ask us to rely on a theory-knowledge generated merely by chatting "away in a post-Wittgensteinian room whose mirrors reflect nothing but the lost contexts of...[our]...own good sense."[105] As Trimbur and Holt observe;

> To imagine human culture and the quest for knowledge as a conversation between persons instead of a confrontation with reality may appear to lock us in a "prison house of language," a hermeneutic circle that offers no release, no standpoint to get outside our discursive practices in order to show how things really are.[106]

Subversive post-modernists, however, dismiss these concerns. In the writings of Derrida, for example, we find a deeper malcontent and a resolve to slay the "Hydra of Western logocentrism."[107] Derrida's deconstructionist project aims to "desediment," "uproot," "decompose," "undo," "dismantle," and "overturn" Western metaphysics through textual analyses of philosophical writings.[108] The aim is not, it should be noted, a complete dismissal

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"Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism," *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.87.

[105] O'Neill, J., (1990), *op.cit*, p.78.

[106] Trimbur, J., & Holt, M., (1992), *op.cit*, p.81.

[107] Logocentrism is inter-changeably used with Western metaphysics, denoting the tendency in Western rationality to think in terms of "dialectics" and "binary oppositions." Thus, the penchant to establish binary opposites as in hierarchy/anarchy, positive/negative, present/absent, etc., is representative of logocentric practices that, notes Jonathan Culler, "assumes the priority of the first term and conceives the second in relation to it." More importantly, though, logocentric practices establish value patterns, where the first term, the logos, as in *hierarchy*, for example, is seen as superior to its binary equivalent *anarchy*. See the discussion in Culler, J., (1982), *On Deconstructionism*. New York, Ithica: Cornell University Press, p.93. See also, Rorty, R., (1991), *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers*. Volume II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.107-118.

[108] Mccarthy, T., (1989-90), "The Politics of the Ineffable: Derrida's Deconstructionism," *The Philosophical Forum*. Vol.21,Nos.1-2, Fall-Winter, p.153, Donougho, M., (1992), *op.cit*, p.71.

of Western rationalism, since Derrida recognizes this to be impossible, but an attempt "to transform [such concepts], to displace them, to turn them against their presuppositions, to reinscribe them in other chains, and little by little to modify the terrain of our work and thereby to produce new configurations." Derrida hopes this will coalesce into a "structure of resistance" to the dominant mode of conceptuality which, to date, under the auspices of Enlightenment thinking, has led to the violence of exclusion, in which certain groups, peoples, voices, thoughts, and modes of conceptualization have been marginalized, exiled, and disenfranchised.[109]

The defining moment for subversive post-modernists obviously rests in the political act they recommend: *resistance*. The politics of negation dominates their agenda, particularly the want to tear down the modernist edifice and subvert its practices. However, subversive post-modernists are not consistent in this project but contradictory, pragmatic and opportunistic. As Pauline Rosenau notes, post-modernists are not "concerned with categorical epistemological rigor or total coherence," and "relinquish intellectual consistency in exchange for political relevance." Witness, for example, the way subversive post-modernists portend to be avowedly anti-theoretical; a position which is not only deduced from theoretical activity but presented as part of a theoretical discourse and comprised of theoretical propositions.[110] As Norris sardonically observes, the act of theoretical negation is itself a "form of theoretical endeavour, including such attempts to discredit other kinds of theory while smuggling one's own back in,

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[109] Derrida as quoted in Mccarthy, T., (1989-90), *op.cit*, p.147.

[110] Rosenau, P.M., (1992), *op.cit*, p.175.

so to speak, by the side entrance."[111] Indeed, many of the charges laid against modernist

theory seem somewhat futile since they also implicate post-modernists in similar theoretical

crimes. For example, to denounce "truth" claims or foundationalist theory and epistemological

philosophy, is an inherently foundationalist position presupposing some singular and superior

insight beyond modernist understanding; dare one say an appeal to a higher realm of "truth"

and a better conception of the "good"? Similarly, denouncing reason and logic while engaging

in a meticulous discourse that is well reasoned, logically rigorous and cumulative in its critique,

suggests the very use of those tools they attempt to destroy. Further, by attacking value

hierarchies subversive post-modernists champion the cause of the "oppressed," "marginalized,"

and the "disempowered," displaying a keen awareness of "right" from "wrong," "good" from

"bad" and a zealous pre-occupation with such modernist themes as "social justice,"

"emancipation" and "liberation."[112] And if, as subversive post-modernists insist, language is

imprecise, effective communication is impossible, and culture is running down toward allegoric

illiteracy amid a simulacra of electronic images, it seems highly unusual for so much effort to

be placed on the enunciation of post-modernist theory and its communication through language

and the written word; writing and reading for subversive post-modernists should surely be a

barren and improbable task. Why, we might ask, do post-modernists feel the need to

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[111] Norris, C., (1988), *Deconstruction and the Interests of Theory*. London: Pinter, p.147.

[112] Of these themes, particularly the move towards inclusivity of marginal groups, Bryan Turner notes the corollary of post-modernism with liberalism: "the postmodern critique of hierarchy, grand narratives, unitary notions of authority, or the bureaucratic imposition of official values has a certain parallel with the principles of toleration of difference in the liberal tradition." Perhaps, then, we are dealing with a radicalized liberalism rather than a fundamentally new theoretical lexicon. See Turner, B., (1990), *op.cit*, p.11.

deconstruct modernist knowledge systems if language is so imprecise and communication so ineffective?

Contradictions of this type inflame the passions of those who would see an end to post-modernism. Christopher Norris, for example, dismisses post-modernism as quasipostural *political correctness* interspersed with "deconstructionist word spinning nonsense."[113] This sentiment is shared by Eric Hirsch who objects to the "decadence of literary scholarship" and the debasement of scholarship and language through "anti-rationalism, faddism, and extreme relativism."[114] For Hirsch;

> Scholars are right to feel indignant toward those learned writers who deliberately exploit the institutions of scholarship — even down to its punctilious conventions like footnotes and quotations — to deny the whole point of the institutions of scholarship, to deny, that is, the possibility of knowledge. It is ethically inconsistent to batten on institutions whose very foundations one attacks. It is logically inconsistent to write scholarly books which argue that there is no point in writing scholarly books.[115]

Alex Callinicos attributes this "farcical" and "light-minded playfulness" to a Western intelligentsia suffering from an "apocalyptic mood" as they confront the end of the millennium. He blames, in particular, two French theorists, Derrida and Foucault, who through stressing the fragmentary, plural and heterogeneous character of reality, have attempted to deny "human thought the ability to arrive at any objective account of that reality and reduced the bearer of this thought, the subject, to an incoherent welter of sub- and trans-individual drives and

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[113] Norris, C., (1990), *op.cit*, p.147.

[114] Hirsch, Jr., E.D., (1976), *The Aims of Interpretation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.13.

[115] *ibid*.

desires."[116] The "success enjoyed" by post-modernists, he concludes, is "quite out of proportion with any slight intellectual merit their work might have."[117]

The "success" of post-modern theory seems all the more amazing when one considers its spurious relativism. Derrida and Foucault, for example, both abandon objectivity, embrace perspectivism and relativism and deny the privileging of any one narrative over others. Yet, both these theorists proceed to insist that we should reject modernist for post-modernist narratives and adopt a post-modern interpretation of the world. This position is no less absolutist than the one expounded by their modernist counterparts. As Eric Hirsch observes, for post-modernists "all principles are subject to a universal relativism except relativism itself," which leads him to ask;

> But whence comes *its* exception? What is the sanction, in a world devoid of absolutes, for *its* absoluteness? We are never told. This question, so absurdly simple, yet so embarrassing to relativism, is never answered by even the most brilliant of the cognitive atheists.[118]

But perhaps this is not the way to judge the *agency* of post-modern theory and its effects upon theoretical discourse. We cannot, as is clear from the foregoing, speak of a singular post-modern theory and dismiss all for the shortcomings of one particular strand. As Jameson noted, "no one postmodernist can give us postmodernism."[119] Rather, I think it best to assess post-modern theory in terms of its effects on our sensibilities in the era of late-

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[116] Callinicos, A., (1989), *op.cit*, p.2.

[117] *ibid*, p.170.

[118] Hirsch, Jr., E.D., (1976), *op.cit*, p.13.

[119] Jameson, F., (1988), "Regarding Postmodernism –– A Conversation with Fredric Jameson," in Ross, Andrew, (ed.), *Universal Abandon: The Politics of Postmodernism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.27.

modernity; where the modernist referents of science, industry and technology, and faith in the application of reason and logic, experience a *crisis of confidence*; where the modernist project is now questioned, and where the end of the millennium suffers from malaise. These events, be they real or imagined, allow us to understand the revisionist concerns of subversive post-modernists, the catalogue of technological innovations recorded by technological post-modernists, the search for new understandings by epistemological post-modernists, and the sense of hopelessness and paralysis proffered by nihilistic post-modernists.

John O'Neill sees in these concerns the ongoing battle between the division of our reason; "divided once and for all into the subrationalities of science, art, and ethics." Yet, he notes, we have not experienced any "settlement in this process."

> On the contrary, our science tries to rule our politics and economy, while our economy largely dominates our art and morality, if not our science. At the extreme edge, our art and morality try to impose their rule upon our science and political economy — but they generally lack the stamina...[120]

In some ways the post-modernist project is a contribution to understanding this interstitial battle between the "subrationalities" of art, science, ethics, politics and economics; a contribution to exploring the human condition and its various constituencies in search of new meaning and understanding. This project, however, is not dissimilar to the one upon which those modernist institutions, the social sciences and humanities, were originally founded. Thus, we should not think of post-modern theory as separate to, distinct from, or outside of, the modernist-Western tradition as some post-modernists insist, but as part of its unfolding genealogical tapestry and implicated in its project. What distinguishes subversive post-

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[120] O'Neill, J., (1990), *op.cit*, pp.77-78.

modernists is their revisionist disposition toward modernity: their search for "thinking space" as they reflect on the modernist experience and their willingness to exploit the *crisis of modernity* and contribute to it. There is no constructive endeavour, only a celebration of the loss of certainty, where, argues John O'Neill, "men (sic) are no longer sure of their ruling knowledge and are unable to mobilize sufficient legitimation for the master-narratives of truth and justice." By relativizing all that is offered as knowledge and theory, subversive post-modernists rejoice in the loss of "authority" that hitherto marked modernist institutions.[121] In other varieties, however, technological post-modernism might well prove a vehicle for not only alerting us to sweeping change, but of theorizing its objective effects upon our social, economic and political institutions and for remaking a new social science cognizant of post-modern dynamics. Or, in the case of epistemological post-modernism, we might understand it as an avenue for conceptualizing the heightened engagement between cultural and aesthetic sensibilities and their incorporation into commodity production.

To what end these approaches will prove useful, however, to what end their concerns and depictions of current realities prove accurate, remains problematic. What does seem obvious, though, is the continuing desire for understanding, the need to examine, comprehend, and make sense of events and, consequently, the need for theoretical endeavour. Despite nihilistic despair or charges of epochal change, most of us will wake up tomorrow confronted by a world much the same as today, one that experiences the recurring problems of inequality, production and consumption, distributive justice, war and peace, violence and conflict. Various problems will emerge and solutions to them will be sought. These, surely, cannot be

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[121] *ibid*, p.78.

deconstructed, only "reinscribed" as new questions. And while we might problematize current knowledge and interpretations, question our faith in science, reason and logic, or reinscribe questions in new contexts, to suppose these endeavours contrary to the activity of theory and the search for meaning and understanding is plainly absurd. If we abandon the principles of logic and reason, dump the yardsticks of objectivity and assessment, and succumb to a blind relativism that privileges no one narrative or understanding over others, how do we tackle such problems or assess the merits of one solution *vis a vis* another? How do we go about the activity of living, making decisions, engaging in trade, deciding on social rules or making laws, if objective criteria are not to be employed and reason and logic abandoned? How would we construct research programs, delimit areas of inquiry or define problems to be studied, if we abandoned rationalist tools of inquiry?

These are awkward questions rarely asked of post-modernists. In fact, post-modern theory has enjoyed a certain aloofness in the social sciences and humanities, often sheltered from critical analysis because of its obtuse language and ethereal forms of representation. It has enjoyed the luxury of evolving in isolation, insulated from contending perspectives and the probing critical analyses usually afforded orthodox theories. In some ways this has been intentional. Post-modernists have deliberately tried to distance themselves from orthodox scholarship and, through their confrontationalist and aggressive styles, have managed to subdue opposition that would otherwise be vocal. Orthodox theorists, confused both by post-modernist nomenclature and their discursive styles, have been defensive and reticent to analyze systematically post-modern theory. Dialogue between these two schools has, at best, been

mute.[122] And while this might reflect the unwillingness of post-modernists to respond to criticism, it also reflects the brevity of criticism to come from orthodox theorists, many of whom are plainly on the defensive. We should not be surprised at this. Rarely have modernists known how to respond to allegations that implicate them and the "age of reason" in mass slaughter and genocide, the active marginalization of minority groups, the oppression of women and non-whites, the disfiguration of the environment, the brain-washing of subjects into pre-specified modes of conceptualization that serve instrumentalist purposes, and the degradation of knowledge and universities to proactive instruments of social control and legitimation. Much of the post-modernist conduit along with these extraordinary allegations have simply been dismissed as "politics from the fringe." Few have seen the need to oppose post-modern theory, most have left it alone in the hope it might go away, and nearly all have been baffled and intimidated by its imperceptible vernacular. The lack of vigilance or, more precisely, the surrender of conventional standards of appraisal, have enabled post-modernists to infiltrate nearly "every imaginable theoretical discussion."[123] International political theory has been no exception. And of those who have tried to resist the post-modernist tide, the cult of political correctness accompanying it stigmatises its detractors as vagabonds of reason and oppression.[124] The "terror of theory," it seems, is also used in the service of post-modernism.

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[122] Spike Peterson, V., (1992), "Transgressing Boundaries: Theories of Knowledge, Gender and International Relations," *Millennium*, Vol.21,No.2, Summer, p.184.

[123] Callinicos, A., (1989), *op.cit*, p.1.

[124] The cult of "political correctness," especially as it relates to the university, is eloquently told in two essays by Allan Bloom entitled; "The Crisis of Liberal Education," and "The Democratization of the University," in Bloom, A., (1990), *Giants and Dwarfs: Essays 1960-1990*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

However, before we pronounce the death of the "age of reason" and surrender ourselves to post-modern theory, it would, at the very least, be judicious to examine critically its implications and utility. In the context of this thesis, I for one am not prepared to make the mighty jump from modernist to post-modernist theory without first understanding what such a move would mean for international political theory and the discipline of International Relations. Yet, I also appreciate the sense of change and disjuncture that permeates all facets of our social existence and, ostensibly, changes the nature of global politics. The task that remains therefore is to understand these two events, see if they share any relation, understand their implications, and assess their desirability.

Conclusion

In this chapter I undertook the daunting task of "making sense" of post-modern theory by developing a series of thematic ideal types. I do not pretend to have been comprehensive in this task since post-modern theory has too wide and too voluminous a literature to possibly do it justice. Instead, I have identified some of the dominant themes and issues among post-modernists and offered some rudimentary discussion as to their respective "projects." The object has been one of taxonomy and classification in order to simplify the generic "post-modern" into specific categories that can be dissected and analyzed. The chapter has therefore been prefatory to the primary task of this thesis: namely, an exegetic analysis of post-modern international political theorists and an assessment of the merits of a post-modernist approach to international politics. In the following chapters the classifications developed here will act implicitly as tools of appraisal. So too will they be used to categorise the increasing array of post-modernist approaches in international politics. More immediately, however, I employ them

in the following two chapters to construct a critical genealogical account of the development

of post-modernist thinking among the disciplines leading "dissidents."

Introduction

Much as political theory is now "haunted" by the "spectre" of the "dissident," so too is international political theory. Intellectual "dissidents" now comprise a significant number of theorists in the discipline. Their work, although not as widely read as the ubiquitous rehearsals of neorealism, is certainly infamous. "Dissident" writings now commonly feature in graduate reading courses and are the subject matter of an increasing number of scholarly books, articles, conference papers and doctoral dissertations. In the space of only a decade, the study of international relations has "come under the influence of continental philosophical and intellectual practices;" belatedly for some, and unfortunately for others.[1] Where previously the study of international relations was the preserve of positivist—and empiricist—based pedagogical practices, theoretical debate now slides between affirmations of Kuhnian theories of knowledge development and intertextualism, as well as feminist psychoanalytic theory, semiotics, genealogy, and deconstructionism. And while many wait for this "fad" to pass and some semblance of normalcy to return to the activity of theory, the "salon lizards of theory" as Bowers describes them, "are yet to move *en masse* to any newer, more attractive fad." Despite the "devout hopes of many cynics, the allure of postmodernism and the problems that are attendant upon this term and its cognates—postmodernity, postmodern, 'postie'—is undiminished."[2]

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[1] James Der Derian & Michael Shapiro, (1989), "Introduction," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, p.*ix*.

[2] Bowers, J., (1992), "Postmodernity and the Globalisation of Technoscience: The Computer, Cognitive Science and War," in Doherty, J., Graham, E., & Malek, M., (eds.), *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*. London: Macmillan, p.111.

In international political theory the "undiminished" "allure" of post-modernism is plainly attributable to two theorists, Richard Ashley and, to a lesser extent, Robert Walker.[3] Since the early 1980s their intellectual contributions have made dissident writings a veritable cottage industry, such that today few students of international political theory would be unaware of the new "reflectivist" trend in theorizing. Most distinctive, however, have been the writings of Richard Ashley. These have not only widened the scope of international political theory but have also brought seemingly alien concepts and theoretical tools to its study. In particular, Ashley has brought to the discipline constructivist theoretical accounts of the state, political power, the practices of realpolitik, and raised questions of the Enlightenment's authority over the construction of knowledge, meaning, identity, and truth. Never before have international political theorists been so assaulted by "excursions into metatheory," especially when the depth of this excursion questioned not only the ontological but also the epistemological and "axiological foundations of their scientific endeavours."[4] Not all have welcomed this examination or the subsequent course of debate in the discipline. There is, as Yosef Lapid notes, those who proscribe "a rigorous philosophy-avoidance strategy" and who warn of the

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[3] While I affix the *post-modernist* label to the work of Ashley and Walker, it should be noted that, as far as my readings confirm, Ashley does not use the post-modernist title and identifies himself as a *post-structuralist*. Moreover, at various points he displays a liking for describing himself as a "critical social theorist," and at various other junctures refers to his "critical" technique as "critical social theory." This, I presume, is intended to establish some affiliation between his work and the writings and practices of the Frankfurt School of critical social enquiry. If this is the case, however, it is confusing, since the Frankfurt School is surely more attuned to a modernist-rationalist understanding of social practices associated with the work of Georg Lukacs, Max Horkheimer, and more recently, Herbert Macuse, Jurgen Habermas and Claus Offe. See, for example, the collection of edited works in Connerton, P., (1976), *Critical Sociology*. Penguin.

[4] Lapid, Y., (1989), "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33,No.3, September, p.235.

dangers of pursuing philosophy at the expense of "actual research."[5] Robert Keohane, on more than one occasion, has warned that the "postmodernist project is a dead-end in the study of international relations," and that it serves no useful purpose to conduct indefinitely "a debate at the purely theoretical level, much less simply to argue about epistemological and ontological issues in the abstract." For Keohane, such debates "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."[6] Yet "philosophical insurgencies" abound reminding us that "[t]hose who try to ignore philosophy only succeed in reinventing it."[7] Ashley can rightly be thought of as a pioneer in this respect, delineating an intellectual space that, in his own words, exists on the "margins" and "border lines" of the discipline, yet one which now enjoys a considerable following. Indeed, the new-found prominence of theory in the study of international relations is, in no small part, a consequence of the meta-theoretical excursion launched by Ashley. His assault upon neorealism and the shibboleths of reason, logic, positivism, and science, has fulfilled his original calls for;

> a methodologically more demanding science: a science that expands the range of allowable criticism, and sharpens the standards of theoretical adequacy, by institutionalizing the expectation of continuous critical reflection on the historical significance and possibility of our attempts to arrive at objectivist conclusions.[8]

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[5] *ibid*, p.236.

[6] Keohane, R.O., (1989), "International Relations Theory: Contributions of a Feminist Standpoint," *Millennium*, Vol.18,No.2, p.249, and Keohane, R.O., (1988), "International Institutions: Two Approaches," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.32,No.4, pp.382.

[7] Mario Bunge as quoted in Lapid, Y., (1989), *op.cit*, pp.235-236. See also, Der Derian, J., (1988), "Introducing Philosophical Traditions in International Relations," *Millennium*, Vol.17,No.2, p.189.

[8] Ashley, R.K., (1986), "The Poverty of Neorealism," in Keohane, R.O., (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.282.

In this Ashley has surely "expanded the domain of discourse" and demonstrated "the arbitrariness" of that which is "taken for granted."[9] Yet despite this not inconsiderable achievement his work has rarely been subjected to critical enquiry let alone comprehensive exegetic analysis. This, to say the least, is unusual given the gravity of Ashley's writings and their implications for the discipline. Of those who have attempted to appraise Ashley's work, not only are their contributions all too brief, but their number unusually sparse.[10] This might be explained by the fact that, as Donna Gregory points out, post-modern thinkers "are more often attacked than read." And when attacked their ideas frequently differ from what their most ardent detractors believe them to be.[11] With the theoretical stakes so high and the future well being of the discipline at issue, one would have thought the "Third Debate" occasion for productive interlocutions and diligent attention to the theoretical intricacies of contending

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[9] *ibid*, p.284.

[10] In fact, these contributions can be counted on one hand. As far as I am aware only four short articles have dealt directly with appraising critically Ashley's contributions. See, for example, the excellent, although brief, discussion in Spegele, R.D., (1992), "Richard Ashley's Discourse for International Relations," *Millennium*, Vol.21.No.2, Summer, pp.147-182., Roy, R., (1988), "Limits of Genealogical Approach to International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.13,No.1, pp.77-83. Connolly, W.E., (1989), "Identity and Difference in Global Politics," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, pp. 323-342. See also, albeit a rather sympathetic "critique," Walker, R.B.J., (1988), "Genealogy, Geopolitics and Political Community: Richard K. Ashley and the Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.13.No.1, pp.84-88. Gilpin, R.G., (1986), "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," in Keohane, R.O., (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.301-321. And although concerned with a general assessment of the utility of post-modernist approaches to international theory, Tony Porter has also addressed Ashley's contributions to international theory. See, Porter, T., (1994), "Postmodern Political Realism and the Third Debate," in Sjolander, C.T., & Cox, W.S., (eds.), *Beyond Positivism: Critical Reflections on International Relations*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, pp.105-127. A very brief discussion is also contained in George, J., (1994), *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, pp.171-176.

[11] Gregory, D.U., (1989), "Foreword," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *op.cit*, pp.*xiii*.

approaches.[12] However, this has not been the case. Scholars frequently talk past one another, accepting theoretical incommensurability much as they accept national borders as means of demarcation between different value and belief systems. Robert Gilpin can thus largely dismiss Ashley's discourse, not in terms of the weaknesses implicit in its postulates, but by virtue "of the opacity of much of Ashley's prose," the "needless jargon" he employs, and the fact that Gilpin has "no idea what it means."[13] In this way, post-modernist approaches have not provoked meaningful or enlightening dialogue as much as they have "heat, venom, and nonproductive controversy."[14] And when critical appraisals of post-modernist approaches in International Relations have been attempted, for James Der Derian most have "arisen as much from confusion and wilful ignorance as from disagreement."[15] The "Third Debate," it would seem, is no debate at all but a series of discrete theoretical vignettes that occasionally interact (or more correctly collide) if only because of the common disciplinary ocean they begrudgingly share.

The task of this chapter, then, is self-evidently defined; an exegetic analysis of Ashley's work and a humble contribution to the "Third Debate." My concern rests exclusively with the work of Richard Ashley,[16] not because other theorists are of lesser importance, but because

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[12] See Maghroori, R., & Ramberg, B., (1982), *Globalism versus Realism: International Relations Third Debate*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press. See also, Lapid, Y., (1989), "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33,No.3, September, pp.235-254.

[13] Gilpin, R.G., (1986), *op.cit*, p.303.

[14] Gregory, D.U., (1989), *op.cit*, p.xiii.

[15] Der Derian, J., (1992), *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War*. Oxford: Blackwell, p.6.

[16] And where coauthored, with Ashley's primary intellectual collaborator, Robert Walker.

Ashley is the preeminent and defining voice of a post-modernist perspective in international political theory today. My critique, as the provocative title of this chapter suggests, will level several allegations at Ashley's "project." First, it will allege intellectual dexterity, by which I mean a schizophrenia, where at various junctures in Ashley's intellectual development his project has been radically changed. In particular, I want to demonstrate that we are not dealing with one Ashley, but two; in this chapter, a young or "heroic" Ashley who employs critical social theory (here understood as epistemological post-modernism) in a project broadly conceived as anti-structuralist and emancipatory, and, in chapter five, a "subversive" Ashley who abandons critical theory for subversive post-modernism and Continental philosophy. [17] Or does he? In fact, I shall maintain that Ashley's use of post-modernism is a ruse for blatantly ideological ends that are *revolutionary* and *subversive*. Second, I argue that Ashley's critique of modernist theory and his "post-modernist" rubric is irrationalist and self-contradictory, and if taken literally leads nowhere other than to darkness and nihilism. Third, I will argue that Ashley's discourse is emblematic of the broader crisis in Marxism and personifies the inheritance of Nietzsche. [18] This, I maintain, is dangerous not in itself but because it tends towards a value and ethical relativism that eschews from its discourse any means of establishing foundational principles upon which to conduct human affairs. More obviously, I argue that this position is morally abhorrent, for it forsakes a commitment to analyze and

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[17] These two categories, the "heroic" and "subversive" phases, I treat as chronologically discrete, comprising the periods between 1980 and 1985 (the "heroic" Ashley), and 1986 to 1995 (the "subversive" Ashley). The division is not arbitrary but occasioned clearly by Ashley's movement from what I will argue was epistemological post-modernism to subversive post-modernism.

[18] On this see the excellent discussion by Allan Bloom, (1987), *The Closing of the American Mind*. Penguin, the chapter entitled, "The Nietzscheanization of the Left or Vice Versa", pp.217-226.

understand the political-economy of power, oppression, or international affairs, and forsakes those who it portends to represent, the marginalized, minorities and the oppressed, by ostracising them through a highly convoluted, elitist, and partisan discourse. Finally, I argue that this "orrery of errors"[19] is occasioned not by Ashley's anti-positivism, but by the fact that Ashley is a *despondent positivist* who desires a foundational knowledge. Contrary to popular depictions, then, I argue that Ashley's use of post-modernist perspectives betrays a poor understanding, radical misinterpretation and misapplication of them. In short, I argue that Ashley has been de(con)structive to the discipline and its theory, taking us further from and not closer to an understanding of things international.

"Reading" Richard Ashley: A Methodological Note

Before I turn to my analysis, however, I first want to make a few observations about "reading" Richard Ashley. For some, such observations are doubtless peculiar; reading, after all, is usually understood to be an inductive process individually pursued and in need of little explanation. For post-modernists, however, "reading" constitutes a political act; a proactive process of *interpretation* premised upon individual sites of *intertextual* and *intersubjective* experience. Where previously, for example, the subject was understood as a passive receptor of authorial authority, post-modernists now insist that the "reading" subject is a radical site of intertexts, each one unique. While these contending debates need not concern us here, the implications of a post-modernist approach most certainly do. For as I shall argue shortly, a post-modernist approach towards the "reading subject" constitutes a subversive political strategy

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[19] This term I borrow from Ashley who uses it to document the "orrery of errors" implicit in neorealist theory. See Ashley, R.K., (1984), "The Poverty of Neorealism," in Keohane, R.O., (1986), *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.261.

that, through the facade of interpretivism, pursues ideological ends.[20] The argument

foreshadows my analysis and understanding of Richard Ashley, and suggests that Ashley needs

to be "read" in a manner other than he has been if he is to be understood properly. In

particular, I suggest that Ashley needs to be "read" *politically*, his writings viewed not so much

a scholarly exercise as a political one. My analysis of Ashley therefore sublimates his

theoretical/scholarly compositions beneath his political project, and argues that while a

familiarity with the intricacies of his approach is necessary, more important is an understanding

of Ashley's politics and ideology, since it has been the latter which has conditioned the former.

"Reading" Richard Ashley is therefore not only a theoretically challenging task but an

inherently confusing one. His writings, while an intellectual treatise, are also a political-

ideological exercise writ large, and the reciprocity between these two objectives easily confuses

the prospective reader. Indeed, his work has the ominous propensity of being all things to all

people. He is, for example, labelled a critical theorist while rejected by critical theorists as a

post-modernist. As a post-modernist he refers to himself as a "poststructuralist" engaged in

"critical social theory." And, as a "poststructuralist" concerned with positivist epistemologies

and their applications in neorealist theory, international political theorists understand him as

a post-positivist. As for those who would entrap him within the disciplinary confines of

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[20] I use the concept of *interpretivism* in synonymic fashion with those of *deconstruction* and *hermeneutics*. These I consider to be interchangeable concepts denoting identical meaning except in emphasis and context. Albert Shalom, for example, notes a trend in post-Wittgensteinian philosophy of what he calls a "reified series of linguistic acts" and the creation of "an extra-linguistic reality which now becomes the object of a special kind of search called philosophy." And this philosophy, he argues, derives from an approach that "has given rise to a more pronounced skeptical trend, under the name of 'deconstruction,' itself the consequence of a certain way of conceiving 'hermeneutics,' which itself simply means 'interpretation.'" See the discussion in Shalom, A., (1990), "The Metaphilosophy of Meaning," *Dialectics and Humanism*. Vol.17,No.3,Summer, pp.34-35.

"international political theorist," Ashley prefers the "margins" and now labels himself a "dissident."

This ambiguity and definitional obfuscation, however, is intended, part of Ashley's ingenious method for exploiting interpretivism by portending to escape all forms of "territorialising logic."[21] The result, though, is a blinding confusion for those who attempt to summarise his theoretical offerings. Friedrich Kratochwil, for example, can condemn him for "the sorry state of theory building in international relations," while Ramashray Roy praises Ashley's "bold venture" and theoretical innovations.[22] Ashley, it seems, is the wandering master of illusion; neither Marxist nor realist, liberal or reactionary, globalist or statist, but the quintessential *floating signifier* protected by the many meanings, interpretations, and confusions caused by the multiplying applications of the prefix *post*.[23] Consequently, few in the discipline know what to make of him, what label to affix to him, and still fewer how to assess him. This might explain why comprehensive critiques of his work have been so sporadic and why Ashley can claim for himself the persona of enigma.

Such illusions, however, are deliberate, and his enigma orchestrated. Indeed, much of his attraction derives from the ease with which his imprecise language lends itself to multifarious "readings" and interpretations. Understanding Ashley therefore becomes

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[21] Ashley, R.K., (1991), "The State of the Discipline: Realism Under Challenge," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (eds.), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives on an Evolving Discipline.* Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National University, p.38.

[22] See, for example, Kratochwil, F., (1986), "Errors Have Their Advantages," *International Organization*, Vol.38.No.2, Spring, p.305. See also, Roy, R., (1988), "Limits of a Genealogical Approach to International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.13,No.1, p.77.

[23] Spegele, R.D., (1992), "Richard Ashley's Discourse for International Relations," *Millennium*, Vol.21.No.2, Summer, p.147.

oxymoronic; in the post-modern world he is not to be understood so much as "interpreted." In fact, he *cannot* be understood if we accept that the "post-modern reader" now resists authorial authority in the transmission of ideas, theory and knowledge, and instead reads *intersubjectively* and *intertextually*. Ashley has adroitly exploited this nebulous interface between author, text, and reader, enabling him to triumph where others have failed. Rather than resist this "interpretive turn" Ashley has expropriated its concepts, recognizing their political utility.[24] His writings are deliberately designed to facilitate interpretivism. Ambiguous prose combined with eristic rhetoric, for example, helps ensure his writings appeal to multiple audiences, speaks to different "readers" in different ways, and allows his writings to be recombined in forms that accommodate themselves to various theoretical debates. Consequently, Ashley can write with the unique knowledge that he will be "read" with relative *impunity*; his project not so much critically assessed or rebuked, as merely "interpreted" in endless rounds of intertextual discourses.

This technique is politically accommodating, inclusive of contending issues and groups and exploited as a political strategy. Consider, for example, his use of theoretical eclecticism, where he melds seemingly dissimilar concepts and issues into a single "critical approach." In this way, Ashley invents a "discourse" that purports to deal with neorealist theory but invokes issues of literary theory, gender, feminist psychoanalytic theory, associates rationality with masculinity and oppression, recombines this into a Foucauldian theory of power and knowledge, and deconstructs the state on the basis that it derives from constructivist logic to

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[24] On the so-called "interpretive turn," see the excellent discussions in Hiley.D.R., Bohman, J.F., & Shusterman, R., (1991)(eds.), *The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science, Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

validate the practices of realism. The arguments are not so much important here as is the political intent of his writings. It enables Ashley to be "read" as a feminist, environmentalist, champion of the oppressed and marginalized, and concurrently interpreted as a post-modernist, post-structuralist, critical theorist, and international political theorist, and at various points rejected as each of these but without apparent damage to his political standing! This, undoubtedly, is what has made for so much confusion over his work. Most theorists have succumbed to one or another of these personalities or "readings" without realizing their complicity in accommodating Ashley's strategies. Consequently, previous attempts at analyzing Ashley have inanely concerned themselves with interpreting his nomenclature, deciphering his meaning, or attempting to affix the correct *post* to his project. These efforts have proven fruitless, however, if only because of Ashley's ease at assuming yet another personality and so escaping a systematic logic that might define and expose him. Thus, the immediate dilemma in attempting to understand Ashley is to consider that he might not want to be understood at all. He will always be an intellectual fugitive, one step ahead of those who would entrap him in a "territorialising logic." His appeal lies in his ambiguity, not the fixity of his concepts but their fluidity, his notoriety in interpretivism, not the exactness of his language and meaning. Ashley's multiple personalities and eclecticism are therefore best understood as *political tools* and not theoretical approaches. They are employed to reify interpretivism and, more importantly, to recruit political allies. As Roger Spegele points out, Ashley is the master of "overblown rhetoric in a political campaign to persuade...[others]...in international studies to come over" to his "version of dissidence."[25]

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[25] Spegele, R.D., (1992), *op.cit*, p.156.

My point is that most previous attempts at analyzing Ashley have failed on this count, approaching his thesis scholastically as if an *a*political and non-ideological exercise. Theorists like William Connolly, Robert Gilpin, or Friedrich Kratochwil, for example, have been perplexed at Ashley's continuing notoriety despite their habitual attempts to point out the theoretical inconsistencies of his arguments.[26] Kratochwil, in particular, rehearses Ashley's "immoderate, conceptually unclear, and often mistaken" treatise, and castigates him for not "communicating effectively with his audience" and his forsaking "conceptual clarity," but never once pauses to consider that this is precisely Ashley's intent in a partisan project less concerned with theoretical eloquence and consistency as it is with ideological insurrection. Thus, Kratochwil remains confused at Ashley's continually "beating dead horses and straw men."[27]

Reading Ashley is therefore fraught with danger; traps have been set into which the unwary reader might stumble. Because of this, Ashley has to be read *critically* and not textually or interpretively. The theoretical suppositions and biases in his arguments along with the contradictions inherent in his theory need to be exposed. The allegations he makes against those in the discipline, of the "submission" of women, of the "conspicuous displays of violence" committed against "students, junior faculty, scholars of color, feminists, and other disciplinary marginals," need to be critically assessed and substantiated, not merely "five times

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[26] See, Gilpin, R., (1986), *op.cit*, Kratochwil, F., (1984), *op.cit*, and Connolly, W.E., (1989), "Identity and Difference in Global Politics," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, pp.323-342.

[27] Kratochwil, F., (1984), *op.cit*, pp.306-307.

recited in a single paragraph" as is Ashley's style.[28] More importantly, though, Ashley's

partisan project needs to be exposed so that his theoretical allegations can better be appreciated

in light of his ideological motivations. I now turn to this "reading" of Ashley.

The "Heroic" Ashley: Epistemological Post-modernism and Neorealism

In this section I continue my exploration of Ashley and attempt to contextualise his

work both episodically and thematically. I concentrate here on Ashley's formative works, or

what I shall characterise as Ashley's "heroic" episode, and thematically analyze his motifs of

technical rationality, structuralism, economism, and reductionism.[29] My reasons for doing this

are fourfold. First, apart from *The Poverty of Neorealism*, Ashley's early works have been

generally ignored, detracting from a perspicacious understanding of the evolution of his ideas.

Second, this has fostered the false impression that his work is a unitary exercise founded upon

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[28] Ashley, R. K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, p.411.

[29] In this early phase, 1980-1985, I consider the following works in chronological order: Ashley, R.K., (1980), *The Political Economy of War and Peace*. London: Frances Pinter; Ashley, R.K., (1982), "Political Realism and Human Interests," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.25.No.2, June, pp.204-236; Ashley, R.K., (1983), "The Eye of Power: The Politics of World Modelling," *International Organization*, Vol.37.No.3, Summer, pp.495-535; Ashley, R.K., (1983), "Three Modes of Economism," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.27,No.4, December, pp.463-496; Ashley, R.K., (1984), "The Poverty of Neorealism," *International Organization*, Vol.38,No.2, Spring, pp.225-286. In the second phase, 1986-1994, I consider: Ashley, R.K., (1987), "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.12,No.4, pp.403-434; Ashley, R.K., (1988), "Geopolitics, Supplementary, Criticism: A Reply to Professors Roy and Walker," *Alternatives*, Vol.13,No.1, January, pp.88-102; Ashley, R.K., (1988), "Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique," *Millennium*, Vol.17,No.2, Summer, pp.227-262; Ashley, R.K., (1989), "Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, pp.259-321; Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, pp.259-268; Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, pp.367-416; Ashley, R.K., (1991), "The State of the Discipline: Realism Under Challenge," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (eds.), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives on an Evolving Discipline*. Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National University, pp.37-69.

the rejection of structural realism. While this is true to some degree, it understates the real intent and scope of Ashley's project. When considered collectively, for example, Ashley's early works are as much a polemic against economistic, structuralist and reductionist forms of theory, as they are a rejection of neorealism itself. Third, Ashley's writings should not be considered separately but as a series of inter-related efforts more accurately understood as a "project."[30] In this regard, his early writings need to be seen as contiguous efforts, each concerned with validating one particular aspect of his overall program. And fourth, I review his early works since I believe them to be the more substantive, original, and useful of his contributions, especially Ashley's insightful critique of the structuralist turn in international political theory.

Against "Technical Rationality"

Ashley's earliest work, *The Political Economy of War and Peace*, upon first reading appears to bear no relation to his subsequent concerns.[31] It was, he wrote, a book "about the sources of conflict and violence among today's major military powers: the Chinese People's Republic, the Soviet Union, and the United States." Its focus, he added, addressed the issues of "the balance of power," the "modern security problematique," and the dynamics and dilemmas of military rivalry." Its approach Ashley termed "international political economy,"

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[30] Indeed, how one *reads* Ashley will largely determine how adequately one understands him. There are, I argue, two ways of reading Ashley. The first approaches his writings individually, assumes each work to be a self-contained and separate treatise, and assesses the intellectual strengths and weaknesses of these works on the basis of this closed hermeneutic. On this reading, much of Ashley's writings appear confusing, thematically unrelated and disparate. Witness, for example, the commentaries and critiques by Robert Gilpin and Friedrich Kratochwil in Robert Keohane's, *Neorealism and its Critics*, where Ashley's article, *The Poverty of Neorealism*, is treated in isolation from his preceding work. The second way of reading Ashley, however, is more rewarding. It approaches his work not as a series of discrete writings but constitutive of a larger "project;" a project as grand as any that Ashley would otherwise dismiss as "meta-theory" or "meta-narrative." My point, simply, is that Ashley must be read in his entirety if he is to be understood properly, since each of his works are contributing chapters, so to speak, systemically related to an ideological commitment that is Ashley's *modus operandi*.

[31] Ashley, R.K., (1980), *The Political Economy of War and Peace*. London: Frances Pinter.

and its contents considered "the processes of growth — differential, technological, economic, and population growth in a world of finite resources and unevenly distributed capabilities."[32] Ostensibly, the study purported to be orthodox, the methodology empirical, and the objective laudable; "the search for a lasting peaceful order."[33] Books, however, can never be judged by their covers, nor should their contents by the prefatory remarks that introduce them. Indeed, while Ashley's book was about all these things, they were neither the purpose of, nor point to, his study. Rather, they were exemplars; demonstrative subjects used to illustrate the consequences of a particular mode of conceptualization that Ashley termed "technical rationality." The latter became and remains Ashley's intellectual *raison d'etre*; the defining purpose and motivation of all his works. And for this reason *The Political Economy of War and Peace*, remains central to any appreciation of Ashley's intellectual development, since it foreshadowed and defined his subsequent 'project' and the path it would take. In fact, the works that followed were merely augmentations, logical extensions and refinements of Ashley's crusade against "technical rationality," that, eventually, would lead him to reject rationality altogether and adopt a subversive philosophy.

In this first, "heroic" episode, Ashley's project was comprised of three constellations: the first was his attack against the *super*structural edifice of technical rationalism; the second attacked the *sub*structural foundations of instrumentalist logic when he argued the case against economism and reductionism; and the third extended this critique to attack structuralism. His rejection of neorealism was therefore only incidental; predicated not on the nature, logical

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[32] *ibid*, p.*ix*

[33] *ibid*.

consistency, or efficacy of neorealist theory *per se*, but upon neorealism as the exemplar *par excellent* of technical rationalism and structuralist theory.

It is thus that I approach his works both episodically and thematically, and his writings as an inter-related program unified by their rejection of technical rationalism. The latter, Ashley believed, inspired an instrumentalist "grammar of thought" that reduced scholarship to the design of "research programs" whose sole objective was the analysis and solution of discrete problem situations. This enterprise, he wrote, tended;

> to conceive of life as consisting of so many more or less discrete problem situations; ...defined in terms of certain given purposes or needs, certain obstacles to or limits on the realization or satisfaction of these, and certain means by which the obstacles and limits can or might be overcome.[34]

Technical rationality tended to lure the pursuit of knowledge into this service, denying any "rational purpose for knowledge and skills except insofar as they orient the development, application, or strategic manipulation of means to solve problems and serve ends."[35] Ashley's polemic was therefore directed against the construction and use of theory for purely instrumental purposes. Perhaps reacting to the remains of the behaviouralist revolution, Ashley was at pains to reject such pragmatic and utilitarian theoretical enterprises, in part because theory lost its critical function and became simply a non-reflective problem-solving tool. Doubtless Ashley was also reacting to what Richardson described as the discipline's "excessive reliance on the style of theorising derived from economics" and "a one-sided emphasis on

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[34] *ibid*, p.210.

[35] *ibid*, p.209.

rational choice models."[36] As far as Ashley was concerned, rational choice and utility theory[37] made the study of international relations a technocratic exercise. In this way, theorists were less concerned with the theoretical task of explaining the complex "multi-level phenomena of international relations," as they were with developing parsimonious models drawn from empirical observations of the patterns of behaviour, historical repetitions, or structural attributes of discrete subject areas.[38] Ashley outlined this methodological schema in the case of the "security problematique," where technical rationality inspired a grammar of thought that attempted;

> to systematically join insights from several different traditions, each focusing upon particular sectors or levels of activity, and each offering generalizing knowledge claims regarding certain patterns and processes.

Moreover, Ashley noted, "[e]ach assumes that the patterns it identifies reflect the technical-rational choices of people acting within certain kinds of problem situations." The aim of this "knowledge" was purely instrumental; that "as a knowledge of ...[a]... particular domain is enhanced and applied, people will be better able to make rational choices that solve or manage the problems that beset them."[39] The job of the social scientist was therefore reduced to that of technician, whose task was to ensure "improved knowledge" and the "resolute application" of that knowledge as a means to greater control and the creation of a "more

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[36] Richardson, J.L., (1991), "The State of the Discipline: A Critical Practitioner's View," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (1991), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives in an Evolving Discipline.* Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, p.31.

[37] These concepts Ashley tended to refer to as "situational analysis."

[38] This was the implicit project of the behaviouralists in international political theory, and of the behaviouralist revolution in the social sciences generally. See Richardson, J.L., (1991), *op.cit*, p.32.

[39] Ashley, R.K., (1980), *op.cit*, p.213.

encompassing political order."[40] Such an approach had long comprised the theoretical

ambitions of scholars of international politics. Hans Morgenthau, for instance, had urged that

we;

> ...put ourselves in the position of a statesmen who must confront a certain problem of foreign policy under certain circumstances, and [that] we ask ourselves what the rational alternatives are from which a statesmen may choose who must meet this problem under these circumstances,...and which of these circumstances he is likely to choose.

For Morgenthau, it was "the testing of this rational hypothesis against the actual facts

and their circumstances" that would give "theoretical meaning to the facts of international

politics."[41] This approach proved attractive, dominating "theoretical" research for many years

to come. Ashley, for example, argued that "Stanley Hoffmann's 'imaginative reconstruction'

and Thomas Schelling's 'vicarious problem solving'" were complementary extensions of

Morgenthau's approach and technical rationalism. This was also true of "Ernst Haas and his

assumptions about welfare-oriented technocrat-politicians;" of "Keohane and Nye with their

arguments about the choices of state bureaucracies engaged in transgovernmental politics;" as

well as Graham Allison with his attempt to locate rationality within "bureaucratic 'players' in

a 'central competitive game.'"[42] Ashley thought all these approaches were essentially the

same, in that they all assumed "the actualities of international relations" could "be understood

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[40] *ibid.*

[41] Hans Morgenthau as quoted in *ibid*, p.212.

[42] *ibid.*

in terms of the interactions, aggregations, and recombinations of individual technical-rational choices."[43]

Ashley rejected this approach not only for its utilitarian and instrumentalist rationality but also for its hegemonic dominance, particularly its ability to exclude and delegitimize other knowledge systems. More obviously, though, Ashley opposed the delimiting task proscribed the social scientist by technical rationalism: a task instrumentally conceived in order to capture "social laws or general social principles" as a means to "solve (analytical) problems, close (theoretical-empirical) gaps, and bring social reality (intellectually) under control." And to the extent that knowledge and scholarship were seen simply a means to inform and "solve particular social problems," and their worth judged on this basis, then in Ashley's view this made the dominance of technical rationality "all the more plain," and its effects the more insidious.[44]

Ashley's concerns and the debate they inspired will be familiar, albeit presently conducted under the "positivist" versus "post-positivist" rubric. Indeed, technical rationality has become one of the central motifs that currently informs the parameters of discourse between contending "schools of thought" in the field. We need hardly recall, for example, Robert Keohane's recent chastising of the "reflective approaches" for their failure to approximate "rationalistic premises" and impart "a clear reflective research program." Keohane argues that the non-rationalist approaches are "less well specified as theories," too preoccupied with epistemological and ontological debates and therefore display "little prospect of becoming a

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[43] *ibid*, p.213.

[44] *ibid.*

comprehensive deductive explanation of international institutions." "Rationalistic theory," he argues, offers such an explanation, and is able to "specify the characteristics of a given institutional situation" and "anticipate the path that change will take." "Reflective theory," on the other hand, offers us the machinations of self-doubt, philosophic speculation, and from the point of view of empirical theory, inconsequential, untestable, non-operational, and non-useful conjecture. His remarks clearly expose the chasm between these two contending schools, demonstrated, for example, when he insists that "interpretive" scholars are yet to "illuminate important issues in world politics." The inference is quite apparent: reflective approaches are less than worthy of the title "theory," and their project something other than useful and legitimate if not formalized and presented as a "research program" germane to predictive and problem-solving tasks. Under the regime of technical rationality[45], legitimacy for the "reflectivist approaches' rests in their renouncing the "margins" and their adopting a "research program" with "testable theories" and an "explicit" research "scope" that leads to "systematic empirical investigations."[46]

The problem of course is that Keohane's recommendations not only disparage the hermeneutic epistemology of the reflectivist approach, but recommend its complete overhaul and substitution for a positivist one![47] And this was precisely Ashley's point and his reason for rejecting technical rationality. The "grammar of thought" it inspires acts as an intellectual

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[45] Or what Ashley would now call modernist discourse or positivism.

[46] Keohane, R.O., (1988), *op.cit*, pp.382-383,388,390-393.

[47] It is somewhat amusing to note that after recommending such a savage overhaul of the "reflectivist" approach, Keohane then feels compelled to hope for the eventual "synthesis" of the "rationalist" and "reflectivist" approaches. One can only imagine what there might be left to "synthesize!" See Keohane, R.O., (1988), *op.cit*, p.393.

hegemon and a self-appointed arbiter of what is, and what is not, legitimate theory, research, and knowledge. James Der Derian makes a similar observation of Keohane's arguments, noting that within them there "lies an implicit imprecation: if one is to find a 'genuine research program' it is better to take the enlightened road of rationalist reflection than the benighted wood of poststructuralist reflexivity."[48]

Ashley's observations were not meant as arcane reflections on the territorializing abilities of one particular knowledge system however. He believed they had very real implications for the way in which global politics, security, trade, or decision-making processes were conducted. And it was through these concerns that his alternative theoretical vision would come ultimately to confront neorealist theory. His explorations of the "security problematique," for example, were meant to be illustrative of but one "protracted climactic scene in the tragic drama of technical rationality's ultimate failure."[49] The constellation of global order embodied in the state system and, ergo, the "modern security problematique," for example, Ashley attributed "not to natural law and not to historical accident, but to the culminations and the interactions of processes framed by a technical-rational grammar of thought."[50] Within the "violence prone [state] system," he noted, it was impossible to "contemplate peace within a grammar of thought that frame[ed] choices in a way producing the absence of peace."[51]

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[48] Der Derian, J., (1992), *op.cit*, p.8.

[49] Ashley, R.K., (1980), *op.cit*, p.214.

[50] *ibid*, p.xv.

[51] *ibid*, pp. 208 & xv.

Against "technical rationality' Ashley therefore aspired to create a more encompassing and liberating form of reflection, to open up a new, "more expansive rational logic" as a means to escape the delimiting options conferred by instrumentalist thought. He also wanted to demonstrate the capacity for reflective political agency, to change structural conditions rather than merely react to their circumstances. This alternative form of reflection he clumsily termed "rationality proper." Unlike technical rationality it was cognizant of history, the historical conditioning of reality, and of a "differentiated reality." It attempted to embed and subordinate "technical rationality within a richer logic that problematize[d] the elements of technical-rational problem-solving."[52] The aim was to escape finitude in knowledge and understanding, at least as proclaimed by the shibboleths of technical rationalism, and restore to the task of knowledge generation a sense of on-going reflection. All knowledge had therefore to be situated within historical contexts, and its meaning and efficacy restricted to that milieu. History, in other words, could not be understood as a series of structures imposed from above, and truth an autonomous referent detached from historically specific conditions, but as a series of perpetually changing socio-political practices and modes of thought modified by agents within interrelated, but historically distinctive epochs. This clearly established Ashley's opposition to structuralist theory, since the latter discounted the role of political agency, failed to understand history as the processual outcome of structurated interactions between subjects and structures, and foreclosed political/historical options via structuralist determinism.[53] In contrast, Ashley understood history as knowable only via "*an attempt to 'import' the larger*

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[52] *ibid*, p.217.

[53] On structuration theory see the work of Giddens, A., (1986), *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

historical reality" so as "to engage, criticize, and synthesize competing vantage points associated with other aspects of reality." By doing so, Ashley could avoid "invoking the assumption that there exists some fixed, final, and potentially knowable structure predominating over the whole of reality."[54] The difference between these two perspectives was therefore ontological. Technical rationality proclaimed "human freedom by denying the determinist influences of historical processes" yet was "entrapped" in history and "unable to imagine or criticise" it. Rationality proper, on the other hand, commenced "the search for human freedom by allowing that human beings...[were] distinctly unfree of historical-processual influences" and embedded in community constituted by tradition.

The distinction rested on the ontological conception of history:

> Technical rationality sees history episodically, as a sequence of discrete...problem situations. It see [sic] reality as segmentable...into a number of bounded...problem domains...Rationality proper sees history processually. It allows that the segments of reality are processually created, interdependent, and susceptible to change.[55]

Truth, knowledge, and reality were therefore different creatures depending upon one's ontological conception of history:

> Technical rationality assumes the autonomy of systematic knowledge, [and] sees truth in the actual dominant patterns of the historical moment...Rationality proper strives for autonomy and truth by seeking...an intersubjective consensus through the...exchange of communications and criticisms among people...situated within, and having varying vantage points upon, the whole of actual and possible human experience.[56]

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[54] Ashley, R.K., (1980), *op.cit*, pp.216-217.

[55] *ibid*, p.216.

[56] *ibid*, p.216.

Ashley's approach therefore reified historicity, making knowledge contingent not only on the historical milieu it occupied but also on the cultural vantage point from which it stemmed. The methodology was contextualist and designed to escape the structuralist logic that dominated social and political theory throughout the 1960s and 1970s. It was also idealistic, aspiring to erect a "rationality proper" that would inform an "emancipatory logic." The latter Ashley implored of the "transnational communities of social science" who, he argued, represented "a likely point of departure for [the development of an] emancipatory praxis."[57] Indeed, Ashley was optimistic that technical rationality's dominance would decline. This he believed was coming about due to technological changes that would allow "greater latitude for effective expression;" first, in the developments in global communications and information processing technologies; secondly, through growing global interdependence and cross-culturalism, and; thirdly, in the "growth of a multifaceted, transnational social scientific community that" was "already exhibiting a modest commitment to the seeking of autonomy through the criticism-conscious pursuit of some intersubjective consensus across social, political, and economic divides." While these developments did not guarantee the subordination of technical rationality, they did present "opportunities unlike any previously experienced in the history of human-kind."[58] More importantly, they were occurring at precisely the same time as was the interpretivist and post-structuralist turn in political theory in the United States. The latter Ashley not only foresaw, but would eventually contribute to and exploit. And this, more than any other single event, provided Ashley with the intellectual-theoretical wherewithal

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[57] *ibid*, p.208.

[58] *ibid*, p.219.

to challenge what he saw as the "acme" of technical rationality; "[w]orld empire via massive violence." At the very least it would furnish him the theoretical means to unmask the "false logic" of technical rationality. And, it need hardly be noted, this became Ashley's preoccupation; an "heroic" effort to speak with a "sovereign voice" and invoke an alternative means of thinking, conceptualizing, theorizing, and ergo of political praxis. His project was therefore begun, his course of action defined, and the method implicit. The arguments and allegations would become legion, and all of them sounded from this beginning:

> ...technical rationality is a false logic...It is a false logic because it is at once a creative logic and a logic totally in awe of its creations. It is a false logic because it serves human purposes without questioning their sources and creates new needs in ways it refuses to see...It is a false logic because it orients attempts to solve problems in fragments, frames social action such that it institutionalizes limitlessness in society's manifest structures and forms, and thereby implicates all aspects of a finite world in every seemingly isolated problem situation. It is a false logic because its equates autonomy with an unobtainable independence and mastery over the environment...It is a false logic because, in its celebration of autonomy and its equation of autonomy with power, it finds lasting success by persistently subordinating the many to the solutions of the few.[59]

With the objectives and targets of his project defined, and the obsessions of his ideological ambitions implicit in his call for an "emancipatory praxis," all that remained was an on-going "heroic" commitment to their realization. In the context of international political theory, that commitment would continue by his connecting realism (specifically neorealism) to technical rationality, positivism, economism, reductionism, and eventually to structuralism. The next section explores the development of these connections.

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[59] *ibid*, pp.214-215.

Against Technical Rationality, Positivism, Economism and Structuralism

The four articles considered here comprised Ashley's most ingenious and certainly his most erudite period.[60] Each was concerned with validating a particular aspect of his ideological program. *Political Realism and Human Interests*, for example, extended his critique of technical rationality to the domain of political realism. *The Eye of the Power: The Politics of World Modeling*, vilified the paragon of technical "science" presumed in attempts to model world order and calculate interests, costs, benefits, and outcomes, while situating its epistemology within positivism and its technical rationality in a Benthamite panopticon preoccupied with control. The *Three Modes of Economism* attacked the economisation of theory, the infusion of econometric logic into the "determination of social and political relations," and the reduction of all things political to the "logic of economy." Finally, *The Poverty of Neorealism* was the conduit that synthesised all these concerns, the climatic presentation that charged neorealist theory with a legion of theoretical crimes; first in its penchant toward structuralism; second its technical rationalism embodied in its instrumentalist utilitarianism; and last in its reductionist econometric logic that reified positivism and science to the detriment of a reflective, critical-hermeneutic understanding of international politics.[61]

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[60] These works, in chronological order, are: Ashley, R.K., (1981), "Political Realism and Human Interests," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.25.No.2, June, pp.204-236. Ashley, R.K., (1983), "The Eye of Power: The Politics of World Modelling," *International Organization*, Vol.37.No.3, Summer, pp.495-535. Ashley, R.K., (1983), "Three Modes of Economism," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.27,No.4, December, pp.463-496, & Ashley, R.K., (1986), "The Poverty of Neorealism," in Keohane, R.O., (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.225-286.

[61] See Ashley, R.K., (1986), *op.cit*, pp.225-286. Ashley, R.K., (1983), "Three Modes of Economism," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.27,No.4, December, pp.463-464.

While thematically discrete, all these articles were inter-related—cumulative projects designed to challenge orthodox international political theory. In this respect, they were hardly unique. All Ashley's contributions have attempted to problematise orthodox interpretations of international politics. What distinguished these earlier attempts from his more recent contributions was their grounding in rationalist epistemology. Despite his incredulity toward modernist meta-narratives and their positivist foundationalism, his work derived entirely from modernist-Enlightenment thinking. In *Political Realism and Human Interests*, for example, the writings of Jurgen Habermas, one of the leading champions of Enlightenment thought, were used to distinguish between what Ashley termed a "technical" and a "practical realism."[62] The latter Ashley understood as containing "genuine antinomies—some critical tensions" that made it, "at least potentially, a vital, open ended tradition."[63] Practical realism, he wrote, had a "practical cognitive interest:"

> This is an interest in knowledge as a basis for furthering mutual, intersubjective understanding. It guides knowledge toward the development of 'interpretations that make possible the orientations of action within common traditions.'[64]

Technical realism, on the other hand, had a "technical cognitive interest:"

> This is an interest in knowledge as the basis for extending control over objects in the subject's environment (possibly including strategic dominance over other human beings). It guides knowledge to obtain 'information that expands...powers

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[62] Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit*, p.204. See, for example, the writings of Habermas, J., (1991), *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, (Frederick G. Lawrence: Trans.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. See also the discussion in the edited volume by Bernstein, R.J., (1988)(ed.), *Habermas and Modernity*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

[63] Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit*, p.204.

[64] *ibid*, p.208.

of technical control. The technical cognitive interest...finds its foremost philosophical expression in positivism...[65]

As always, the point of his critique was to contextualise knowledge and demonstrate the fallacy of positivistic social science and technical realism. "Knowledge," he wrote, "is not constituted objectively. It is not constituted as a 'universe of facts whose lawlike connection can be grasped descriptively." Instead, "the illusion of objectivism," of knowledge inductively generated via the positivist pretence of *a posteriori* value-neutral observation, had to "be replaced with the recognition that knowledge is always constituted in reflection of interests."[66] Ashley's dilemma, then, was Habermasian in nature: "how to progress beyond this position without reducing the relation between knowledge and interests to Mannheimian simplisms"?[67] (for example, Robert Cox's reductionist adage that "Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose").[68] Stated in another way: how is realism to "reconcile a practical interest in

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[65] *ibid.*

[66] *ibid*, p.207

[67] Karl Mannheim (1893-1947), postulated a theory of the sociology of knowledge that, essentially, understood knowledge as socially constituted in respect of membership to particular social groups, social classes, sects, and competition among these groups. In this way, Mannheim understood knowledge and "truth" as merely relativistic constructs embedded in "beliefs" that were themselves socially located and perfunctory of specific (material, ideological, competitive, cultural) interests. Consequently, Mannheim argued that all knowledge was relative, that there was no such thing as "true" beliefs only accepted beliefs reflecting socially embedded traditions, and there existed no socially independent criteria of "truth" since all knowledge-generating agents were socially constituted and biased. See, for example, Mannheim, K., (1986), *Conservatism: A Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge*. (Kettler, D., Meja, V., & Stehr, N., eds., Trans.), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Here, Mannheim operationalised his theory with respect to the conservative classes and their beliefs. See also, Mannheim, K., (1952), *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. (Kecskemeti, P., ed.), New York: Oxford University Press.

[68] Cox, R.W., (1986), "Social Forces, States and World Order: Beyond International Relations Theory," in Keohane, R.O., *Neorealism and its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.207. This rather trite observation reduces all knowledge to a power/materiality nexus, denying theory, or knowledge generation generally, any autonomy from the "mode of production" in which it operates. Power and materiality become determinist of theory, interpretation and understanding, and theorists, we might also assume, become no more than automatons in the service of some mode of production. The position seems somewhat absurd, especially since Cox's dictum would also implicate his theoretical efforts in similar un-virtuous pursuits!

intersubjective understanding, on the one hand, with the mutually objectifying instrumentalism of power politics, on the other?" Ashley's solution (borrowed, in part, from Habermas) was hermeneutic interpretivism, or "practical realism:" a "*tradition*" derived from "subjectivities" who "maintain a consensus of co-reflective self-understanding."[69] The idea was deceptively simple: to situate all knowledge and understanding in the series of social relations constituted by the historical traditions established by subjective practices.[70] The *aim* of knowledge had therefore to be "the attainment of possible consensus among actors in the framework of a self-understanding derived from tradition."[71] Practically speaking, this meant "the integration of society, the maintenance of order, the mutuality of interaction, and the avoidance of severe, dislocating social conflict."[72] In this way, "valid knowledge" for practical realism, entailed

> not so much an improved capacity to control one's object environment, but an improved capacity to be and behave as a worthy member of one's traditional community, with its intersubjective and consensually endorsed norms, rights, meanings, purposes, and limitations on what the individual participants can be and might become.[73]

This hermeneutical method of inquiry approached "texts" interpretively; not a post-modernist sense of interpretation detached from empirical verification, but one that "tests" the hypothesis of "texts" against practice. As Ashley put it; "[e]very interpretation is tested, as it

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[69] Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit*, pp.208 & 215.

[70] *ibid*, p.211.

[71] Jurgen Habermas as quoted in *ibid*, p.210.

[72] *ibid*, p.212.

[73] *ibid*, pp.211-212.

were, insofar as it generates expectations for practice, including language, that can be gauged against actual practices." Consequently,

> a disappointment of expectations signals the failure of interpretation and a need...to carry the dialogue forward...Only when the interpreter's expectations close on actual practice can it be said — and then always provisionally — that the interpreter has succeeded...[74]

As an example of "practical realism" and this "hermeneutic attitude," Ashley cited the work of Hans Morgenthau[75], who urged that we;

> retrace and anticipate...the steps a statesmen — 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.[76]

Morgenthau's realism was interpretivist to the extent that it recognized that realist practices were socially located; that they reflected, and were contingent upon, the actions of agents acting within historical traditions to give them meaning and reality. And Morgenthau's approach was "practical realism" to the extent that it recognized that "[n]o study of politics...can be disinterested in the sense that it is possible to divorce knowledge from action."

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[74] *ibid*, pp.212-213.

[75] It is interesting, and at times confusing, to observe Ashley's love-hate relationship with Hans Morgenthau. At various points in Ashley's writings, for example, Morgenthau is upheld as the pillar of "practical realism" or "classical realism," a form of realism that Ashley in his "heroic" phase implored his readers to return to. At other times, however, Ashley uses Morgenthau as an example of the nemesis of "technical realism" or "scientific realism," tersely rejecting his work for its pretence to "science" and its use of positivist epistemology. Doubtless, readers will be confused justifiably as to which "Morgenthau" is under consideration at any one moment in time, since Ashley fails to periodise Morgenthau's work or categorise his writings into discrete intellectual phases. Rather, the only explanation Ashley offers is to note that Morgenthau's "work...is exemplary...since both aspects ("practical" and "technical" realism) appear in his work." One is left with the impression that Morgenthau is, at one and the same time, a "technical," "practical," "scientific," "positivist," and "hermeneutic" realist! See Ashley, R.K. (1981), *op.cit*, p.210.

[76] Hans Morgenthau as quoted in Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit*, p.213. See also, Morgenthau, H.J., (1967), *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Alfred Knopf, & Morgenthau, H.J., (1958), *Dilemmas of Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Far from being esoteric-philosophic reflection, then, "practical realism" displayed a "practical cognitive interest," albeit articulated via a "hermeneutic logic."[77] It was not an instance of theory detached from practice any more than it was observations of practice detached from theory. On the contrary, it reflected the intersection between action and knowledge, synthesising these two categories into one to produce a *praxiology* of international politics. And Morgenthau's hermeneutical praxiology was, according to Ashley, a form of textual interpretivism, where theoretical insights vented practice, informing the conundrums of foreign policy, statesmanship, diplomacy, and statecraft, while realist practices vented theory, providing the empirical referents to "test" texts and, through a perpetual state of modification, adapt theory to the modalities of specific historical circumstance. So important was Morgenthau's "hermeneutic attitude" that, for Ashley, it explained "why *Politics Among Nations*" was "still 'must reading' among foreign service officers." For it not only recognized their political agency, albeit restrained by the traditions in which they operated, but provided the nearest thing yet to a practical-theoretical manual of instruction; not about the "facts" of international politics, but about the processes contained within them and derived from the reflexive intersection between action and knowledge. And this is what made practical realism an "open-ended tradition," where international politics reflected the dynamic interplay of instrumental power politics amid hermeneutic interpretation. History, in other words, was explained as "process," the outcome of coaction among agents (or as Ashley termed then subjectivities) operative within tradition, and not as the mechanistic effects of metaphysically conceived "systems" or "structures." Indeed, this is what made "practical realism" and, ergo, Morgenthau's

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[77] *ibid*, p.214.

approach attractive to Ashley; their refusal to foreclose history through any kind of structuralist determinism. Instead, the "partial autonomy" implicit in "practical realism" allowed "room for practical action," which, in Ashley's view, was coterminous with an emancipatory logic and reflective progress.[78]

The distinction between "practical" and "technical realism" was important for Ashley, since the former did not portend to trans-historical foundationalism, truth, certitude, or "fact." "Practical realism" understood "fact and "reality" as merely historical dialogical readings, and theoretical-narratives as historical documents of interpretation. Ashley, for example, reminded us of Morgenthau's contention that "no fixed, once-and-for-all operational definition" of "power and national interest" was possible. The contents, characteristics, and nature of these terms "at any moment depend upon the 'political and cultural environments,' the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated."[79] Morgenthau, as Ashley was keen to point out, simply recognized that things change, that history was not just repetition with new players, that knowledge was not immutable, and that "fact" and "reality" were as much determined by one's cultural, aesthetic, and historical vantage point, as they were by supposedly "objectifying" forms of reason.

Against this belief, however, Ashley confronted the dominance of "technical realism," where a "very considerable proportion of North American international politics research...[had]...been tidily confined within the logic of economy." Neo-functional integration theory, along with "[d]eterrence theory, game theory, and so-called 'strategic thinking,'" for

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[78] *ibid*, p.222. A more through discussion of "practical realism" can be found in Ashley, R.K., (1984), *op.cit*, pp.264-281.

[79] Hans Morgenthau as quoted by Ashley, *ibid*, p.214.

example, "operated entirely within the model of technical rational action;" a condition Ashley

depicted as the "economization of politics."[80] His opposition to this stemmed from a well

established intellectual tradition. Morgenthau, for instance, had objected to the use "of the tools

of modern economic analysis...to understand international relations. In such a theoretical

scheme," he had written, "nations confront each other not as living historic entities with all

their complexities but as rational abstractions, after the model of 'economic man.'"[81] Before

him Edward Carr had also addressed the "illusion of a divorce between politics and economics"

and of the infusion of economic rationality into the study of political phenomena. Indeed, Carr

had insisted that "economic forces" were "in fact political forces."[82] Similarly, the masterly

study by Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation,* traced the tumultuous consequences of a

world turned upside-down, where: "[i]nstead of economy being embedded in social relations,

social relations...[were]...embedded in the economic system."[83] For Polanyi, this "Great

Transformation" was tantamount to the usurping of social needs in the name of economic

rationality with consequences that obliterated international order, first in the "Great Depression"

of the 1930s and then its political ramifications in Germany and world war. Ashley did no

more than take his lead from these three theorists in particular, seeing "economism" and its

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[80] Ashley, R.K., (1983), "Three Modes of Economism," *International Studies Quarterly,* Vol.27,No.4, December, p.480, & Ashley R.K., (1984), *op.cit,* p.279.

[81] Hans Morgenthau as quoted in Ashley, R.K., (1984), *op.cit,* p.279.

[82] Carr further noted that: "Economics can be treated neither as a minor accessory of history, nor as an independent science in the light of which history can be interpreted." And noted that: "Much confusion would be saved by a general return to the term 'political economy.'" See Carr, E.H., (1964), *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939.* New York: Harper & Row, pp.114-120.

[83] Polanyi, K., (1968), *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time.* Boston: Beacon Press, p.57.

theoretical offsprings of rational choice theory and neorealism (or "technical realism"), manifestations of a single nemesis—technical rationality. All these, he said, derived from a *"technical cognitive interest,"* which remains "the knowledge-constitutive interest of the empirical-analytic sciences" expressed as positivism.[84] The objective of his project had therefore to be a thorough critique of positivism, especially its pretence to "science," empirical "value-free" knowledge, and its vapid manifestations in structuralist and reductionist economistic theory.

Ashley's main target in this undertaking was Kenneth Waltz and his work, *Theory of International Politics.*[85] Ashley chastised Waltz's instrumentalist approach to theory, where a theory's usefulness was assessed in terms of its "capacities to *orient purposive-rational attempts to exert control over an objectified reality.*" Waltz clearly displayed a "technical cognitive interest," for example, when he noted: "The urge to explain is not born of idle curiosity alone. It is produced also by the desire to control, or at least to know if control is possible."[86] This conception of "theory" was said to conceal a deeper "political significance" that, by making theoretical endeavour conditional upon purposive-rational control, established "expectations as to the kinds of research practices that were warranted, comprehensible, appropriate, and worthy of community [read financial and institutional] support."[87] "Appropriate" or "legitimate" theory sought to solve problems and enhance control, while

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[84] Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit,* p.208.

[85] See Waltz, K.N., (1979), *Theory of International Politics.* New York: Random House.

[86] Kenneth N. Waltz as quoted in Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit,* p.217.

[87] Ashley, R.K., (1983), "The Eye of Power: The Politics of World Modelling," *International Organization,* Vol.37,No.3, Summer, p.528.

inappropriate theory problematized knowledge and engaged in rank speculation. Reason had been reduced to "purposive rationality," and action was now gauged "solely in terms of the efficiency of means," disparaging "human reflective capacities" that might "transcend the technical interest in control."[88] The root of this problem derived from neorealism's positivist epistemology. As Ashley noted, "Neorealist theory...[was]...theory of, by, and for positivists."[89] And positivist epistemology, or more precisely the technical rationality inherent in positivism, tended to "inhabit the domain of the 'is' rather than the domain of the 'ought'" where its "truth" required no "normative defense."[90] Hermeneutic reflection or interpretation, questions of values or issues of epistemology or ontology, therefore, could be jettisoned from positivist discourse. This was also true of neorealists who deflected criticism of their project by limiting "the range of theories about society that [could] be scientifically entertained."[91] Indeed, they could simply dismiss, or more easily ignore criticisms that derived from philosophic "what ought to be" type arguments, asserting instead that their theoretical purview concerned only the "facts" of international politics and questions of "what is." The "purpose" of theory was thus self-evident. As Waltz noted; "[b]y a theory the significance of the observed is made manifest."[92] Theory had only to bring parsimonious order to the complexity of "facts'

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[88] Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit*, p.235.

[89] Ashley, R.K., (1984), "The Poverty of Neorealism," in Keohane, R.O., (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics.* New York: Columbia University Press, p.248.

[90] *ibid*, p.250.

[91] *ibid*.

[92] Waltz, K.N., (1986), "Laws and Theories," in Keohane, R.O., (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.37.

and "phenomena" that constituted international politics, and, by virtue of this knowledge, influence and control over them might be extended.

Ashley's more immediate criticism of Waltz, however, rested on his rejection of structuralism. More precisely, it rested on the duplicitous way Waltz had fused an instrumentalist, utilitarian, positivist conception of theory to a structuralist understanding of international politics. Waltz, he claimed, had used a form of structuralist sophistry by assuming the "state" to be "*ontologically* prior to the international system," and by ascribing to the state a generative structuralism in the creation of the international system and the condition of *anarchy*.[93] This was no more than an instance of "statist economism," where states were infused with a technical-economic rationality and the international system was said to be "an emergent property, a consequence of the coaction of a multiplicity of unitary, complete, and egoistic states oriented according to the logic of *raison d'etat*.[94] This argument, of course, Ashley thought fallacious. The "state-as-actor assumption," the epistemological linchpin of neorealist theory, was merely "a metaphysical commitment prior to science and exempted from scientific criticism." Indeed, despite its pretensions to "science," neorealist theory rested entirely on normative *supposition*: the ontological presumption of the "state-as-actor" which, despite its ontological centrality, remained an un-theorized category. In fact, this "neorealist move" was

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[93] See Ashley, R.K., (1984), *op.cit*, pp.238-242. See also, Ashley, R.K., (1983), "Three Modes of Economism," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.27,No.4, December, pp.483.

[94] Ashley, R.K., (1983), "Three Modes of Economism," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.27,No.4, December, p.481.

"a sleight of hand, for despite its statism, "neorealism...[could]...produce no theory of the state capable of satisfying the state-as-actor premises of its international political theory."[95]

Ashley also thought Waltz's inverted structuralist assumptions illogical. For example, once the utilitarian-rationalist state-as-actor (the parts) had generated the anarchic international system (the whole), the logic of Waltz's generative structuralism — the causal effects of the parts upon the whole — ceased to operate. In fact, Waltz inverted this structuralist causality, granting to the anarchic international system "absolute predominance over the parts."[96] Ashley was thus the first to identify what others would come subsequently to recognise, that Waltz's neorealism suffered from ontological confusion and contradiction, emasculating cause and effect beneath a top-heavy structuralism after having explained the process a bottom up — generative — structuralism, and all of this premised upon the ontological assumption of the state. But perhaps Waltz's greatest mistake, for Ashley at least, lay in the way he depicted structure as ontologically independent of its generating agents — human subjectivities. Neorealism denied 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." No longer were men and women free agents, but "some idealized homo oeconomicus, able only

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[95] Ashley, R.K., (1984), *op.cit*, pp.239 & 248. See also the discussion in Keyman, E.F., (1994), "Problematizing the State in International Theory," in Sjolander, C.T., & Cox, W.S., (eds.), *Beyond Positivism: Critical Reflections on International Relations*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, pp.153-181.

[96] Kenneth N. Waltz as quoted in Ashley, R.K., (1984), *op.cit*, p.256. The problem of "generative structuralism," and of Waltz's structuralist thesis is addressed eloquently by Wendt, A.E., (1987), "The Agent-Structure problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization*, Vol.41,No.3, Summer, pp.335-371. See also, Little, R., (1985), "Structuralism and Neorealism," in Light, M., & Groom, A.J.R., (eds.), *International Relations: A Handbook of Current Theory*. London: Francis Pinter, pp.74-89. Dessler, D., (1989), "What's at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?," *International Organization*, Vol.43,No.3, Summer, pp.441-474. See also Wendt's recent on-going contribution to this debate, Wendt, A.E., (1992), "Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization*, Vol.46,No.2, Spring, pp.391-426.

to carry out, but never to reflect critically on, the limited rational logic that the system demands of them." [97] Likewise, by infusing the state-as-actor with contrary-differentiated-competitive interests, Waltz denied "states" the ability to engage in unified coaction that might bring about systemic-system change. All that was left was a stagnant *a*historical and *a*political structuralist model, unable to account for historical movement or provide latitude for international collaboration, transnational learning, or conscious political agency.

Ashley correctly characterised this as crude structuralist determinism articulated via the logic of economy, where international *politics* was understood in reductionist fashion as the interstitial points of engagement between structurally determined entities — "states" — motivated by the abstract logic of utilitarianism. Ashley therefore rejected neorealist theory on the basis that it was top-heavy structuralism and not a theory of international politics *per se*. Rather, "[n]eorealist *historicism*" was said to deny "*politics*," or "[m]ore correctly, neorealism reduce[d] politics to those aspects which...[lent]...themselves to interpretation exclusively within a framework of economic action under structural constraints."[98] This, it need hardly be said, was the elemental fault in neorealist theory as far as Ashley could see. "Absent from neorealist categories...[was]...any hint of politics as a creative, critical enterprise, an enterprise by which men and women might reflect on their goals and strive to shape freely their collective will." Waltz's structural realism was thus an "orrery of errors."[99]

> Far from expanding discourse, this so-called structuralism encloses it...Far from penetrating the surface of appearances, this so-called structuralism's fixed

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[97] *ibid*, p.258.

[98] Ashley, R.K., (1984), *op.cit*, p.260.

[99] *ibid*, pp.260-261.

categories freeze the given order, reducing the history and future of social evolution to an expression of those interests which can be mediated by the vectoring of power among competing states-as-actors. Far from presenting a structuralism that envisions political learning on a transnational scale, neorealism presents a structure in which political learning is reduced to the consequences of instrumental coaction among dumb, unreflective, technical-rational unities that are barraged and buffeted by technological and economic changes they are powerless to control.[100]

This was "statism, utilitarianism, positivism, structuralism, and statism yet again;" a strange unity of "contrarieties" where "absurdities abound."[101]

Ashley's "heroic" project was now complete. The paragon of international theory, neorealism, had been attacked and its epistemic basis problematized. There was one problem however. Where Ashley's "heroic" strategy had intended a revolutionary reconstruction of international theory, his efforts had largely failed and were "marginalised" by the extremity of his own discourse. International theory remained committed to "technical" theory and its preeminent practitioners unconvinced by Ashley's critique. If Ashley's project had intended to destabilise orthodox theory and reorient theory in reflection of an emancipatory interest, then he had been only marginally successful. It was time to try new strategies.

Observations on the Death of a "Hero"

The "heroic" Ashley no longer lives, but, according to Ashley, lies dead and buried beneath the rubble of a "sovereign knowledge." At his request, his early works are now largely ignored, indeed derided by a self-reflective "auto-critique."[102] In their place the works of a

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[100] *ibid.*

[101] *ibid*, p.261.

[102] See, for example, Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writings the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," **International** *Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, pp.396-402. See also,. Ashley, R.K., (1987), "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social

new "neo-Nietzschean" Ashley have arisen; one more radicalized, flamboyant, and infamous in style and rhetoric. He now shuns his early works for their ideological epistemology and for what he calls their "heroic" strategy. Yet, he was not wrong, he writes, for he was still a "dissident," but a dissident imprisoned in a false logic, method, and tradition.[103] That tradition was rationalist and bound to the Enlightenment project, and adopted by Ashley because of its emancipatory problematic: an "heroic" strategy committed to the principles of "truth," justice, and liberation. His mentor in this undertaking was Jurgen Habermas, who, he acknowledged, exerted "an important influence" over his work.[104] Indeed, his entire methodological formula cum emancipatory project was vintage Habermas; "imported" into international political theory and used in his crusade against "technical rationality" and its omnipresence in positivist-structural-realism.

Like Habermas, Ashley's "heroic" project challenged the "community of science;" the substitution of hermeneutic social theory for positivism, and sought to realise "progress" through emancipation.[105] All humankind, he noted, had;

> an emancipatory interest — an interest in the unrestrained, communicative exercise of reflective reason — because, amidst 'the exigencies of man's struggles for self-preservation,' only reflection on the self-formative process of the human species...makes possible the autonomous, self-conscious development of life.[106]

Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.12,No.4, pp.403-434.

[103] See the comments in Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, pp.396-397.

[104] Ashley, R.K., (1980), *op.cit*, pp.226n,251n,317n.

[105] *ibid*, p.226n.

[106] Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit*, p.209.

He thus asked his readers to join him and "struggle as well" against the self-enclosure imposed by a "technical-rational grammar of thought," and to erect, instead, "a reflective reason in light of needs, knowledge, and rules" so as to "achieve human autonomy and self-understanding." Much like his mentor, Ashley's "knowledge-guiding interest" was emancipatory, and his project a critical one, partly inspired by the politics of the Frankfurt school and Marxist epistemology.[107] But while his ambitions were Marxist in origin it would be wrong to assume Ashley's "heroic" phase as wholly modernist. Though inspired by the Enlightenment project, many of his methodological techniques and modes of criticism derived from post-structuralist thought, creating obvious tensions and contradictions in his scholarship. What was peculiar therefore about Ashley's "heroic" phase was his attempt to realize modernist ambitions but through post-modernist means.[108] Habermas, for example, slowly gave way to Foucault, and what started out as an emancipatory project inspired by Habermasian logic, became increasingly a Habermasian project informed by Foucauldian theory. By 1984 with the publication of the *Poverty of Neorealism*, this transformation was all but complete and the contradictions evident.[109] International theory was now witness to the perverse amalgamation of two opposed epistemologies. Single-handedly, Ashley had made Habermas and Foucault political bed-fellows. Understandably for orthodox theorists this combination proved

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[107] *ibid*, p.208, & Ashley, R.K., (1980), *op.cit*, pp.*xv*.

[108] Arguably, he also embraced many of the concepts termed post-marxist. See, for example, Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C., (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. (Winston Moore & Paul Cammack: Trans.), London: Verso.

[109] See Spegele, R.D., (1992), *op.cit*, p.166n. The final transformation of Ashley from his "heroic" to "subversive" phase, occurs with his 1987 publication, Ashley, R.K., (1987), "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.12,No.4, pp.403-434. However, even by 1984 with the publication of *Poverty of Neorealism*, we observe a subtle but encroaching commitment to the influence of Michel Foucault *vis a vis* Habermas.

unfathomable and Ashley's discourse too erratic to maintain their interest. Consequently, most observers gave up on Ashley, surrendering his scholarship to his enigma where it was free to roam the discipline unrestrained by critical analysis.

My preceding chronological narrative, however, makes it possible to wipe away Ashley's enigmatic aegis and assess the merits of his scholarship. It is for this reason that I have characterised Ashley's "heroic" phase as epistemological post-modernism: where *epistemology* accommodates Ashley's "heroic" cum modernist search for "truth," allows a contingent foundationalism and universal ethical commitment to emancipation, while *post-modernism* accommodates many of his theoretical techniques, and certainly his political acumen that derived increasingly from a post-structuralist sensibility.[110] This typology also disentangles Ashley's substantive beliefs from his pragmatic politics, exposing his use of post-structuralist theory a strategic means of articulating his modernist agenda. In other words, post-structuralism became an exploitable vehicle through which Ashley could promote his political and theoretical ambitions. Thus, for example, he could aspire to a modernist constructivist "project," a "sovereign" project spoken with a "sovereign voice," while employing post-structural theory to dismiss positivism for its pretence to "truth" and foundationalism. And while he displayed a modernist conception of philosophy-as-epistemology, a foundationalist

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[110] Mark Hoffman has also offered a useful, albeit restrictive, means of conceptualizing these contending traditions in critical scholarship. For Hoffman, critical scholarship can be divided into two traditions. The first, "critical interpretivism," is "characterised by a 'minimal foundationalism' which accepts that a contingent universalism is possible and may be necessary in both ethical and explicatory fields." The second, "radical interpretivism," disparages "even the possibility or desirability of a minimal or contingent foundationalism" and adopts a deconstructionist position, seeing world politics in terms of textual narratives and intertexts. This classification, then, would characterise Ashley's "heroic" phase as "critical interpretivism," where a contingent or limited foundationalism is evident amid his universal aspirations to global transformation, revolution and emancipation, but in a critical rubric broadly conceived as post-modernist. See Hoffman, M., (1991), "Restructuring, Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation: Four Voices in Critical International Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol.20,No.2, pp.169-185.

enterprise whose object was to discover universal "truth," the use of post-structural theory lent credibility to his enterprise as a contextualist and contingent one. Indeed, post-structural theory allowed him to caution against universalism, supposing that while we could not "fashion a pure universalism (a pure rationalism, a pure empiricism) uncontaminated by the particular culture in which we are located," we could instead "fashion a pure contextualism...a pure interpretivism" mediated by history, culture, and aesthetics, but whose objective remained a "transformational critique."[111] If the logic seems obtuse, it was, and Ashley was quite aware of this, justifying this rather discrepant combination of modernist ambition with post-modernist means in terms of his steadfast commitment to transformational politics.

As we have seen, however, even Ashley could not maintain this elaborate and contradictory charade indefinitely, and was eventually forced to bury the "heroic Ashley." Before we do the same, though, it is perhaps worth pondering Ashley's "heroic" phase if only because of the insights it offers as to his motivations and subsequent conversion to subversive post-modernism. For while Ashley was adept at blurring modernist and post-structuralist epistemologies, his "heroic" phase remains distinctive if only because of its blatantly ideological commitment to insurrection and the strategic use of theory to that end. More importantly, what this suggests of Ashley's "heroic" scholarship was a constructivist ethic and a commitment to the idea of theory because of its centrality in informing political praxis. Unlike his more recent deconstructionist offerings where he attempts to destabilize the very idea of theory, the "heroic" Ashley was committed to a transformational reconstruction of

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[111] Connolly, W.E., (1989), "Identity and Difference in Global Politics," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, pp.326-327.

international theory, hoping to reconstitute its cognitive interest away from technical control and towards an emancipatory praxiology. The battle, therefore, was over the ideological use to which theory should be employed, not the efficacy of theory itself which now seems to concern him. The distinction is important and explains the otherwise contradictory ambiguities that have so confused other commentators of Ashley's work. It reveals Ashley's "heroic" phase to be more rationalist than post-structuralist, yet strategic in its use of post-structuralist techniques to support his ideological project. With this in mind, I want to exhume the "heroic" Ashley, engage in a little archaeological dig and postmortem as it were, in order that we might not only find the reasons for his demise, the rationale for his suicide, but also the basis for his reincarnation in another medium.

A Postmortem of Ashley's "Heroic" Scholarship

At the outset of this chapter I noted that my approach to Ashley sublimated his theoretical constructs beneath his political program. We can perhaps now begin to see why this approach was implicit in Ashley's scholarship by demonstrating the conduit between his political beliefs and their theoretical expression. The first demonstration of this lies in the way Ashley's "heroic" scholarship utilized theory in terms of a means—ends rationality; that is, theory was prized but only insofar as it might realize the promise of the Enlightenment. This betrayed an instrumentalist conception of theory; an entity able to be captured and used in the service of specific rationalities. More importantly, it provided Ashley with a twin-edged sword; first, as a means of attacking positivists on the basis that they exploited theory in reflection of their technical-instrumental interests in control, while, secondly, demonstrating to Ashley that, if captured, theory could also be used in promotion of a progressive agenda. Arguably this

insight not only defined his approach to theory but also surrendered it to the battleground of ideology, to be fought over and manipulated in reflection of particular interests. In this sense Ashley was about to do to theory what he had originally professed to avoid: reduce theory to a Mannheimian simplism and constitute a knowledge in reflection of a specific (emancipatory) rationality.[112] Consequently, Ashley's "heroic" scholarship was no different to positivism, objectifying theory and scholarship and rendering them instrumentalities of a power-knowledge — a betrayal of his mentor's approach to theory. This had fairly obvious implications for theory, not least of which was its abuse when used in reckless fashion in support of ideological ends. Ashley, for example, could combine opposing epistemologies in the construction of a "new" critical theory, but in doing so forsake the yardsticks of rationality and consistency and the sanctity of theory for purely partisan ends. Likewise, rather than preserve the institution of theory on the basis of its contribution to knowledge or its efficacy in contemplation, its purpose had always to be inscribed in reflection of interests and accepted or rejected on the basis of its relationship to one's own political agenda. There was no point to theory and knowledge except insofar as they served ideological ends. If this was true of positivism as Ashley insisted, then it was also true of Ashley. The label that best explains Ashley's "heroic" motivations and rationality, then, is "revolutionary," and it is in this context that I interpret his "heroic" scholarship and explain the denigration of theory.

Ashley was careful, however, to conceal the duplicity of his theoretical enterprise to his revolutionary program. We thus have to "read" Ashley with an eye to his sophistry, aware that he too is engaged in a positivist project of sorts: the construction of theory in reflection of a

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[112] Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit*, p.207.

revolutionary ambition. In his attempt to forge a "rationality proper" and escape the war-prone logic of "technical rationality," for example, he appeared the great integrationist and protector of the realist tradition, not a deconstructionist but a synthesist striving to preserve it. Indeed, when reinterpreting the work of John Hertz, Ashley implored us to preserve "practical realism," "not to deny or replace realism, but to find in the realist dialogue the basis for a new synthesis" where "technical interests in control no longer subordinate...reflective reason."[113] For Ashley, once this "synthesis" was realized, "reflective reason" or "rationality proper" would guide humankind away from hierarchial social relations of domination and deliver us to the "good society." We had only to free ourselves of this mode of conceptualization, emancipate our minds and collectively aspire to a just world order.

Realizing this "synthesis," however, required more than theoretical argument; it required revolutionary action albeit theoretically informed and inspired. Theory had a rational-purposive function—the investigation of and contribution to, "the prospects for emancipatory politics in the late twentieth century." Its role was political, involving a "ceaseless analysis, vigilance and will to subversion," so as to open up "alternative spaces, for the constitution of alternative subjects, for the making of alternative worlds."[114] Revolution was the objective, and theory a practical means of contributing to its realization. While theoretical critique(s) would shatter the ideological illusions of realism, revolution would transform and usurp the material basis on which realism rested and its practices legitimized. "In the end," Ashley wrote:

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[113] Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit*, p.231.

[114] Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, September, pp.264-265. Ashley, R.K., (1987), *op.cit*, p.428.

the only kind of criticism that would do away with realism is a global revolutionary change that would put an end to the current order of domination without establishing a new one in its place. In the end, this, and only this, is the kind of falsifying evidence that realism will recognise.[115]

In Ashley's grand plan, realism was only an incidental casualty, a manifestation of the real enemy — technical realism — and to fight realism without assaulting its epistemological essence — its material basis — would all but leave it intact.

Like all revolutionaries, Ashley's ambition was fed by a quixotic idealism, a faith that the revolutionary act would not only transform existing social relations but kindle a new moral order and "a higher state of being."[116] His position reflected the perennial realist/idealist dialectic in international theory. Antithetic to the realist tradition where "mankind" was entrapped in the Hobbesian state of nature — "a perpetual and restlesse desire for power after power" — Ashley embraced a Rousseauian cum Marxist position, where humankind was understood as pristine being corrupted by societal tyranny.[117] Ashley's "heroic" project therefore displayed all the trappings of the idealist tradition: a reactionist stance against the current global order, a dissatisfaction with the nation-state as the basic unit of global organization, and a commitment to transformational politics and the creation of new forms of global order founded upon unity, harmony, inclusiveness, and peace. At base, Ashley believed it was the state that was the source of war and conflict. More precisely, it was the state combined with technical rationality that, in a "world of finite resources," created competitive

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[115] Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit*, p.234.

[116] Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, p.397.

[117] See Hobbes, T., (1968), *Leviathan*. (C.B. Macpherson ed.), Penguin, p.161. See also, Rousseau, J.J., (1947), *Social Contract*, New York: Hafner Pub Co.

dynamics between states and resulted in differential technological and economic growth patters, "unevenly distributed capabilities" and a global system prone to war.[118] This explains why Ashley understood realism a symptom and not the source of conflictual politics, and why a theoretical deconstruction of realism and neorealism would never suffice as a transformational strategy. In the end, only the obliteration of the state itself would allow humankind freedom from the territorial logic of the state-as-actor. Only then would we escape the cartographic abstractions that divide humankind, the perceptions of insecurity they incite, and the realist narratives they necessitate. Only then would humankind achieve self-realization.

Ashley's commitment to revolutionary politics necessarily made his scholarship secondary to that goal. Many of the ambiguities and contradictions in his scholarship could therefore be explained in terms of pragmatic opportunism. For example, while Ashley opposed "technical realism" he preserved "practical realism," arguing that the latter's cognitive interest in instrumental power politics was useful for revolutionary purposes and its intersubjective understanding helpful in realizing an emancipatory problematic. "The job of the revolutionary," he noted, was not to repudiate the "community of power politics" and abnegate "a revolutionary resource," but to exploit and "strengthen this community" and do "violence to a tradition notorious for its celebration of violence."[119] Making "new worlds" apparently required the use of old tools, and Ashley was not averse to the appropriation of violent means to that end. It was therefore ironic that Ashley should have been so outraged by those

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[118] Ashley, R.K., (1980), *op.cit*, p.*ix*. Ashley's hostility toward the state as an instrument of control and a realm of power, is more fully addressed in his article, Ashley, R.K., (1988), "Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique," *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol.17,No.2, Summer, pp.227-262.

[119] Ashley, R.K., (1987), *op.cit*, pp.428-429.

"conspicuous displays of violence" against "students, junior faculty, scholars of color, feminists, and other disciplinary marginals" that he alleged of realists, when he himself was so quick to advocate revolutionary violence on a global scale.[120] Indeed, Ashley's condemnation of so-called "technical" theory seemed curious in view of its commitment to the aversion of international violence through greater theoretical insight, informed practice and enhanced control. Calling for massive revolutionary action to correct the abstract, if not fictitious, violence of "technical rationality" was thus a contrived and spurious justification at best. Likewise, while committed to global "transformational" change — a universal project or master-narrative by anyone's definition — he attacked positivist theory for its meta-theoretical commitments and universalist aspirations. Universalism in pursuit of an emancipatory problematic was perfectly acceptable, but in pursuit of science whose cognitive interest was "control," Ashley labelled it "dangerous." Moreover, while he derided realism's "technical interest," he failed to acknowledge that his own "emancipatory interest" shared many of the same commitments. Ashley's ambition to erect a "reflective" knowledge, for example, could also be seen as a quest for "technical" knowledge, especially since "reflective" knowledge sought to engineer, or at the very least contribute to, the technical project of global transformation and revolution. Reflective knowledge was not benign as Ashley freely admitted. It had a "practical cognitive interest" that endeavoured to facilitate an interpretivist or contemplative space and apprise subjectivities of the means to political action. Surely this also was a master-plan to shape the course of history, a desire to control and technically manipulate

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[120] Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, p.411.

historical events and secure outcomes much like the "community of science." Similarly, while Ashley advocated "contextualism" and rejected absolutism in knowledge, his "project" was clearly foundationalist if not absolutist. It had to be, or how else could Ashley claim emancipation ontologically and ethically superior to all other cognitive interests? And while he rejected structuralism for its analytical shortcomings his own critique relied upon structuralist conceptions of power and oppression, understood the state a structural entity constituted by "practice," used structural categories like "class" to objectify interests, and used structural notions of instrumental power politics as a means of informing revolutionary action.

These anomalies tell us much about Ashley's "heroic" scholarship. First, it tells us that Ashley's commentaries were not attempts at constructing a "theory" of international politics. More likely, they were attempts at contributing to politics; projects that aimed at realizing a revolutionary praxis by providing a theoretical medium to legitimize and sanction political action. More gratuitously, we might interpret them as crude revolutionary documents—a sort of call to arms. Ashley's focus upon political agency, indeed its centrality in his discourse, is more appropriately understood in terms of its political utility than its theoretical poignancy. After all, if one is to effect, or at least contribute (theoretically) to, the possibility of revolution, one need first demonstrate that revolution is; i.) desirable; ii.) necessary if freedom and emancipation are to be achieved and; iii.) possible inasmuch as human agents *are* able to mould their political realities. Thus, by reifying the agency of subjectivities Ashley could critique structural realism's cognitive interest in control as an attempt to delimit political-agency (an attempt to preserve the constellation of global order), and at the same time, offer a theoretical incitement to arms by establishing a theoretical rationale or legitimacy for

revolutionary politics, and a theoretical knowledge on which to base it. Second, this tells us that Ashley's discourse was not dispassionate intellectual enquiry, but ideological belief forcefully expressed in pragmatic discourse where the ends justified the means. Ashley was not attacking a theory or theories *per se*, but the configuration of global order. Far from being a benign theory of interpretation, structural realism represented the interests of state and class, according recognition to, and allied with, "those class and sectorial interests...congruent with state interests and legitimations." The fight for "freedom" or Ashley's "heroic" strategy, thus lay in demolishing realism and neorealism, not because they were theoretical categories of positivism, but because in reality they obstructed and denied "recognition to those class and human interests" opposed to the reason of state.[121]

The argument, of course, was purely Marxian. Where Marx saw ideology "the false system of thought elaborated by the ruling class to justify its rule in the eyes of the ruled, while hiding its real selfish motives" — a "false consciousness" -- Ashley depicted realism in the same manner: an ideological mask erected by the oppressors and serving the interests of the transnational ruling elites.[122] In other words, realism was simply a technical "competence model" facilitating the repression of opposition forces who threatened the constellation of global order.[123] Realism, he noted, was "the ideological apparatus of a global professional community, the community of competent statesmen" who, through their actions, "ideologically reproduce a tradition that constitutes important aspects of the world;" a "tradition" of "silences,

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[121] Ashley, R.K., (1984), *op.cit*, p.240.

[122] Bloom, A., (1987), *The Closing of the American Mind*, Penguin, p.218.

[123] See Marx, K., & Engels, F., (1977), *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press.

omissions, and failures of self-critical nerve," that together joined "in secret complicity with an order of domination that reproduce[d] the expectation of inequality as a motivating force, and insecurity as an integrating principle."[124] So long as the world remained a "hierarchical order of domination, the dominant...would...always retain an interest in realist concepts and claims, and being dominant," they would try "to make the world in reflection of those concepts and claims."[125] Ashley as "hero" thus issued forth "a promise of an abstract freedom that comes to those who repudiate neorealist commitments."[126] The "heroic" strategy was merely a revolutionary one, premised upon a critical epistemology that claimed "truth," and for those who followed it, "freedom" and emancipation. Only a critical-theoretic interpretation could shatter the ideological blinkers of neorealism's false consciousness, "play havoc with neorealist concepts and claims," and "crack them open."[127]

The gulf between Marx and the "heroic" Ashley therefore was not as wide as Ashley would protest. To be sure, the language was slightly different, the project less overtly stated, but the ambitions virtually synonymous. Yet it would be incorrect to simply label Ashley's project a Marxist one. Unlike Marxist theory, he refused to offer a unified theory of the interconnections between capitalism, states, and violence, for example. Indeed, he was positively shy when it came to discussing issues of capitalist modes of production as

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[124] Ashley, R.K., (1984), *op.cit*, pp.275 & 281.

[125] Ashley, R.K., (1981), *op.cit*, p.234.

[126] Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, p.397.

[127] Ashley, R.K., (1984), *op.cit*, p.286.

instrumental forces in history.[128] His discussions of power, for example, are noticeably *a*economic, refusing to observe what seem patently obvious associations between exploitive economic relationships and the structure of North-South relations, or the effects of differential growth patterns on military-power capabilities. Ashley's critical epistemology all but abandoned categories of economic imperialism, capitalist practices of accumulation, or issues of the global division of labour, pretending that these "objectified" realities were only representations manifested by dominant interests. In doing so, however, Ashley was strangely reticent to identify explicitly these "interests,' let alone ascribe to them some economic motif that might explain their epistemological basis in relation to the operation of political power. One can only assume that like Foucault, Ashley understood the operation of power to be diffuse, abstract, and ethereal. Yet, as Tony Porter points out, Ashley's approach was also "extremely elitist," crediting the play of international politics, diplomacy, statecraft, and international institutions, the exclusive preserve of a few "intellectuals and statesmen."[129] In Ashley's appraisal, "statesmen and intellectuals create not only an ideology...but equally create the state structures, their foreign policies, and the sense of community and xenophobia that citizens experience." That this borders on a paranoid disposition toward conspiracy theory should be obvious, and that it contradicts Ashley's attempt to inflate the agency of subjectivities should be even more obvious. Those that he calls "marginalized" in the discourse of international politics, are made

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[128] Fred Halliday has gone further, suggesting that international theory has exhibited a "general shyness about the concept of capitalism," and a reticence to theorize its interrelationship with the rise of nation-states in order to offer a more through account of the development of the state-system and its dynamics. See Halliday, F. (1993), "The Cold War and its Conclusion: Consequences for International Relations Theory," in Leaver, R., & Richardson, J.L., (eds.), *Charting the Post-Cold War Order*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, pp.22-24.

[129] Porter, T., (1994), "Postmodern Political Realism and the Third Debate," in Sjolander, C.T., & Cox, W.S., (eds.), *Beyond Positivism: Critical Reflections on International Relations*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, pp.118-119.

more invisible by his own disposition toward elite theory as an explanation of international relations. If only the world was so simple, Ashley might have a modicum of theoretical relevancy.

In all these ways Ashley's discourse was only partially Marxian. It is probably more appropriate to ascribe his emancipatory interest to a humanist philosophic tradition replete with idealist accoutrements that, together, marked the beginnings of a new neo-idealist movement in international theory.[130] At the same time, however, it was Ashley's genius at covertly repackaging and reintroducing Marxian themes into the North American International Relations discourse that popularized his work. He managed to blunt the overt ideology of previous Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches—various "new Left" theories of the early 1970s, whose penchant for economic reductionism explained everything in terms of capitalist modes of production for example[131]—and revise these offerings by discarding their economism and introducing contextualist and post-structuralist techniques. This achievement was significant, seeding a strong critical tradition in North American International Relations scholarship that,

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[130] See, for example, the excellent discussions in Alker, Jr., H.Y., (1992), "The Humanist Movement in International Studies: Reflections on Machiavelli and las Casas," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.36,No.4, December, pp.347-372. & Kegley, Jr., C.W., (1993), "The Neoidealist Movement in International Studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.37,No.2, June, pp.131-147.See also, Riggs, F.W., (1994), "Thoughts about Neoidealism Vs. Realism: Reflections on Charles Kegley's ISA Presidential Address, March 25, 1993," *International Studies Notes*, Vol.19,No.1, Winter, pp.1-6.

[131] I am thinking here of many of the cruder neo-marxist theories that emerged during the 1960s and early 1970s. For example, Andre Gunder Frank's "Dependency Theory," Immanuel Wallerstein's World System theory, Arghiri Emmanuel's theory of "Unequal Exchange," and theories of economic imperialism. See, for example, Emmanuel, A., (1972), *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade*. (Brian Pearce: Trans.), London: New Left Books. Frank, A.G., (1969), *Latin America, Underdevelopment or Revolution: Essays on the Development of Underdevelopment and the Immediate Enemy*, New York: Monthly Review Press. Wallerstein, I.M., (1976), *Modern World System: Agriculture and the Origins of the Modern World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York: Academic Press. Amin, S., (1976), *Unequal Development*, (Brian Pearce: Trans.), Sussex, England: The Harvester Press. Magdoff, H., (1969), *The Age of Imperialism: The Economics of U.S Foreign Policy*, New York: Monthly Review Press

arguably, had been absent for too long. The irony, though, was that while Ashley now claimed his critical approach free of totalitarian narratives, patriarchal insensitivity, eurocentricity and historical determinism, and contextually sensitive to the cultural and specific histories of marginal groups, this was only an illusion. Ashley still made absolutist claims, operated from a foundationalist position, disparaged alternative interpretations that failed to conform to anti-positivist critical theory, and in reifying contextualism made claims to a new methodological master-narrative! The illusion was a political sleight of hand, expertly executed in the hope that his ideological project might see an end to neorealism, and, in its own small way, contribute to some romantic notion of emancipation.

It would be wrong, however, to dismiss Ashley's "heroic" phase entirely. For he succeeded in highlighting many of the epistemological and ontological premises on which realist and neorealist orthodoxies were constructed. In the case of neorealist theory, he provided a necessary corrective to its excessive structuralism, highlighting its determinism and inability to explain adequately agency, change, or history. Ashley also demonstrated the fallacy of applying micro-economic tools of analysis to the study of political phenomena and explaining what are inherently complex relationships in terms of the logic of economy. Similarly, his critiques of world modelling research succeeded in highlighting its "political content" and complicity in the maintenance of social orders. He made such theorists ask basic questions of their project, insisting that they "locate, interpret, problematise, and define the limits of their" research so as to expose "its rules, expectations, conscious claims, explicit premises, implicit presuppositions, mystifications, and lapses."[132] In this he not only challenged these research

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[132] Ashley, R.K., (1983), "The Eye of Power: The Politics of World Modelling," *International Organization*, Vol.37,No.3, Summer, p.501.

projects, but made theorists aware of the political functions theory performed and how supposedly "objective" theory was often normatively derived. So too, his taking to task neorealist theory for its overly circumspect understanding of the state and his attempt to re-theorize it in reflection of power interests and theories of representation, has only strengthened our understating of what in international theory is our central analytical construct — the state-as-actor. All these commentaries were insightful. Indeed, his critique of instrumental-technical-rationality and positivism, a concurrent theme throughout all his works, acted as a catalyst to the development of post-positivist perspectives in the discipline. Almost single-handedly Ashley's theoretical agenda defined the course of research most critical theorists would pursue. In fact, it would be no exaggeration to claim that Ashley's "heroic" scholarship began the "Third Debate," bringing to the discipline a period of introspective reflection that, in many ways, has strengthened theory and the quality of research. Undoubtedly, the discipline has benefited from these developments. We now have a more informed understanding of agency thanks to Ashley's importation of post-structural and *structurationist* theories. Agents and structures are now coactively understood and analyzed through the mediating influences of culture, specificity, and tradition.[133] Ashley's interpretivist presentation of "practical realism" and his re-conceptualization of Morgenthau, for example, demonstrated the utility of a hermeneutic-structurationist realism as a means of comprehending how practice and structure are constituted through agency and tradition. Likewise, theory in the discipline has become more sophisticated, having jettisoned many of its banal generalities in favour of greater precision and complexity. The breadth of theory, its concerns and scope, have dramatically

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[133] Porter, T., (1994), "Postmodern Political Realism and the Third Debate," in Sjolander, C.T., & Cox, W.S., (eds.), *Beyond Positivism: Critical Reflections on International Relations*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, p.121.

increased, and now incorporates feminist, Third World, environmental, and other previously "marginal" perspectives along with traditional concerns.[134] Many of these developments we can trace to the critical perspectives pioneered by Ashley.

Ironically, however, while orthodox practitioners have generally welcomed these developments, for Ashley it signalled the failure of his project and an end to his "heroic" strategy. Modifications to orthodox theory were never his intentions so much as its downfall and eradication. It was time to try new tactics.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide a critical overview of Ashley's intellectual ruminations amid his political ambitions, concentrating on his formative development or "heroic" phase. In this respect, my approach has been novel, assessing his works interrelatedly as a "project" rather than as a series of disparate writings. My argument has therefore been revisionist, challenging previous unreflective observations about Ashley's writings while suggesting a new means of assessing his "scholarship." In particular, I have attempted to "read" Ashley politically, circumventing his facade of interpretivism and thereby avoiding those pitfalls that have otherwise impeded a more perspicacious understanding of Ashley's discourse. This task, however, has not been an easy one, and, indeed, without hindsight would have proven near impossible. Only now can we reconstruct Ashley's writings chronologically and thematically, and only now can we thread together his various theoretical vignettes and expose the political motifs that motivated his formative "scholarship." Yet this task is far from

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[134] See, for example, the discussion in Higgott, R., (1991), "International Relations in Australia: An Agenda for the 1990s," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (1991), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives in an Evolving Discipline.* Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, pp.394-426.

complete and does little to account for Ashley's new found role as a subversive post-modernist. Chapter five thus continues this task by looking at Ashley's intellectual metamorphosis and reincarnation as a "deconstructionist."

Introduction

This chapter continues my analysis of Richard Ashley, concentrating here on Ashley's subversive phase and his apparent embrace of post-structuralist theory and Continental philosophy. As the title of this chapter suggests, my analysis focuses upon Ashley's *continental drift*, not only in terms of its intellectual merits, but its intrinsic dangers.

Continental Drift

One of the great mysteries surrounding Richard Ashley's scholarship — indeed the post-modernist movement generally — is the question *why?*: why the shift from modernist epistemologies to post-modernism?; why the progressive abandonment of Marx and Habermas for Derrida and Foucault?; why the rejection of rationalist for anti-rationalist discourse?; and why the turn to deconstruction? Allan Bloom has suggested that this trend is indicative of the crisis in Marxism and represents either the progressive "Nietzscheanization of the Left" or the Marxianization of Nietzsche.[1] For Bloom, the old Marxism with its "embarrassing economic determinism" grew increasingly "vulgar," losing its theoretical credibility and political pertinence. Indeed, Bloom insists that for a great many Marxists, Marx became "boring," his intellectual deeds prosaic, no longer exciting the minds and souls of Left intellectuals. Where once the *Manifesto* might have inspired, in the contemporary world it seemed naive, and the rewards of reading *Capital* insufficient to warrant "the hard work it demands to be digested."[2] Consequently, Bloom argues, the "eponymous hero" of the Left, Marx, succumbed to an

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[1] Bloom, A. (1987), *The Closing of the American Mind*, Penguin Books, pp.222.

[2] *ibid*, pp.217.

"intellectual death," and those who for so long nourished themselves on his works were forced to turn elsewhere for intellectual gratification.

Marx was dead, at least in the sense in which old-style Marxism had credibility as a "worldview," could sustain a mass movement, incite a revolution, provide solace for the oppressed and marginalised, or a critical meta-narrative explaining history, purpose, and destiny. The "Nietzscheanization of the Left' was therefore begun by a "[m]utant breed of Marxists" who de-rationalized Marx and turned "Nietzsche into a Leftist."[3] Their aim was simple — to revitalize Left critical-theory and politics. Nietzsche, it was thought, would do for cultural analysis what Marx did for economics, and the grafting of Nietzsche's cultural politics onto Marx has, according to Bloom, "strengthened Marx's position" while killing off vulgar Marxism. "Nonvulgar Marxism is [now] Nietzsche," yielding a new and peculiar breed, Leftist Nietzscheans with Marxist agendas.[4] The Left now celebrate the writings of a new emissary, having been proselytized to Nietzsche's pragmatism. This "newer breed" of radical, as Bloom calls them, "wills chaos" and sees "violence" containing a "certain charm of its own." But where "vulgar Marxists" saw history teleologically, automatically culminating with the "new order," the "newer breed" understands that the "new order is not waiting, but has to be imposed by the will of man."[5] And this "will" we can understand as the acts of "deconstruction" and "destabilization," new-old political stratagems of transformation and revolution that appropriate

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[3] *ibid*, p.220.

[4] If we follow Bloom's reasoning, we might also characterise them as pragmatic Marxists armed with the ruthlessness of Nietzschean weaponry.

[5] Bloom, A. (1987), *op.cit*, p.220.

Nietzsche's *will to power* and his individualist narcissism hoping that these will finally prove the chimera that realizes the "new order."

The crisis in Marxism is thus as good a place as any in which to situate the genesis of post-modern theory. More importantly, it helps define those motives that caused Ashley to abandon epistemological for subversive post-modernism. Ashley was not alone in recognizing that, as a critical theory, Marxism's scholarly utility and intellectual credibility were declining. The "new Left" revivalism of the 1960s had exhausted itself by the late 1970s, and was reflected in the rising political fortunes of conservative and reactionary political parties. Doubtless for many, Marxism's ideological veracity remained, but its strategic and political utility to Left political movements became problematic. Consequently, like most Left intellectuals during the 1980s, Ashley too experienced a *continental drift*, embraced Nietzsche for his pragmatism and succumbed to the "allure of postmodernism."[6] It is important to stress, however, that this was not an ideological transition so much as a strategic one; a new means of realizing old ends. And it is thus that I shall characterise Ashley's apparent transformation: an "heroic" strategy ideologically reincarnated in alternative theoretical forms and strategically reinvigorated with new destabilizing techniques. For those of us concerned with international theory, then, Ashley's metamorphosis provides a vignette into these changing political tactics: an insight into how the Left, in the face of a triumphant liberal-capitalism and a disillusionment with Marxism, underwent a "Nietzscheanization."

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[6] Bowers, J., (1992), "Postmodernity and the Globalisation of Technoscience: The Computer, Cognitive Science and War," in Doherty, J., Graham, E., & Malek, M., (eds.), *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*. London: Macmillan, p.111.

Ashley and Subversive Post-modernism

Ashley's turn to post-structuralism should therefore be understood as a logical extension of his "heroic" emancipatory project, and not, as he insists, a repudiation of it. Much like his "heroic" strategy, Ashley's post-structuralist writings also attempt to realize emancipation but by offering "radical reflections about difference and freedom" and by opposing "all forms of 'rationalistic' and 'totalistic' thinking and practice." The implicit imprecation in post-modernist thinking, as John McGowan points out, is that modernity, "perhaps fostered by insecurity about legitimating principles," displays an "increased intolerance...of differences within the social whole," moving with ever increasing certitude toward "Weber's 'iron cage,' Adorno's 'administered society,' and Levi-Strauss's 'monoculture.'"[7] Consequently, no longer is the emancipatory ethic defined in relation to economistic and moral rationalities (freedom from capitalist exploitation, for example), but by cultural and aesthetic sensibilities alarmed at the banal conformity imposed by universalism, and amid which the "subject" has been made destitute of difference, creativity, and "thinking space." From this, post-modernists insist, thinking practices must be liberated, differences recognized, discontinuities celebrated, and the inscribed modes of thinking inspired by reason, obliterated. And while redefinitions of the nature of oppression have changed the rationale for emancipation, so too have they wrought change in the strategic mechanisms of achieving it. Michel Foucault, for example, from whom Ashley appropriates much of his theory, has redefined the very essence of emancipation by reconceptualizing power and oppression. Modernist conceptions of power anchored in macrostructuralist economistic categories like "ruling class" and "capitalism," or juridical

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[7] McGowan, J., (1991), *Postmodernism and its Critics*, Ithica: Cornell University Press, p.13.

categories like "law," "moral right, and political sovereignty," are rejected. Power is understood now "genealogically" as a microphenomenon of "disciplinary matrices" that operate in a variety of institutional settings, "not through physical force or representation by law, but through the hegemony of norms, political technologies, and the shaping of the body and soul."[8] A "genealogical" archaeology of power therefore explores the cultural and aesthetic dimensions from which thinking practices arise, and understands "subjects" the product of "scientifico-disciplinary mechanisms" fabricated by processes of "normalization" who are then subsumed amid culturally determined patterns of thinking: a sort of mental imprisonment. Power becomes an "asymmetrical" and "relational" entity, "highly indeterminate in character" and "exercised from innumerable points" such that there is "no source or centre of power to contest."[9] Mass struggle in the name of alternative rationalities (Marxism, liberalism) becomes superfluous when in (post)modern society power is so diffused. Indeed, universal "emancipatory schemes" advanced in the name of reason, post-modernists argue, are symptomatic of "power/knowledge" that, in the end, reproduce merely new forms of domination.[10] A new "micropolitics" of resistance is therefore called for; a discourse politics that acts as "a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy." Discourse politics, like Derrida's deconstruction,

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[8] Michel Foucault as quoted in Best, S., & Kellner, D., (1991), *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations.* New York: Guilford Press, pp. 46-49.

[9] *ibid*, pp.50-51. The aesthetic dimension of power is evident in Ashley's dictum that; "works of power...are also works of art." See Ashley, R.K., (1991), "The State of the Discipline: Realism Under Challenge," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (eds.), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives on an Evolving Discipline.* Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National University, p.61.

[10] Best, S., & Kellner, D., (1991), *op.cit*, p.50. A frequently cited example of this is the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. While enacted under the auspices of "reason" and the Enlightenment principles of equality and liberation, it ended up creating new repressive rationalities in the name of the Soviet State and socialism.

"attempts to contest the hegemonic discourses...of normal identities," and to subvert "the norms of what is rational, sane, or true," by speaking "from outside these rules" and from the margins.[11] In this way, Ashley hopes that

> practices might be resisted or disabled; boundaries might be put in doubt and transgressed; representations might be subverted, deprived of the presumption of self-evidence, and politicised and historicised; new connections among diverse cultural elements might become possible; and new ways of thinking and doing global politics might be opened up.[12]

This program is made necessary by what Ashley understands as the failed promise of the Enlightenment. "[D]espite modern discourse's heralding of reason as a critical emancipatory force" that would "break through all traditional barriers and expose every ideology for what it is," the regime of modernity has cemented "reason" in "an indispensable ideological limit, a sovereign voice that is itself immunised from reasoned criticism."[13] Consequently, "reason" too must be disturbed and deconstructed if emancipation is ever to be realized. "Reason," Ashley argues, like any other knowledge system, produces certain historical outcomes through its theoretical practice, and hence the realities we observe are not immutable, unproblematic sovereign sites, but arbitrary social constructions articulated through particular thought practices. Where some see this interpretivist stance as dangerous and destabilizing, challenging the very motif of Enlightenment thinking, Ashley thinks it profoundly liberating, demonstrating

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[11] *ibid*, pp.57-58.

[12] Ashley, R.K., (1988), "Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematic," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.17,No.2, Summer, p.254.

[13] *ibid*, p.254. Elsewhere, Ashley notes: "Put more simply, modern discourse presupposes an unexamined metaphysical faith in its capacity to speak a sovereign voice of suprahistorical truth." Ashley, R.K., (1989), "Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, p.264.

not only how tenuous are current realities, but how numerous are the possibilities for alternative future worlds and histories. In the case of state-centric global organization, for example, Ashley notes that:

> By carefully analyzing the *workings* of theoretical discourse on the anarchy problematique — the knowledgeable practices by which it controls ambiguity and disciplines the proliferation of meaning — we may gain some insight into how the predicament it portrays and takes to be foundational is actively *produced* in history and through practice. By showing how, on the plane of theory, these knowledgable practices might be exposed as arbitrary and rhetorical rather than unproblematic, we may catch a glimpse of how in history the anarchy problematique might come to be understood, not as a necessary condition that the "realistic" conduct of politics must take to be beyond question, but as an arbitrary political construction that is always in the process of being imposed.[14]

By doing this, Ashley hopes that we can "begin to see how these practices of imposition might be resisted" and the anarchy problematique "transgressed." Ultimately, "[e]xplorations of new practices — and, with them, new modes of global political seeing, saying, and being — might thereby become possible."[15]

Obviously, then, the difference between Ashley's "heroic" and post-structuralist strategy is not to be found in his ambition (this remains contiguous — global transformation), but in his targets and methodology. Under his "heroic" strategy his targets were technical rationality and positivism but attacked using a rationalist discourse. In his subversive phase, these targets are broadened to encompass modernity and rationality, and the strategy is to subvert the logic of modernity, depriving it of those

> techniques, strategies, and rituals by which practices are disciplined, resistances are tamed, regions of silence are imposed, boundaries of practice are secured,

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[14] *ibid*, pp.228-229.

[15] *ibid.*

subjects are legitimated, order is normalized, and domination is violently projected in the world.[16]

By operating at "places of closure," at those sites where the "Enlightenment's authority" over the construction of "knowledge, truth and meaning" has closed off "reason" as an unproblematic sovereign site, Ashley aims to disturb "the placid unanimity of the current Western order" by turning its own discourse against itself.[17]

This strategy I have termed *subversive*, since it seeks to "de-centre" reason and the representations on which international theory are constructed and world politics conducted. Yet Ashley seeks to do so from a non-position, refusing to speak in "a sovereign voice...of interpretation and judgement from which truth and power are thought to emanate." Indeed, his purpose, he insists, "is not to announce a new and powerful perspective on global politics," nor is it to "impose a standard and pass a judgement." Dissidents "stake out no territory to be defended" and issue no "manual of war by which soldiers of a new mode of global or political theory might be taught to seize, defend, and extend a domain." In fact, Ashley issues "no promises" and "bear[s] no flag."[18] Rather, he argues, what he does offer is a means to chaos

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[16] Ashley, R.K., (1987), "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.12,No.4, p.411.

[17] McGowan, J., (1991), *op.cit* p.14, and Silverman, H.J., (1990), "Introduction: The Philosophy of Postmodernism," in Silverman, H.J., (ed.), *Postmodernism — Philosophy and the Arts*. New York: Routledge, p.1. Spegele, R.D., (1992), "Richard Ashley's Discourse for International Relations," *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol.21,No.2, Summer, p.148.

[18] Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, p.368. Ashley, R.K., (1988), *op.cit*, p.228, & Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, p.264. See also Ashley, R.K., (1989), "Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, pp.271-272.

and "anarchy" in theory by contributing to the crisis of representation in modern discourse.[19]

In international theory this is achieved primarily through attacking the anarchy problematique, depictions of the global arena as a residual, "natural" and "primordial" sphere, as well as the arbitrary demarcations that divide "domestic" from "international" and "state" from "society." Through discursive textual analysis and rhetoric Ashley problematizes these representations—indeed all monological interpretations derived through the application of reason—and advances, instead, the idea of multiple realities through interpretivism and thus the relativity and instability of truth and meaning. What he has "shown," he notes, is that;

> in theory as much as in any other domain of modern culture, it is impossible to arrive at any stable representation of the state and domestic society as a well-bounded sovereign identity, an unproblematic origin, a final ground upon which a rational understanding of international politics might be built.[20]

Here we observe the encroaching shadow of Foucault fall on international theory as Ashley imports his "*genealogical* attitude."[21] No longer can international theory be an exercise in "apocalyptic objectivity," where reality can be captured in a "singular narrative, a law of development, or a vision of progress toward a certain end of humankind." On the contrary, "[t]here are no constants, no fixed meanings, no secure grounds, no profound secrets, no final structures or limits of history." In the end, Ashley maintains, "there is only interpretation," where history "is a series of interpretations imposed upon interpretations—none primary, all

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[19] Ashley, R.K., (1988), *op.cit*, pp.253-254. See also Ashley, R.K., (1991), *op.cit*, pp.56-63.

[20] Ashley, R.K., (1988), *op.cit*, pp.250-251. See also, Ashley, R.K., (1989), op.cit, particularly pages 272-284, where Ashley rejects monological interpretation for radical post-structuralism.

[21] Ashley, R.K., (1987), *op.cit*, p.408.

arbitrary" and all without "essential meaning."[22] Within this meaningless edifice, the job of

the theorist cannot be to understand, discover, or resolve the meaning, purpose, or truth of

history, but only to contemplate how, through "clashes of historical practices," the imposition

of structure might be resisted. World politics, in other words, is perceived as the never

completed "historical emergence, bounding, conquest, and administration of social *spaces*," or,

"a still-contested product of struggle to impose interpretation upon interpretation" where

"[n]othing is finally stable."[23]

To highlight this point, Ashley studies the imposition of structure that occurs in the

context of realist narratives. These, Ashley argues, invoke "a Western rationalist understanding

of a domestic *community-as-presence* in order to differentiate a field of international political

practice recognized as a primordial *absence-of-community*." In doing so, realist narratives

sustain an artificial representation of the international sphere as a "realm of necessity" that

exists independently of "knowledge, will and practice."[24] This "double move," as Ashley

terms it, imposes silence "by occulting the community of international politics" and

"misrecognizing it as a natural sphere." Consequently, this

> excludes from active political discourse the strategies and procedures by which
> the margins of domestic and international society are produced, [how] the sphere
> of international politics is constituted and normalized, and [how] the prevailing
> subjectivity of modern statesmanship is empowered.[25]

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[22] *ibid*, pp.408-409.

[23] *ibid*, pp. 409 & 411.

[24] *ibid*, p.419.

[25] *ibid*.

The effect of realism is thus to render silent the *genealogical* "proposition that political realism is itself the voice of a specific historical mode of international community that has sustained a tentative hold on international political space": the "European-born global order" that now has a "transnational reach."[26] Subsequently, what we study, the "modern sovereign state," is, for Ashley, "never more than an effect of realist practices." And this, he argues, explains the pervasive and recurrent presence of realist doctrine in international theory; it complements, legitimizes, and reproduces the modern state system thereby validating the current configuration of global order and those subjectivities (statesmen and transnational elites) empowered to administer it. Ashley is therefore forced to the conclusion that "[r]ealism will always be the name of the discipline of the state, as it will also be the name of the state of the discipline."[27] Realism and realists alike are accredited with an insidious, almost conspiratorial, quality:

> Realist power politics does not identify with the state; it produces the effect of the state. The state is not a fiction that realists reify; the state is a fiction that people know to be necessary because realist practices work to construct people who will know that they would be imperilled were they not willing to participate in its writing.[28]

It is not surprising therefore that Ashley does "not seek theoretical engagement with an established discipline" that propagates this order, but an expose of how the "discipline itself sustains orders of domination, control and exclusion" and why these "should be questioned,

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[26] *ibid*, p.421.

[27] Ashley, R.K., (1991), *op.cit* pp.67-68.

[28] *ibid*, p.67.

subverted and overcome."[29] And this is the purpose of his project, a commitment to disruption, instability, and transformation in order that the "elusive quest" for emancipation, to borrow a positivist metaphor, might yet be realized if modernist theory in its various positivist, realist, and structuralist forms, can only be subverted and dismantled. Freed of "reason," of presuppositions that seemingly delimit the ability of agents to effect change and take control of history, transformation might yet be effected. If Ashley can first liberate the mind from this mental imprisonment, "forestall the further spread of [the] rationalist order," then he might liberate the body from its physical inactivity and see the emergence of new worlds and histories.[30] What we witness in Ashley, then, is not a theory of world politics or a tool of analysis to foster greater understanding, but, as with his heroic strategy, a means to revolution, a strategy to transform, destroy, and then make anew the discipline and its theory in forms that few would recognize.

Assessing Ashley's Post-structuralist Challenge: The Politics of Rhetoric and Interpretivism

In the space of only a few short years the post-structural challenge to international theory has risen to prominence. What once was a "marginal" activity dispensed by an "exiled" few, today attracts numerous cohorts who issue their attacks against the discipline from within its hegemonic "centre." For Ashley and Walker, this signals "a crisis of confidence, a loss of faith, a degeneration of reigning paradigms, an organic crisis in which, as Gramscians would

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[29] Spegele, R. D., (1992), *op.cit*, pp.148-149.

[30] Ashley, R.K., (1987), *op.cit*, p.428.

say, 'the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born.'"[31] Needless to say, both Ashley and Walker celebrate this trend. For them, "the game is pretty much up," and "the crisis of international studies" merely reflects a whole series of crises in modern culture: "a crisis of patriarchy, a crisis of governability, [and] a generalized crisis of representation."[32] Whether in the "proliferating works of thought" of dissidents, in the "informal xerox-circuits of the field," or in the "seminar papers of graduate students," Ashley and Walker "detect an increasing volume and variety of work whose principal business is to interrogate limits...and to think *other*-wise." Despite the "oppressive" legacy of positivist social science, these "happenings," they insist, "indicate the opening up of international studies into a boundless space of freedom," where "marginality" is fast becoming the norm and where the "cocksure voice of sovereign judgement" now "trembles in self-doubt."[33]

Doubtlessly, Ashley and Walker overstate the success and attraction of post-positivist approaches for political reasons. Yet there is also much truth in what they claim; the lexicon of post-structural theory has indeed become commonplace in the field and far from a marginal or ostracised activity. The discipline's most eminent journals, for example, commonly feature articles with a post-modernist perspective. Indeed, the willing complicity of disciplinary journals to publish these perspectives, has, ironically, been one of the main vehicles by which

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[31] Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, p.264.

[32] Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, pp. 411 & 413.

[33] *ibid*, pp.410-411.

Ashley and Walker have promoted and popularised their agenda.[34] This fact alone would seem to make a mockery of their allegations of victimization, and how, under "the threat of some deprival of status, tenancy, or right to speak, be heard, and earn a living among the ranks of the profession," so-called "disciplinary marginals" are "coerced into submission."[35] Such "threats" are surely more imagined than real, and the suggestion of coercion almost ludicrous when one considers how those who "think *other*-wise" have been so prolific in filling the discipline's learned journals, conferences, and graduate seminars with voluminous post-modernist literatures. One can either be "victimised" *or* successfully published, but scarcely both. The absurdity of this suggestion, however, seems to have escaped Ashley and Walker, who list a litany of charges against realism and realists, of intimidation, coercion, and exclusion, but communicate these repressive horrors via a "Special Issue" of *International Studies Quarterly*, the discipline's flagship journal.[36] Apparently, those inclined to "conspicuous displays of violence" fail to count censorship among their tools of repression and banishment. Cries of victimization thus ring hollow when they are so well heard, so often repeated, and given so much freedom to be expressed in so many publications.

Arguably, however, such allegations are merely ambit claims, grounded not in fact so much as political ambition. The efficacy of these allegations are thus extraneous when we realize that the motivation for making them derives from the political advantages they obtain

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[34] In particular, *International Studies Quarterly, International Organization,* and *Millennium: Journal of International Studies.*

[35] Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly,* Vol.34,No.3, p.411.

[36] "Special Issue: Speaking the Language of Exile. Dissidents in International Studies.", *International Studies Quarterly,* Vol.34,No.3, September, 1990.

against external criticism. Consider, for example, how scholarly debate or critiques of post-modernist approaches are never that for Ashley and Walker, but crimes of "marginalization," attempts to "silence," strategies of territorialization that seek to "close off debate," or "threats" of professional denunciation. Michael Walzer's critique of Foucault, for instance, is dismissed by Ashley and Walker for its "imposition and observance" of ethical thought and conduct "defined and justified from the standpoint of a sovereign centre of judgement." Walzer becomes the villain, a totalitarian monster who would "impose" moral and ethical criteria upon his victims by intimidating would-be-readers through the suggestion that Foucault's "radical abolitionism" approaches nihilism and ethical relativism.[37] Differences of opinion, debate, let alone critique, become impossible under circumstances where all would-be-opponents are tainted with such vile and totalitarian intentions. If understood as a strategy of deflection and deterrence, however, this tactic serves Ashley and Walker well, creating a sort of hermeneutic truth that always presumes the guilt of detractors and the righteousness of proponents: a protective cocoon that shelters post-modern approaches from outside examination. Consequently, Ashley and Walker have been able to dismiss rationalistic/modernist critiques of post-modernism, insisting that post-modernist perspectives can be assessed only in terms of their own discourse, but have then proceeded to dismiss enlightenment thinking in terms of a post-modern discourse! And herein lies the novelty of these self-serving political strategies: they seemingly validate post-structural theory by removing its theoretical conduit from the realm of rationalist/modernist debate and therefore beyond the reach of those who, through the

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[37] See Walzer, M., (1986), "The Politics of Michel Foucault," in Hoy, D.C. (ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp.51-68. Ashley, R.K., & Walker, R.B.J., (1990), "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34,No.3, p.390.

force of rationalist argument and logic, would expose the poverty of much post-modern theory. The great advocates of "discourse" and free thought thus turn out to be as intolerant of "difference" as they would have their opponents to be. And while, undeniably, this is a clever tactical device it is scarcely sufficient to warrant post-modernists permanent residence among those who count themselves as theorists of international relations.

Undoubtedly, this will be interpreted as a "threat." But these too have come as much from the post-modernist side of the debate as they have from the orthodox. The sense of "intimidation" and "exclusion" has been borne equally by orthodox practitioners confronted with allegations of their duplicity in "violence," "marginalization," racism, patriarchy, and assorted "other crimes and misdemeanours." As Robert Gilpin points out, to believe Ashley is to believe that realists, realism, modernists, and those who profess rationalistic thinking practices, "are all card-carrying members of an insidious and rather dangerous conspiracy that, like Socrates, is indoctrinating youth (read graduate students) in false and dangerous ways of thinking."[38] For Gilpin, Ashley has assumed the mantle of a "Kafkaesque prosecutor," who, in a self-enclosed, self-absorbed treatise, insulated as much by obtuse logic as "needless jargon," has accused realists and modernists with "intellectual treachery" that approaches a pernicious "evil." Collectively, however, such allegations have served their purpose, intimidating those who would protest against the protesters by closing off, silencing, or ascribing pejorative overtones to certain topics, debates, or issues now considered "modernist," "hierarchical," statist, sovereignist, realist, patriarchal, technical, structuralist, objectivist, positivist, foundationalist, or rationalist. These words are now lumped together into an

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[38] Gilpin, R.G., (1986), "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," in Keohane, R.O., (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.301.

amorphous whole, assumed inseparable and issued in condemnation. As Gilpin again notes, this "is polemical innuendo designed to scare easily corruptible graduate students away from the likes of such alleged protofascists as Bob Keohane and George Modelski."[39] And this, I think, is the crux of the matter: political sophistry disguised as theoretical discourse. Ashley, along with Walker, has executed an exceedingly clever political manoeuvre by invoking the theme of *victimization*, allowing them the freedom to allege horrendous crimes but in the absence of any substantive evidence. Indeed, this has become a trademark of their discourse, where, against alleged "intellectual treachery," they assume the moral high-ground, all the time sheltering from the probing eye of criticism by labelling themselves victims. Only the truly treacherous would dare bully the "victim," subject them to yet more heinous ridicule, "violence," and "threats." Only the truly foolish would dare incur the wrath of the new vigilantism of "political correctness." Presented with such options, few have felt compelled to reply to the likes of Ashley and Walker, and those who have are roundly dismissed for their intellectual impurity and moral culpability.

The politics of rhetoric and interpretivism, then, far from promoting the "idea of plurality of meanings" and an "openness to dialogue," in practice have been exploited by Ashley to precipitate intellectual closure. What might have been a genuine intellectual tool for "disturbing" and "disrupting" the complacency of modernist narratives, has, in Ashley's hands, been moulded into a self-serving political tool that functions to "close down discussion" and ward off dissent.[40] Yet this had to be the case, since to invite scrutiny would expose other

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[39] *ibid*, p.313.

[40] Brown, C., (1992), *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches*. Hertfordshire, England: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp.226-227.

contradictions and anomalies implicit in Ashley's post-structural theory. I now turn my attention to these.

Questions of Relevance, Rhetoric, Fiction, and Irrationalism

While Ashley's rhetoric serves to effect a number of political moves, it also helps conceal a series of blatant weaknesses implicit in his post-structural theory. The first of these we might identify as the rhetorical invention and reification of fictitious enemies; a mechanism that not only validates Ashley's project but gives it meaning. Frequently, for example, what Ashley purports to be attacking turns out to be a fictitious, or at best grossly exaggerated, entity. In his adoption of the "megahistorical unit, modernity," for example, Ashley presupposes an homogenous, coherent phenomenon able to be studied—a suggestion most would find outrageous. As Tony Porter notes, "[g]iving coherence to such a phenomenon requires doing violence to its diversity." Enlightenment thought can no more be reduced to a symmetric intellectual tradition or historical moment than can "post-modernism."[41] Indeed, emasculating such an intellectual potpourri of ideas whose only similarity is dissonance, seems peculiar considering Ashley's persistent commitment to venerate "difference" and "discursive practices." To suppose that liberalism, marxism, conservatism, fascism, Leninism, or assorted other "isms" that fall under the "modernist" rubric are contiguous, is as preposterous as conflating Derrida with Foucault, Lyotard, and Baudrillard. Preposterous or not, however, the hubris of Ashley's entire post-structural theory rests on such simplification, and not only with the concept of "modernity." Positivism, realism, or technical rationality, for example, are all reduced to overly simplistic caricatures, assumed ubiquitous and distilled into three or four rudimentary

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[41] Porter, T., (1994), "Postmodern Political Realism and the Third Debate," in Sjolander, C.T., & Cox, W.S., (eds.), *Beyond Positivism: Critical Reflections on International Relations*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, pp.115-116.

propositions that Ashley then sets about "deconstructing." Technical rationality simply becomes non-reflexive "problem solving," positivism a system of thought that divides "subject" from "object" and "fact" from "value," and realism is reduced to the ontological presumption of the state-as-actor. While simplicity has unquestionable heuristic value, crude reductionism for the sake of political opportunism is plainly defamatory. Rather than parsimonious theory, what Ashley delivers is a series of fictitious straw men, theoretically fabricated along with crude ontological and epistemological presumptions that render them congenitally deformed and thus susceptible to Ashley's post-structural interpretivism.

In reality, of course, no such caricatures exist. Positivists, realists and modernists alike are considerably more complex, divergent, and reflexive than Ashley would have us believe. In the case of realism, for example, Ashley conflates the writings of "Kenneth Waltz, Robert Keohane, Stephen Krasner, Robert W. Tucker, George Modelski, Charles Kindleberger," and Robert Gilpin, disregarding the "disparate set of professional and political perspectives" that makes each one distinctive and debate among them ferocious.[42] Yet it is on the basis of these exaggerated caricatures that Ashley's *raison d'etre* for post-structural theory and revolutionary transformation ultimately rests.

Perhaps more alarming though is the outright violence Ashley recommends in response to what, at best, seem trite, if not imagined injustices. Inculpating modernity, positivism, technical rationality, or realism, with violence, racism, war, and countless other crimes, not only smacks of anthropomorphism but, as demonstrated by Ashley's torturous prose and reasoning, requires a dubious logic to make such connections in the first place. Are we really

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[42] Gilpin, R.G., (1986), *op.cit*, p.301.

to believe that ethereal entities like positivism, modernism, or realism, emanate a "violence" that marginalizes "dissidents"? Indeed, where is this "violence," repression and marginalization? As self-professed "dissidents" supposedly "exiled" from the discipline, Ashley and Walker appear remarkably well integrated into the academy, vocal, published, and at the centre of the "Third Debate" and the forefront of theoretical research. Likewise, is Ashley seriously suggesting that, on the basis of this largely imagined "violence," global revolutionary violence is a necessary, let alone desirable response? Has the rationale for emancipation or the fight for justice been reduced to such vacuous revolutionary slogans as "down with positivism and rationality"! The point is surely trite. Apart from members of the academy, who has heard of "positivism" and who for a moment imagines that they need to be emancipated from it, or from modernity, rationality or realism for that matter? In an era of unprecedented change and turmoil, of new political and military configurations, of war in the Balkans and "ethnic cleansing," is Ashley really suggesting that some of the greatest threats facing humankind, or some of the great moments of history rest on such innocuous and largely unknown non-realities like positivism and realism? These are imagined and fictitious enemies, theoretical fabrications that represent arcane, self-serving debates superfluous to the lives of most people and, arguably, to most issues of importance in international relations.

More is the pity that such irrational and obviously abstruse debate should so occupy us at a time of great global turmoil. That it does, and continues to do so, reflects our lack of judicious criteria for evaluating theory and, more importantly, the lack of attachment theorists have to the "real world." Certainly it is right and proper that we ponder the depths of our "theoretical imaginations," engage in epistemological and ontological debate, and analyze the

sociology of our knowledge.[43] But to suppose this is the only task of international theory, let alone the most important one, is outright elitist, arrogant, and irreverent to those who search for guidance in their daily struggles as actors in international politics. What does Ashley's project, his deconstructive efforts, or valiant fight against positivism, say to the truly marginalized, oppressed and destitute? How does it help, ameliorate, or solve the plight of the poor, the displaced refugees, the casualties of war, or the emigres of death squads? Does it in any way speak to those whose actions and thoughts comprise the policy and practice of international relations?

On all these questions one must answer no. This is not to say, of course, that all theory should be judged by its "technical rationality" and problem solving capacity as Ashley forcefully argues. But to suppose that problem solving-technical theory is not necessary, or in some way bad, is a contemptuous position that abrogates any hope of solving some of the nightmarish realities that millions confront daily. As Holsti argues, we need ask of these theorists and their theories the "ultimate question, so what?" To what purpose do they deconstruct, problematize, destabilize, undermine, ridicule, and belittle modernist and rationalist approaches? Does this get us any further, make the world any better, or enhance the human condition? Indeed, in what sense can this "debate toward [a] bottomless pit of epistemology and metaphysics" be judged pertinent, relevant, helpful, or cogent to anyone other than those foolish enough to be scholastically excited by abstract and recondite debate.[44]

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[43] Rosenau, J.N., (1980), *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy*. London: Frances Pinter, p.28.

[44] Holsti, K.J., (1993), "International Relations at the End of the Millennium," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.19,No.4, October, p.407.

Contrary to Ashley's assertions, then, a post-structural approach fails to empower the "marginalized" and in fact abandons them. Rather than analyze the political economy of power, wealth, oppression, production, or international relations, and render an intelligible understanding of these processes, Ashley succeeds in ostracising those he portends to represent by delivering an obscure and highly convoluted discourse. Consequently, if Ashley wishes to chastise structural realism for its abstractness and detachment he must be prepared also to face similar criticism, especially when he so adamantly intends his work to address the real life plight of those who "struggle" at "marginal places."

If the relevance of Ashley's project is questionable, so too is its logic and cogency. First, we might ask to what extent the post-modern "emphasis on the textual, constructed nature of the world" represents "an unwarranted extension of approaches appropriate for literature to other areas of human practice that are more constrained by an objective reality."[45] All theory is socially constructed, and realities like the state, domestic and international politics, regimes, or transnational agencies are obviously social fabrications. But to what extent is this observation of any real use? Just because we acknowledge that the state is a socially fabricated entity, or that the division between domestic and international society is arbitrarily inscribed, does not make the reality of the state magically disappear or render invisible international politics. Whether socially constructed or objectively given, the argument over the ontological status of the "state" is of no particular moment. Does this change our experience of the state, or somehow diminish the political-economic-juridical-military functions of the state? To recognize that states are not naturally inscribed but dynamic entities continually in the process

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[45] Porter, T. (1994), *op.cit*, p.115.

of being made and reimposed, and therefore culturally dissimilar, economically different and politically atypical, while perspicacious to our historical and theoretical understanding of the state, in no way detracts from its reality, practices, and consequences. Similarly, few would object to Ashley's hermeneutic interpretivist understanding of the international sphere as an artificially inscribed demarcation. But, to paraphrase Holsti again, so what? This does not make its effects any less real, diminish its importance in our lives, or admonish us from paying serious attention to it. That international politics and states would not exist without subjectivities is a banal tautology. The point, surely, is to move beyond this and study these processes. Thus, while intellectually interesting, constructivist theory is not an end point as Ashley seems to think, where we all throw up our hands and announce there are no foundations and all reality is an arbitrary social construction. Rather, it should be a means of recognizing the structurated nature of our being and the reciprocity between subjects and structures through history. Ashley, however, seems not to want to do this, but only to deconstruct the state, international politics, and international theory, on the basis that none of these is objectively given but fictitious entities that arise out of modernist practices of representation. While an interesting theoretical enterprise it is of no great consequence to the study of international politics. Indeed, structuration theory has long taken care of these ontological dilemmas that otherwise seem to preoccupy Ashley.[46]

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[46] See Giddens, A., (1986), *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley: University of California Press. See also Wendt, A.E., (1987), "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization*, Vol.41,No.3, Summer, pp.335-371, and Wendt, A.E., (1992), "Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization*, Vol.46,No.2, Spring, pp.391-426.

Relativism, Nihilism and Anti-foundationalism

While the relevance of Ashley's post-structuralist theory is cause for concern, more disconcerting is its implicit nihilism. Not unexpectedly, Ashley rejects this, insisting that his discourse is not nihilistic but anti-foundationalist. Upon closer inspection, however, this position proves both unsustainable and self-defeating. By rejecting foundationalism and all truth claims derived through the application of reason, for example, Ashley unwittingly abandons theory, knowledge, and human practices to the ether of relativism and subjectivism. And by insisting that there "is no extratextual referent that can be used as a basis for adjudicating theoretical disputes," Ashley depreciates thought, theory and knowledge to the particular outcomes of certain linguistic, interpretivist and textual techniques.[47] Consequently, Ashley is forced to conclude that truth, purpose and meaning can only be textually inferred, and never universally or eternally proclaimed. One theory becomes as good as any another theory, and a particular truth claim no better or worse than other truth claims. Objective evaluation becomes impossible, and with it any claim to a "science" of international politics. All that we might hope for is a subjective interpretivism, where, amid a vacuous intersection of texts, we each reach our own conclusions.

This position is both alarming and perplexing; alarming in that it moves us closer to the abyss of ethical relativism, and perplexing since it undermines the intelligibility, legitimacy and logic of Ashley's own writings. As Chris Brown notes, post-modern approaches end up destroying themselves. Demolishing the "thought of modernity" by rejecting foundationalism, for example, is a "self-subverting" theoretical stance, since it prevents "any new thought taking

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[47] Porter, T., (1994), *op.cit*, p.115.

the place from which the old categories have been ejected."[48] Tony Porter is even more adamant, noting that the post-structural rejection of foundationalism inevitably reduces concepts like "truth" and "reality" to subjective intertextual interpretations. Intellectual thought, let alone the possibility of an inter-subjective consensus on issues like purpose, meaning, ethics, or truth, becomes impossible. Rather than create new thought categories or knowledge systems, post-structuralists simply devolve knowledge into a series of infinitesimal individual interpretations. Yet the issue is at best a mute one. Refuting the notion of "truth" is nonsensical. As William Connolly observes: "Do you not presuppose truth (reason, subjectivity, a transcendental ethic, and so on) in repudiating it? If so, must you not endorse the standard univocally once your own presupposition is revealed to you?" Obviously, notes Connolly, the answer is a resounding "[y]es, yes, yes, yes."[49]

Nonsensical or not, however, such arguments have proven useful for destabilizing modernist narratives. Yet they invariably do the same to post-structural theory, depriving it of any non-textual means of establishing its own legitimacy and therefore forcing it to use these same discursive techniques to fortify itself. Ironically, then, the logical corollary of this endless textual deconstruction is that Ashley, like all post-structuralists, merely succeeds in deconstructing himself, having deprived himself of all referents that might establish his non-textual authenticity or the political and ethical validity of his discourse. By eschewing all foundations, all criteria of assessment, any referent that might establish the superiority of

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[48] Brown, C., (1992), *op.cit*, p.237.

[49] Connolly, W.E., (1989), "Identity and Difference in Global Politics," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, pp.339.

particular truth claims, or the ethics of certain politics, Ashley unavoidably slides into the murky waters of ethical relativism and perspectivism.

This is a curious position, however, especially when Ashley is adamant that an "emancipatory interest" is ethically superior to a "technical interest," that post-structural readings are better than modernist narratives, that modernist sensibilities commit crimes of violence and exclusion while post-modernist practices offer "boundless freedom" and inclusion, and that hermeneutic (classical) realism is preferable to structural realism. Indeed, it seems plainly absurd that Ashley can both advocate an ethical politics while castigating foundationalist epistemologies. This is either outright confusion on Ashley's part, or political deception where he wants to have his cake and eat it too.

Likewise, we might also question the extent to which understanding, political advocacy, let alone substantive action, is available to those who follow Ashley's post-structural approach. To what extent, for example, does Ashley's interpretivist view of history, truth, and meaning, reduce his discourse to a series of solipsistic statements? When Ashley writes that: *"Nothing is finally stable. There are no constants, no fixed meanings, no secure grounds, no profound secrets, no final structures or limits of history"* (my italics), isn't he really saying that we can know nothing other than what we know personally? Inter-subjective action, meaning, let alone community, would surely be impossible if we were to accept Ashley's narcissistic view of the world.[50] And doesn't this make pointless, then, the act of writing, reading, or communication? If no text is ever completed, or has fixed meanings but, instead, is a series of random

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[50] Ashley, R.K., (1987), *op.cit*, p.408.

interpretations, "none primary, all arbitrary," why does Ashley bother to commit his thoughts

to writing since they can never been communicated, only misinterpreted? As Spegele notes;

> this position is self-refuting. If all texts are incomplete, all meanings pluralistic
> and all interpretations arbitrary, these criteria would apply to Ashley's texts as
> well. If the situation were as Ashley describes it, there could never be a clearly
> discernible connection between author and text or between text and world:
> language would be purely self-referential, and all interpretations would be
> equivocal. The very notion of text would collapse.[51]

Indeed, if, as post-modernists insist, "[t]here is nothing outside the text," then the text

can only ever be understood in relation to other texts, and discourse is reduced to an endless

intertextual conversation. This, however, is hardly a satisfactory position. Chris Brown, for

example, asks; "If the chain of texts is not predetermined, does this mean that any text can be

read in the light of any other text or set of texts?"[52] Is Ashley suggesting, for instance, that

a reading of Waltz and Barbara Cartland would be a legitimate intertextual discourse on

international relations? To quote Brown again, "are there limits here, and if so, how can they

be justified" in the context of a non-foundational intertextual discourse? And in the context of

Ashley's relativity and interpretivism, why should we believe Ashley's evaluation and reading

of Waltz to be authoritative, let alone definitive? After all, Ashley denies Waltz sovereignty

over the interpretation of his texts, arguing that there are no "true" readings, only

interpretations. In short, if we believe Ashley, we arrive at a world where the "object of

knowledge — the 'transcendental signified' — disappears from view," while the "knowing subject

also disappears" and the "'author' of the text becomes redundant."[53] This is a world rife with

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[51] Spegele, R., (1992), *op.cit*, p.165.

[52] Brown, C., (1992), *op.cit*, p.216.

[53] *ibid*, pp.213, 216-217.

relativism and nihilism, where the foundations on which we might make ethical evaluations have been denied us by Ashley's illogical and self-defeating rhetoric. In the end, Ashley's discourse is destroyed not by external criticism but by the weight of his own ill conceived theoretical musings. Having divested himself of any epistemological ledge on which to secure his footing, let alone communicate his thesis, Ashley inevitably falls into his own linguistic traps. Well might we question then the ability of Ashley's post-structural challenge to move beyond rhetoric and toward substance.[54]

Questions of Intellectual Propriety in the Importation and (Mis)Representation of Ideas

In the *Modern Day Dictionary of Received Ideas*, the word post-modernism is afforded the following definition; "This word has no meaning. Use it as often as possible"![55] Undoubtedly, this is fallacious, yet in the context of Ashley's usage, deservedly so. Rather than precision, consistency, or articulation of the core concepts and values of post-modernism, Ashley has engaged in a highly selective importation of specific ideas bereft of their context and accompanying theoretical baggage. Specifically, Ashley has pillaged the deconstructive elements of post-modernism while leaving unexamined its otherwise useful, and more applicable, insights into political-economy. And for good reason. Deconstruction has accommodated Ashley's revolutionary ambition while depreciating the requirements of logic, consistency, and erudition. In Ashley's usage, "post-modernism" has become a pseudonym for intellectual anarchy, where rules no longer apply and where, in the name of revolution and "future worlds," anything goes under the logos of deconstruction.

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[54] *ibid*, p.236.

[55] Cited in *ibid*, p.219.

Consequently, post-modernism as written by post-modernists, and post-modernism as written by Ashley, are not to be confused for the same thing but represent two very different ventures. Consider, for example, Ashley's rejection of rationality. His project, quite explicitly, is to "forestall the spread of the rationalist order" so that we might engage in the "making of alternative worlds."[56] Rationality is the nemesis and post-modernism is said to reject it. Yet this is rarely the case, especially if one considers the writings of Michel Foucault. Foucault steers a middle ground on the question of rationality, seeing the "uncritical acceptance of modern rationality and its complete rejection as equally hazardous."[57] As Foucault notes, "it is extremely dangerous to say that Reason is the enemy that should be eliminated" while "it is just as dangerous to say that any critical questioning risks sending us into irrationality." For Foucault, critical thinking has to live on the border lines of these tensions and theorise the "revolving door of rationality that refers us to its necessity, to its indispensability, and at the same time to its intrinsic dangers."[58]

The subtlety of these intellectual nuances, however, are lost on Ashley. There is no critical questioning of rationality, only its complete rejection. Indeed, where Foucault came to appreciate the "critical impulse in the modern will-to-knowledge," embracing many of the elements of Enlightenment thought, Ashley seems unaware of this, suggesting Foucault and post-structuralist thought generally are dogmatically anti-Enlightenment and anti-modernist. This simply is not true, indicating either a poor understanding of post-structuralist theory, or

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[56] Ashley, R.K., (1987), *op.cit*, p.428.

[57] Best, S., & Kellner, D., (1991), *op.cit*, p.53

[58] Michel Foucault as quoted in *ibid*.

dramatic licence to re-write (or is that textually re-interpret) Foucault's writings. Thus, where

Foucault was reasoned and perspicacious in his revisionism, Ashley takes a *carte blanche* stand

against modernity; a sledge-hammer approach that seeks to destroy all and sundry in a rather

violent and pernicious assault. Where Foucault sought new theory and new approaches, Ashley

seeks only deconstruction through rejectionism. And where Foucault sought to construct new

notions of identity, Ashley offers only an old-guard commitment to revolution. The contrast

could not be starker. Rather than a commitment to understand the world, the likes of Ashley

and Walker seek only to change it as one reviewer recently put it.[59] This is not theory, but

doctrinaire revolutionary ambition disguised in the new language of post-modernism.

We should not be surprised by this however. Intellectual importations are not new in

international theory. What is new, though, is the highly selective pilfering of certain ideas that,

in the end, disfigure the theory they portend to represent while laying false claim to the kudos

of its title. Thus, as Roger Spegele points out, Ashley would like to lay claim to the title "post-

structuralist" while pretending that the importation of "deconstruction allows the suspension

of rules of logical consistency." But this is not at all apparent in the writings of post-

structuralists such as Foucault, Jean Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, or Baudrillard, who,

regardless of the efficacy of their political views, all offer highly reasoned, logically coherent

treatises.[60] Similarly, it is not apparent that these post-modernists dismiss moral

foundationalism as an epistemological basis from which to advance an ethical critique of

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[59] See Michael Wallack's review of Robert B.J. Walker's book. Wallack, M., (1994), "Review of Walker, R.B.J., (1993), *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.27,No.1, March, pp.203.-204.

[60] Spegele, R. D., (1992), *op.cit*, p.176.

modernity. Yet Ashley insists that post-structuralism rejects universality and is anti-foundationalist which "makes the very point of moral reasoning unintelligible." Even more absurd, though, as Spegele points out again, is that after rejecting the Enlightenment, epistemology, language and history, Ashley then "implies that his own project is one which seeks to develop a radically new conception of international relations based on a new epistemology and new notions of language and history." For all his post-modernist pretensions, "[t]he end result is a conception of international relations deeply entrenched in the very tensions and difficulties of the Enlightenment against which...[he]...rages so intemperately."[61] Post-modernism is not used so much as exploited; its title appropriated because of its utility in securing Ashley's political ambitions.

This point is highlighted in Ashley's apparent use of discursive techniques to deconstruct logo-centric hierarchial practices that reify binary oppositions and condition thinking in speech/writing. Derrida invented such a strategy to expose the blind spots created in certain philosophical oppositions as between that of presence and absence, or subject and object for example. Yet Ashley and Walker appropriate this technique not to highlight these blind spots or deconstruct oppositions, "but to reconstitute them into ideological splits which pit dissidents against non-dissidents" and help them "achieve certain prior political aims."[62] Roger Spegele sees this as an attempt to authenticate a certain ideological agenda which puts "dissident theory on the 'right side' of...[this]...newly reconstituted ideological divide—the side of feminist movements, ecological movements, workers' movements, etc." Rather than

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[61] *ibid*, pp.174, 177.

[62] *ibid*, pp.158-159.

obliterating binary oppositions Ashley and Walker heighten them, hoping to demonstrate to prospective readers the superiority of their discourse compared to others. Dismissing modernist, positivist, realist, and scientific theory for their foundationalism and universality, then, is a derisive tactic, and implies that "dissidence" is the new sovereign "terrain from which to view all others" and that what they have "discovered [is] the one true language outside language itself" that can arbitrate between truth claims. In the end, the very Cartesianism Ashley and Walker profess to escape engulfs them, the differences they pretend to avoid they reify, the oppositions they want to deconstruct they reinvent as ideological splits, and the foundationalism and universality of modernist theory they chastise they end up embracing in order to justify dissident thought.[63]

Conclusion

Richard Ashley concluded his "*Poverty of Neorealism*" with an "obligatory *auto-critique*," ostensibly to point out weaknesses in his critique of positivist theory.[64] It is, perhaps, fitting that I should do the same, highlighting some of the limitations implicit in my critique of Ashley.

First, I must acknowledge that any theoretical critique of Ashley's project, including this one, is destined to failure, at least in its ability to affect the course of debate within post-modernism. This problem is not endemic to the nature of the critique(s), but reflects the fact that post-modern theory is as much driven by ideological commitment as by theoretical innovation. Moreover, within international relations theory the post-modernist perspective exists

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[63] *ibid.*

[64] Ashley, R.K., (1984), "The Poverty of Neorealism," *International Organization*, Vol.38,No.2, Spring, p.281.

independently of contending approaches, hermetically isolated if only because of its specialized nomenclature and distinctive ideological hue that encloses participants in a select and self-absorbed theoretical-ideological discourse.[65] Membership to this discourse is exclusive, and limited to those who promise to take up the faith and propagate it, not critically question it. Consequently, regardless of how erudite critiques might be, or how serendipitous critical analysis proves, we can scarcely expect Ashley to be convinced by intellectual musings when they are contrary to his political ambitions. Indeed, in Ashley's writings we are confronted as much by ideological intransigence as we are debate over ontological and epistemological issues. The post-modernist/neo-realist divide is more ideological than theoretical, a battle not between contending ontologies so much as between political loyalties. The facade of ontological and epistemological debate has thus been used deceptively to shield the underlying ideological axis upon which these debates ultimately rest. For this reason, we should not be surprised that post-modernists remain unconvinced by modernist theory, or visa versa, or that each is largely uninterested in the others perspective, theory, or arguments. Those views, theories, or paradigms not in accord with ones own world view or basic values are rarely considered, let alone studied. And while Ashley would have us believe that these failings are the exclusive preserve of modernist/positivist theory, post-modernist theory too is just as guilty, having evolved in isolation, cocooned by technical nomenclature, reticent to *engage* contending perspectives in useful dialogue, and trigger happy in rejecting opposing perspectives without first understanding them.

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[65] Indeed, I would go further and argue that critiques emanating from outside the post-modernist school in international relations theory are generally either little considered, judged incommensurate, or become inaudible to post-modernists since many fail to share their ideological commitments or employ the specialized nomenclature required to gain entry to that discourse.

Of course serious theoretical engagement was never possible. Crude theoretical caricatures and fallacious argument amid outrageous allegations served only to isolate these differing perspectives as so many more "islands of theory." Post-modernist perspectives like Ashley's have thus survived and prospered if only because they have been left alone to do so. This, hopefully, is changing.

The second limitation my critique faces derives from its rationalist epistemology and the assumption of similar virtues in those theories it has engaged. In particular, I have assumed a commitment to theoretical endeavour as a means to greater understanding, and, secondly, assumed that that endeavour is utilitarian in terms of its aim to better the human condition. This is why we do theory. Indeed, I have assumed that there is a certain orderliness and purpose to theory predicated upon a rationalist tradition of inquiry and the enhancement of that tradition through contributions to knowledge. The immediate problem, though, is that many of these assumptions and commitments are not shared by Ashley. On the contrary, they are the objects of his derision. My critique, for example, has suggested that Ashley not only rejects these rationalist sentiments but has actively sought to undo them through contributing to, and exploiting, intellectual and theoretical turmoil in the discipline. Specifically, I have argued that this is part of Ashley's broader political strategy that aims to undermine the meta-theoretical fiat on which international political theory is constructed and replace it with an ideologically conceived set of political programs. Conventional critiques of post-modernist approaches are therefore limited by the fact of theoretical incommensurability and dissimilar aims and objectives. Moreover, there is no immediate solution to this dilemma save the force and quality of argument. Yet this, more than anything else, might prove Ashley's nemesis, for despite all

the rhetoric of "new" theory, "new" perspectives, "new" identities, and Ashley's wish to be judged by different criteria beyond the fray of orthodox international theory, even Ashley's offerings must eventually "stand, fall, or languish in competition with established theories...and compete with them at the level of affirmative constructions."[66] But by Ashley's own admission, he can offer us very little if, indeed, anything at all:

> The task of post-structuralist social theory is not to impose a general interpretation, a paradigm of the sovereignty of man, as a guide to the transformation of life on a global scale. In contrast to modern social theory, poststructuralism eschews grand designs, transcendental grounds, or universal projects of humankind.[67]

This we might interpret as faceless description without meaning, comment without purpose, and theory without reason. As William Connolly notes, Ashley creates a post-structuralism bereft of logic, direction, or mission, where "theory does not 'impose' a general interpretation; it does not offer 'a guide' to the 'transformation' of life 'on a global scale.'" Well might we ask, then, what does it do? After all, is this not the purpose of theory? Apparently not. It is enough for Ashley that we simply fret against "transcendental grounds," "universal projects," and "grand designs." But, as Connolly observes, by imposing

> this set of interwoven self-restrictions, Ashley may have reduced "poststructuralism" to one perpetual assignment to "invert the hierarchies" maintained in other theories. One might call this recipe for theoretical self-restriction "post-ponism." It links the inability to establish secure ontological ground for a theory with the obligation to defer indefinitely the construction of general theories of global politics. And it does so during a time when the greatest danger and contingencies in the world are global in character.[68]

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[66] Connolly, W.E., (1989), *op.cit*, p.337.

[67] Richard Ashley as quoted in *ibid*, pp.335-336.

[68] *ibid*, p.336.

Connolly makes an excellent point, taking us closer to what I think is the crux of the matter: Ashley's latent positivism. In a curious way, Ashley's theoretical offerings can perhaps be explained if we understand him not as a post-modernist so much as a *despondent positivist*. At first, this suggestion seems ludicrous. But consider for a moment Ashley's defining preoccupations: an acute anxiety over the lack of any universal, foundational, non-textual referents able to arbitrate between truth claims, and undue concern with the necessity for secure ontological ground as a requisite for theory building. To say the least, these concerns display an excessive preoccupation with positivist precepts and correspondence theories of truth. More importantly, though, it extends the evidentiary requirements of the positivist canon by such an unreasonable measure as to obviate the possibility of it ever being satisfied. Thus, indirectly, Ashley's turn to subversive post-modernism is precipitated not by his attraction to it so much as the necessity of embracing it because of exacting positivist precepts. And this, in the end, unavoidably forces Ashley toward the chasm of nihilism and relativism precisely because of his imposition of overly rigid positivist criteria. What, for many, might have remained a mild case of "cartesian anxiety," a problematic question mark around the issue of ontological precision, for Ashley became a preoccupation that manifested into paranoia and ended in nihilism.

But regardless of the pathology or aetiological route that caused Ashley to arrive at subversive post-modernism, important questions remain of his thesis. How, for example, is this meant to help those on the "margins," the poor, the weak, and the powerless, for whom Ashley professes great concern? How does it help those who seek answers as practitioners and theorists of international relations? If it is meant to empower feminists, scholars of colour, and

other persons who have suffered so-called disciplinary "violence," how precisely does it intend to do this? If it cannot chart new directions, resists the modernist urge to guide and assist us in our dilemmas, refuses to confer "general interpretations" and enhance our understanding, how might it better our well being or resolve conflict and atrocity? What precisely does Ashley lay claim to do? Apart from seeking the closure of modernity, what does Ashley suggest we put in its place, or is it simply a question of leaving empty the space vacated by modernist theory and knowledge?

These questions alone are cause for concern, and if post-modernism is to have any legacy at all it is these questions that must be answered. However, as I have endeavoured to demonstrate in this chapter, Ashley does not answer these questions but, instead, derides those who ask them. It is perhaps time to resist such derision and return to these questions, since in the absence of posing them we surrender the purpose of theory, its meaning, utility, and progress, indeed the study of international relations, to those who would pretend that these issues are no longer of any importance.

Introduction

> Eschewing any claim to secure grounds, the appropriate posture would aspire to an overview of international history in the making, a view from afar, a view up high. The appropriate posture is disposed to a view very much like that of Michel Foucault's *genealogical* attitude: "a form of history which accounts for the constitution of knowledge, discourses, domains of knowledge, etc..."
>
> From a distant genealogical standpoint, what catches the eye is motion, discontinuities, clashes, and the ceaseless play of plural forces and plural interpretations on the surface of the human experience. Nothing is finally stable. There are no constants, no fixed meanings, no secure grounds, no profound secrets, no final structures or limits of history. Seen from afar, there is only interpretation, and interpretation itself is comprehended as a practice of domination occurring on the surface of history. History itself is grasped as a series of interpretations imposed upon interpretations—none primary, all arbitrary.[1]

Theory is dead. Long live theory! As Nicholas Onuf notes, "[f]or all his talk of theory, Ashley cannot do theory without doing what is incorrigibly implicated in the Western project he would cast off."[2] Indeed, there is a baleful and malicious irony in using theory to disparage theory, in attacking Western rationalism with its own tools, and in denouncing Enlightenment thinking through a discourse informed by Enlightenment thinking. As Fred Halliday would doubtlessly observe of the above excerpt from Ashley:

> Here it all is: The mannered invocation of the Parisian; the confused salad of theoretical approaches; the ingenuously declared naivety about the difference between the domains of literary criticism and social science.[3]

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[1] See Ashley, R.K., (1987), "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.12,No.4, pp.408-409.

[2] Onuf, N.G., (1989), *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p.11.

[3] Halliday, F., (1994), *Rethinking International Relations*. Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia Press, p.41.

International Relations, it seems, has been forced into celebrating the divinities of literary criticism, where, "[f]or the latter, criticism and not politics is its primary vocation, and the notion that one reads for pleasure its deepest claim."[4] We are, apparently, condemned to read, to play with words, to "interpret" without purpose, and to sit amid a solipsistic "intertext" where words, meanings, referents, signifiers, authors and subjects, have no meaning or reality other than those we construct individually. With the knowledge that there is no "true" knowledge because of the absence of "secure ground" upon which to build knowledge, the Enlightenment project is to be abandoned, our time squandered away in linguistic play as "floating signifiers" vie for our attention among the "simulacra" of images that each of us consume. Now that we know that we cannot know, the task at hand devolves into one of repudiating the entire stock of knowledge, understanding and practices that constitute International Relations, and developing, instead, a historical amnesia that favours "a view from afar, from up high."[5] Rhetorical subversion, textual deconstruction and parody are to be our new methodological motifs. Even "interpretation," Ashley insists, a method permissible to most post-modernists, must eventually be abandoned "along with theory."[6] Ultimately, for Ashley, "...there is no there there..." to be explained, and since "interpretation" is but another method of affixing intrinsic meaning to a metaphysical non-reality, it too must go. In Ashley's world,

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[4] Onuf, N.G., (1989), *op.cit*, p.12.

[5] Ashley, R.K., (1987), "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.12,No.4, p.408.

[6] Onuf, N.G., (1989), *op.cit*, p.12. As Ashley notes, post-structuralism "...is not especially interested in — it in fact distrusts — 'interpretation,' if by interpretation one means the attempt to recover and fix a meaning intrinsic to a particular text or set of practices." See Ashley, R.K., (1989), "Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, p.278.

nothing waits to be discovered, nothing has intrinsic meaning, nothing is actually present other than "absence," and hence nothing can be named. The "state" does not really exist, subjects are merely transcendental fabrications who chase their "empty identity throughout history," and history is merely an "interpretation," yet another "practice of domination."[7] Within this nihilistic chasm, Ashley's "project" devolves into a form of philosophical mentalism; an attempt

> ...to resist the metaphysical temptation present in our culture, to assume that something so important must be nameable and that the name must indicate a definite referent, an already differentiated identity and source of meaning that just awaits to be named.[8]

Only minds situated amid their various contexts exist, and reality is constituted not through the "realm of immediate sense experience" or "by direct observation of an independently existing world of 'facts,'" but through the thoughts of the mind.[9] Consequently, as Ashley freely admits, his post-modern project can claim very little, if indeed anything at all. In fact as Ashley notes, he "cannot claim to offer an alternative position or perspective, because there is no ground upon which it might be established."[10] Instead, what Ashley offers us is

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[7] Ashley, R.K., (1987), "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.12,No.4, p.408.

[8] Ashley, R.K., (1991), "The State of the Discipline: Realism Under Challenge," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (eds.), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives on an Evolving Discipline*. Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National University, p.65.

[9] George, J., (1988), "The Study of International Relations and the Positivist/Empiricist Theory of Knowledge: Implications for the Australian Discipline," in Higgott, R., (ed.), *New Directions in International Relations?: Australian Perspectives*. Canberra: Department of International Relations, The Australian National University, pp.78-81.

[10] Ashley, R.K., (1989), "Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War," in Der Derian, J., & Shapiro, M.J., (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, p.278.

an endless inter-textual discourse predicated on the consumption of words, their interpretation, and the thoughts they evoke. Locked away in our own various mental prisons, incarcerated because of the imperfection of language in the precise transmission of words, concepts, ideas, facts and theories, our individual knowledge is limited to a mental domain that no one else can access. Thus, we live in a world of relativistic knowledge claims, each "true" to those that think it, but its truthfulness unobtainable to those who would read it or wish to communicate it.

We could, then, conclude this chapter here, by taking Ashley's declarations literally and noting that post-modernist theory offers no intellectual legacy, offers no interpretations, no alternative perspectives, is not a theory of international relations, disparages theory that claims to "fix" meaning or understanding, offers only a method that claims knowledge impossible, reifies words over human actions, and sees writing an act of play without purpose. Were this all to Ashley's "legacy" then those of us in International Relations would be unconcerned, if not delighted. Indeed, of themselves, Ashley's writings would be unremarkable and completely pointless musings. Plainly, however, they are not if only because of the exceptional haste with which so many have joined this "project." Be it fad or fancy, or as Allon White argues, "purified anarchism in a perpetual state of self-dispersal," post-modernism now counts as a sub-field of International Relations, albeit one that purports to transgress disciplinary boundaries and remain free of the constraints of "discipline."[11]

This chapter explores the legacy of Ashley's ill conceived form of post-modernism and the "sub-field" he inspired; what it has done, and threatens to do, to the discipline. More

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[11] As quoted in *ibid*, p.284.

generally, this chapter is a corrective to the preceding three chapters; an attempt to regain sight of International Relations other than as a playground for post-modernist lexicographers. My discussion comes in three parts. The first turns to a discussion of the functions of theory in International Relations, in an attempt to impart some sense of what theory ought to be about, ought to look like, and what we can reasonably expect theory to do. All too often, "theory" in International Relations is an ill defined creature, and the word itself used so loosely as to render it meaningless. Consequently, International Relations has largely surrendered its ability to assess the relative worth of "theoretical" contributions, assuming perspectivism and intellectual pluralism theoretical approaches in themselves. This, however, is far from ideal, bestowing legitimacy on all and sundry that would masquerade as "theory" if only because the word itself is used. While tolerance for contrasting perspectives is a virtue, indeed the essence of intellectual discourse, that discourse nonetheless needs to be conducted amid a set of standards that can discriminate between sophistry and genuine theoretical debate. In the absence of such standards, International Relations will surely devolve into a perspectivist menagerie, and our sense of discipline crumble as it becomes yet more difficult to discern an intellectual focus, purpose, or essence to our enterprise. My discussion thus attempts to offer some criteria for evaluating theories in International Relations, and post-modernism more specifically.

The second section of the chapter looks at the damage wrought by Ashley in terms of the false agenda he has embroiled International Relations in. In particular, I suggest that post-modernism in International Relations, largely because of Ashley, has evolved only one dominant motif, subversion or deconstruction, to the detriment of its other, and perhaps more

useful thematic applications. And the third section looks briefly at the more productive avenues International Relations might pursue within the ambit of post-modern theory.

The Functions of Theory

Perhaps one of the best means of assessing Ashley's contributions to the study of international relations, and of that variety of post-structuralist "theory" that he advocates, is to pose the questions of what it is we mean by theory and what it is we expect theory to do. We rarely ask such questions in International Relations if only because they prove deceptively difficult to answer. Indeed, this is true of the social sciences and humanities generally where the word "theory" is bandied about so imprecisely as to render its meaning obtuse. It has become common parlance, for example, to interchange the word "theory" with that of perspective, approach, paradigm, method, or even opinion. Students and professors alike often predicate statements with "my theory on this matter is...," when what they are actually expressing is an individual belief rather than a theory. Yet few would agree that this is what we mean when we think of "theory." By theory we mean something much more reasoned and perspicacious than simply an opinion or perspective. Implicitly, each of us knows that a theory is a potent instrument comprised of reasoned argument, observation, reflection, logical associations, and perhaps prediction.[12] It represents, as Nicholas Onuf notes, "[o]ne of the crowning achievements of the West over the past several centuries,' and is understood not only

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[12] For a related discussion of the nature of "theory", see the excellent article by Aron, R., (1967), "What is a Theory of International Relations?," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.21,No.2, pp.185-206. See also Bull, H., (1972), "The Theory of International politics, 1919-1969," in Porter, B., (ed.), *The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics, 1919-1969*. London: Oxford University Press, pp.30-55.

as an "enterprise," but also "as an idea and objective" whose purpose is to systematise "what we think we know about the world and ourselves" in order to provide a basis for judgement.[13]

Arguably, however, in International Relations there is a relative dearth of such theory, and what theory there is is often lost amid a preponderance of ideologically informed opinions that masquerade as "theoretical" endeavours. Indeed, one of the unfortunate characteristics of our field, as Chris Brown reluctantly admits, is the lack of a stock of theoretical knowledge such that "each writer [on international theory] is more or less obliged to re-invent the subject from scratch..."[14] Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach tend to agree, seeing theory in International Relations a scarce creature, with each generation of graduate students reinventing the wheel as they plunder the "'old theories' home" often unaware of the historical lineage of the ideas they borrow.

In International Relations we seem averse to building stocks of knowledge, preferring, instead, to clean out house periodically and start anew. Under this formula, old knowledge cannot be relevant knowledge, and "new" knowledge is assumed to be better. The "Great Debates" have thus arrived with perennial regularity, heralding "new" frameworks and theories as we yet again spring clean the discipline, disposing of anything in danger of becoming permanent. The result is an ever present need to (re)invent; one that often generates banal insights of previously explained phenomena but with new labels and increasingly technical jargon. Increasingly, "practitioners find themselves unable to understand the scholarly literature in international relations and, therefore, make little use of it:" a fact that Ferguson and

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[13] Onuf, N.G., (1989), *op.cit*, p.11.

[14] Brown, C., (1992), *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches*. Hertfordshire, England: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p.1.

Mansbach think just as well, since were this not the case these same practitioners "might decide that the emperor is indeed naked."[15] Arguably, novelty, rearticulation, and reinvention have themselves become prized academic pursuits, often to the detriment of explanation, analysis, and the deepening of our theoretical knowledge. We have only to scan the literature on international relations to see how faddish have attempts at theory construction become. Methodologically, we have run the gamut of traditional-classical, behaviouralist, and now reflectivist approaches, and theoretically an entire volume of "theories" have been invented: functionalism, systems theory, linkage politics, dependency theory, world system theory, complex interdependence, long cycles theory, integration theory, and regime theory, just to name a few.

Doubtlessly, we have come a long way since the founding of the discipline, yet in other ways we have travelled no distance at all. Brown is quite correct to suggest that each of us nearly always ends up at the beginning, if not reinventing the wheel then at least walking in a circle. This perpetual need to know where to begin and end our project, where to place our disciplinary markers and hang our theoretical hats, seems never to be answered satisfactorily. Students of economics, for example, can start with Adam Smith and *The Wealth of Nations*; sociologists with Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx; political philosophers with Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle. But where do students of international relations begin and what theoretical tools do they begin with? Are we to study theories of international relations, diplomatic history, interstate rivalry or cooperation, the structure of global politics, decision

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[15] Ferguson, Y.H., & Mansbach, R.W., (1988), *The Elusive Quest: Theory and International Politics*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p.3.

making and foreign policy, trade, regimes, international law, strategic studies, international organization, international political-economy, or the nation-state-as-actor? The short and most obvious answer is yes, we are to study them all, and no we cannot possibly study them all as individual scholars. Hence the problem with theory: a theory of what, for whom, to do what precisely, and how and why? Like Ferguson and Mansbach, I too have just reinvented the wheel, begun at the beginning, and find myself, like Brown noted, starting from scratch. And perhaps the end of our project lies in the fact that it leads us back to the beginning, to those basic ontological and epistemological questions they lead back onto themselves. This, perhaps, is the Socratic lesson. The end is in the beginning; in redefining the wheel so that it better explains what it is we are trying to do, want to accomplish and hope to achieve. For these are not necessarily persistent and recurrent objectives. On the contrary, they change, but only at the procedural level. Systemically, at least, international relations displays remarkable continuity, most recently in terms of the nation-state, and historically in terms of the search for security among contrasting epistemic communities. The variations in theory, method, and perspective, come not from these relatively continuous patterns of recurrence and repetition in our epistemic relationships, but in the procedural-methodological approaches that change depending upon context and as we seek constantly better to explain these relationships.

Thus, theory in International Relations must be understood in this context, and its perpetual reinvention a result not only of "change and debate within the subject itself," but an effect of the "influence of new ideas within other areas of social science" as well as "the impact of developments in the [real] world..."[16] Theory, after all, is a social construction,

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[16] Halliday, F., (1994), *op.cit*, p.7.

prone to social pressures, needs and wishes, and has meaning only insofar as it is constructed in these contexts. This is evident enough in International Relations, a subject whose very being was born of a social-politic sickened by the First World War, alarmed at its recurrence in the Second World War, and matured under the Cold War, which, as Fred Halliday points out, has "shaped its focuses at least as much as inter-paradigm disputes."[17] We perhaps forget how much theory is driven by social need, real or perceived, and how attentive we are to these demands for relevance, diagnosis, prescription, action and solution. Nor is this wrong. I for one do not claim theory for its own sake: to "read for pleasure" or to delight in "intertextuality" is a past-time, not a pursuit, and its concerns are rightly situated among the humanities that nurtures such arts. International Relations, on the other hand, is not situated within the social sciences by pure chance; it has a social charter no matter how irresolutely it is sometimes stated or how buried it seems amid the vernacular of formal theory, rational actor models and the language of science and technical jargon. Indeed, it is amid this social charter—one that might be defined as the search for peace, the maintenance of order, the avoidance of war, and the establishment of community—that we can begin to put together the discipline of International Relations in all its varieties.[18]

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[17] *ibid.*

[18] Although he does not use the term "social charter," Kalevi Holsti makes much the same argument, noting that: "While some may argue that we have organized a field called international relations/politics because the phenomena are 'there,' the truth is that we study them because of a deeply held normative concern about the problem of war." As Holsti notes, "[v]irtually every writer who has helped develop the filed has been animated by this concern, including Hobbes, Grotius, Erasmus, Vattel, Saint-Pierre, Rousseau, Kant, and the moderns. Each has made some sort of implicit or explicit statement about the causes of war and, perhaps more prolifically, has proposed some sort of solution to the problem..." See Holsti, K.J., (1985), *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, p.8.

Fred Halliday, for example, conceives of international relations as a constellation of three essential elements: "...the inter-state, the transnational and the systemic..." These, he notes, "allow of many specializations and varying theoretical approaches."[19] Within this ambit, the various sub-fields or specializations each addresses one of these "constituent elements:" decision making and foreign policy, for example, concerns the "inter-state" aspect of international relations; international organization the "systemic;" and international political-economy the "transnational." While separated by their specialization, all these approaches are united under a common disciplinary roof; a composite rubric that is defined, albeit imprecisely, by the social charter that underlies the motivation of our scholarship. At times, of course, this is far from evident if only because the nature of specialist sequestration obscures the larger meta-theoretical project all of us are engaged in. Just as preoccupation with a particular tree obscures from view the forest, so too does exclusive preoccupation with one branch of international relations cloud from view the discipline as a whole. This, perhaps, is what makes for our perennial sense of "crisis" in International Relations. As we occasionally look up from our particular specialisation we see only an immense blackness and become anxious about where precisely we fit into this grander disciplinary project and how we are connected to other specializations. Cries of perspectivism, disintegration and pluralism, make us seem like so many obtuse interests competing for attention as we hurriedly go about our research agendas unsure of how, and if, they all fit together. Our disciplinary house assumes the character of a divided one as we add yet more rooms whose perspectives and concerns are rarely known to

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[19] Halliday, F., (1994), *op.cit*, p.8.

others in the house, busied as they are with their own vistas and perspectives from their own rooms.

Arguably, however, this is not a crisis in the discipline so much as a failure to codify and map the parameters of our disciplinary house, its various rooms and their particular views.[20] Ours is not a static disciplinary dwelling but a dynamic one. We add and demolish rooms, refurbish, redecorate and remodel with ever increasing rapidity. The architectural specifications of our home are constantly changing, and the conduits and hallways that connect the rooms are often poorly specified or simply assumed and left unexplained. Indeed, disciplinary renovations often proceed without recourse to architectural blueprints, prompted more often than not by empirical developments than they are by theoretical innovations. Theory in International Relations frequently comes after the fact: we did not observe realism, for example, we saw war, anarchy and insecurity and developed realist theory to explain these. Similarly, atop these "three constituent elements" of international relations and the various specializations and approaches they harbour, theory too must be imposed to make sense of their interrelationships, to expose the conduits between them, and make apparent the connection of each approach to the broader disciplinary project.[21]

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[20] In a similar way, Hedley Bull viewed the "...house of International Relations as having many mansions, and many different views of the world, each coherent, plausible, and intellectually defensible." See the discussion in Richardson, J.L., (1990), "The Academic Study of International Relations," in Miller, J.D.B., & Vincent, R.J., (eds.), *Order and Violence: Hedley Bull and International Relations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.141. See also, Bull, H., (1972), "International Relations as an Academic Pursuit," *Australian Outlook*, Vol.26,No.3, December, pp.251-265. And, Holsti, K.J., (1989), "Rooms and Views: Perspectives on the Study of International Relations," in Kruzel, J., & Rosenau, J.N., (eds.), *Journeys Through World Politics: Autobiographical Reflections of Thirty-four Academic Travelers*. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, pp.27-40.

[21] A more encompassing discussion of many of these themes can be found in Hoffmann, S., (1960), "International Relations as a Discipline," in Hoffmann, S., (ed.), *Contemporary Theory in International Relations*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, pp.1-12. See also the brief discussion in Neufeld, M., (1992), "The Pedagogical Is Political: The 'Why', the 'What' and the 'How' in the Teaching of World Politics," in

This is the function of theory in International Relations, a means of emplacing conceptual linkages upon a subject matter whose very nature divaricates into numerous issue areas. The task of theory might thus be seen as the process of codification of the discipline's social charter: an awkward meta-theoretic project that analyses not only the "oughts" of international theory but also the "facts," and in doing so attempts to reconcile these two pursuits within an enterprise that undertakes empirical investigations of international realities but set amid a desire to contribute to normative objectives that aim to better these realities. Practically speaking, Halliday suggests this involves the "theorisation of these three [constituent] elements;" the nature of their interrelationship, the mutual effects of each on the others, and the effect of historical change on the dynamics of these interrelationships *vis a vis* their social, political, and economic consequences. In this way, the function of theory becomes not only the task of explaining international history, but a project of educating and forewarning of the dangers of repeating certain aspects of that history. The latter is a normative process involving ethical considerations about future worlds, and of making argument and convincing others that these future worlds should indeed be made. The functions of theory are thus two fold: i.) a desire to know, understand, and explain international phenomena, not simply for their own sake but in the context of; ii.) a desire to shape, manipulate, and control certain aspects of international relations in the hope that those aspects which cause harm can be avoided. Kimberly Hutchings describes this "dual" aspect of our enterprise this way:

> International relations is one of the areas of social science which most clearly brings home the tensions involved in the dual relations of inquirer to object of inquiry, as both scientific observer and moral judge, particularly in times of war.

Gonick, L.S., & Weisband, E., (eds.), *Teaching World Politics: Contending Pedagogies for a New World Order*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, pp.83-97.

As social scientists, we are required to understand and explain our object, as moral beings, we are required to judge or evaluate it.[22]

This, perhaps, is what makes the study and theory of international relations fuzzy, or what Nick Rengger described as international relations' "irreducible fluidity and contextuality, the sense that its centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere."[23] Imposing rigid boundaries upon so nebulous an exercise as normative discussion of future worlds or of critical reflections upon present ones (the "ought" of international theory), is obviously an inappropriate response, reminding us that those who attempt closure commit "a massive violation of Aristotle's injunction not to try to treat a subject with a degree of exactness it will not admit of." [24] The normative/moral/critical aspects of international theory must necessarily be allowed freedom to roam the corridors of idealism and critical reflection, thinking about how we think, and writing about how we write. But this is not an invitation to stray from the *purpose* of this enterprise; an attempt to think critically about how we understand, and how, through understanding, we might realize better worlds. Normative theory too has a certain circumference, an outer limit beyond which its concerns cease to be those of International Relations. To admit as much is not to "marginalise" certain approaches as post-modernists accuse, but to recognise that some issues begin to fall outside the purview of our discipline.

The problem, of course, is how to centre our discipline and decide what its purview is. This too, however, is the task of theory, one that must recognize that definition of our

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[22] Hutchings, K., (1992), "The Possibility of Judgement: Moralizing and Theorizing in International Relations," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.18,No.1, January, p.51.

[23] Rengger, N.J., (1990), "The Fearful Sphere of International Relations," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.16, p.361.

[24] Taylor, C., (1980), "Formal Theory in Social Science," *Inquiry*, Vol.23,No.2, June, p.139.

discipline is a constant process precisely because, contextually speaking, its concerns and issues change due to their historical contingency. Unlike other social sciences, the boundaries of our field are thematically and intellectually porous. Certainly there is a systemic mantel upon which International Relations rests, but upon this the socially constructed nature of international politics causes variation and difference that theory must take account of. Ian Bell describes this as the perennial "tension between structure and history in the study of international relations...," which, he notes, renders extremely complex an understanding of the reflexive ontological relationship "between the individual and society or, put differently, between action and structure."[25]

This particular axiom might be seen as the point of contention between post-modernists who favour social constructivism, and Realists who favour structure. More specifically, the contention here is over the nature of theory in terms of representation: does theory represent reality or, does theory in the process of representation itself, construct it? Depending upon one's disposition, ontology or epistemology is favoured as the appropriate theoretical axiom on which to base knowledge. My point would be that neither school has bridged the gulf between these two approaches successfully.[26] Post-modernists largely ignore structure seeing

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[25] Bell, I., (1992), "International Relations Theory and Social Theory: Critique and Reconstruction," *Mimeograph*, Paper presented at the panel, "Critical International Theory and the New World Order", 33rd Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, March 31-April 4, pp.2 & 6. The practical difficulties of studying international relations in terms of the structure/actor dialectic is addressed in Ruggie J.G., (1989), "International Structure and International Transformation: Space, Time and Method," in Czempiel, E.O., & Rosenau, J.N., (eds.), *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s.* Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, pp.21-36.

[26] One of the few people who has attempted such a synthesis is Alexander Wendt. See Wendt, A.E., (1987), "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization*, Vol.41,No.3, Summer, pp.335-371. Wendt, A.E., (1992), "Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization*, Vol.46,No.2, Spring, pp.391-426.

agents free wills constituted by a series of intertexts, and argue that the basis of explanation and understanding does not lie in theory that turns to a world of ontological fact, but in the way in which interpretation, perception, and the recombination of ideas, words and meanings, come to comprise epistemological narratives and grand interpretive constructs of history. Realists, on the other hand, have tended to favour structural interpretations, sometimes forgetting the importance of agency in terms of historical change, and argue that "ontology precedes epistemology." As Roger Spegele notes;

> ...it is only on the basis of a discursive argument leading to some sort of consensus concerning what [international relations] is that we shall be able to arrive at any intelligible methodological prescriptions about how, ideally, it should be studied.[27]

The nodal points for intellectual investigation in the discipline, then, tend to divaricate from two essential positions; epistemological investigation as with post-modernists, and ontological explanation as with realists. The latter, in particular, has had an important influence upon theorizing in the discipline, tending to focus upon *ontology as theory* rather than *theory as epistemology* as the post-modernists would have it.

Martin Wight, for example, understood the study of international relations and the incidence of normative theory to be mutually exclusive; the former not a theoretical province since it was concerned with the base human instincts of power and survival. Power, statecraft and diplomacy, had simply to be observed, described and recorded. If theoretical considerations were to enter the study of international relations, they were to be merely ontological ones over the appropriate units and levels of analysis. Much "theoretical" debate in International Relations

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[27] Spegele, R., (1982), "From the Incoherence of Systems Theory to a Philosophy of International Relations," *Review of Politics*, Vol.44,No.4, October, p.584. For a further discussion see the forceful argument in Kress, P.F., (1979), "Against Epistemology: Apostate Musings," *Journal of Politics*, Vol.41,No.2, May, pp.526-542.

has therefore centred on the explication of what it is we are, or should be, studying. Description has preceded explanation. Ontological debate has constituted theoretical discourse, largely precluding epistemological considerations or issues of the sociology of knowledge.[28] Enunciating the distinct domain and practices of international politics, and those entities operative within it, has defined the task of theory. Realism, for example, the doctrine that understands international politics as the play of power-relations between sovereign units in an anarchic system, assumes ontological description the first order of theory: what cannot be first described cannot be explained. As David Dessler argues, ontology is prescient to explanation, and is the "basis of a theory's explanatory power." Ontology defines "the concrete referents of an explanatory discourse." It "consists of the real-world structures (things, entities) and processes posited by the theory and invoked in the theory's explanations."[29] But for Realists, ontology is not merely descriptive. It also has an explanatory appeal that lies in the processes of causality it establishes between "certain designated kinds of things" and the "connections or relations between them."[30] Thus, for Realists, the ontological description of international politics is both means and ends: the observation of the nation-state-as-actor, the identification of anarchy and the pursuit of power as "structured entities," and a description of the "connections or relations between" nation-states via the ontological presumption of sovereignty and contending interests in a situation of anarchy, enables an explanation of the causes of war,

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[28] See, for example, the discussion in Biersteker, T.J., (1989), "Critical Reflections on Post-Positivism in International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33,No.3, September, p.265.

[29] Dessler, D., (1989), "What's at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?," *International Organization*, Vol.43.No.3, Summer, p.445.

[30] *ibid.*

the aims of diplomacy, the need for security. Theories, as Waltz argues, "show why associations obtain."[31] "Theory is a picture, mentally formed, of a bounded realm or domain of activity. A theory is a depiction of the organization of a domain and of the connections among its parts."[32] Obviously, the crowning achievement of International Relations as ontology is Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*.

There are, of course, problems with ontologically derived forms of theory. Post-modernists naturally dismiss this conception of theory and are not entirely wrong for doing so. Realism is not above criticism, and structural-realism even more so.[33] But then again, neither is post-modernism! But this is not the point. I am not here attempting to defend realism against post-modernism or to dismiss post-modernism entirely from the purview of International Relations. Rather, what I am attempting to do is defend the institution of *theory* against post-modernism, which, in its more virulent forms, aims at its deconstruction and obliteration. So too, am I attempting to defend the ontological aspect of theory against those who would engage exclusively in epistemological debate. For there to be theory in International Relations, ontological description must be the first order of things; without first defining the domain of International Relations, identifying those entities and things we wish to explain and understand, epistemological debate would be altogether pointless. Save for this, the discipline threatens to transpose itself into philosophy and not International Relations, to be condemned to perpetual metaphysical reflection but without reference to the social world we are attempting to

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[31] Waltz, K. (1979), *Theory of International Politics*, New York: Random House, p.5.

[32] *ibid*, p.8.

[33] See, for example, the discussion in Ferguson, Y.H., & Mansbach, R.W., (1988), *The Elusive Quest: Theory and International Politics*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, pp.79-108.

understand. Of course, this does not exonerate us from previous mistakes. International Relations, largely because of the dominance of positivism in the discipline, has, in the past, been apt to ontological description in the absence of epistemological reflection. Practitioners in the discipline have rarely seen a need to question the epistemological basis of their scholarship as Thomas Biersteker forcefully acknowledged.[34] Yet, as he also reminds us, developing theory and generating knowledge requires judicious use of both ontological description and epistemological explanation. These are not mutually exclusive dimensions of theoretical discourse, but the elemental ingredients necessary to the construction of discourse itself. Indeed, the exclusive focus upon one dimension to the detriment of the other, probably explains why, according to William Kreml and Charles Kegley, "[i]nternational relations research today...has failed to reach agreement about several fundamental issues:"

> (1) the central questions to be asked, (2) the basic units of analysis (e.g., states or nonstate actors), (3) the levels of analysis at which various questions should be explored, (4) the methods by which hypotheses should be tested and unwarranted inferences prevented, (5) the criteria by which theoretical progress is to be judged, and (6) how inquiry should be organized in order to generate the knowledge that will lead to international peace, prosperity, and justice.[35]

As should be obvious, these issues contain both ontological and epistemological dimensions, reminding us that the road to theory in International Relations is both long and hard and involves examining "...not only what it is that we know but how it is that we know it."[36]

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[34] See Biersteker, T.J., (1989), *op.cit.*

[35] Kreml, W.P., & Kegley Jr., C.W., (1990), "Must the Quest be Elusive? Restoring Ethics to Theory Building in International Relations," *Alternatives*, Vol.15,No.2, p.155.

[36] *ibid*, p.169.

The Dysfunctions of Theory

If my preceding discussion of "theory" in International Relations is in any way to prove useful, it is at the level of demonstrating why Richard Ashley's contributions, and of those who he has inspired, fall short of the mark. As should now be obvious, to talk of "theory" in International Relations and subversive post-modernism in the same sentence, borders on the oxymoronic. By their own admission, subversive post-modernists are not merely suspect of "theory" in its modernist/orthodox configurations, but antithetic to its very idea. Consequently, far from contributing to the realization of theoretical understanding and explanation, or to the resolution of the many problems tacit in international relations, subversive post-modernists identify theory itself as the problem, and deconstruction its solution. Indeed, the discourse that Ashley inspired has managed to reorient attention away from the problems implicit in international politics—issues of war, inequality, security, peace, order, and so forth—and to suggest, instead, that a resolution of such problems lies not in their study or appreciation, but in the manner in which theory as a means of representation and the purposes for which it is pursued and appropriated by certain groups, orchestrates and reproduces these realities. Realists, it seems, make realism, insecurity and cause war, much the same way as tailors make suits and chefs prepare meals. Realists are not representing reality through realism, but constructing realist practices through theoretical representation. Cause, effect, action and structure, are all caught up in a vicious hermeneutic circle. For Ashley, the aetiological order of things thus looks something like this: an idea is born, a belief ingrained, a practice made, an effect caused, and reality thus manifested. Theory, for Ashley, becomes the conduit that effects this etiological route and, in the process, a tool that is frequently captured so as to

legitimate certain practices and realize certain realities. This, obviously, is radical social constructivism run awry, and ignores completely the structured realities we all face as social agents. The enemy becomes those who think realism, and the solution, for Ashley at least, lies in shooting the theoretical messenger, since it is theory that represents these thoughts and manifests them into practices. Thus Ashley's call to "think differently," to "transgress disciplinary boundaries" and invert the practices and effects of modernist theory and its rationalist premises.

Obviously, such a challenge presupposes not just the deconstruction of theory, but also those professional and disciplinary bodies engaged in its production. The discipline and its practitioners too, Ashley argues, are duplicitous co-conspirators in a project he thinks remonstrative because of the interests it serves. Indeed, whether at the level of clarifying the discipline's social charter, or of attempting an explanation and understanding of international relations in terms of ontological explications of its constituent components, Ashley's offerings merely disparage the posing of such questions and the research they engender. This is not unexpected. Ashley's discourse is, after all, premised on a kind of anti-otological deconstruction of all foundational knowledge claims, including those practices, entities and intellectual constructions that have traditionally guided research and explanation in the discipline. For Ashley, there is nothing upon which to build "theory" save a series of moving interpretations that can never be fixed in time, place or space, because of the metaphysical non-reality of all foundational propositions. This we might interpret as Ashley's declaration that there is nothing to believe in since "...there is no there there"[37]—no peace, no war, no

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[37] Ashley, R.K., (1987), "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.12,No.4, pp.403-434

inequality, no injustice, just fabrications of interpretations manifested into practices that orthodox theorists mistake for reality: a position, we must conclude, that denies any possibility for a productive dialogue between subversive post-modernists and orthodox practitioners. These two projects are not simply dissimilar, but utterly incommensurate.

More telling, though, than the apparent intellectual gulf that divides these approaches is the political rift that separates them. Arguably, the interlocution between subversive post-modernists and orthodox practitioners, is not founded on theoretical or epistemological differences so much as political ones. Robert Keohane's desire for a theoretical synthesis of these contending approaches thus proves both naive and altogether useless, especially when it is realized that Ashley's attacks stem from a deep political suspicion not only of the discipline, but toward the implicit project it harbours and the political-sectional interests Ashley thinks it represents.[38] In this light, then, and as I have argued throughout this thesis, subversive post-modernism is best understood as a *neo*-theoretical tool for inflicting damage upon a discipline that Ashley would see done away with: a spanner in the works, so to speak, that, much like sabotage, threatens to clog the wheels of theoretical endeavour and reconstitute this machine in decidedly political-partisan terms. Hence the need for vigilance, or, more precisely, standards, in the evaluation of "theory" and of the various "theoretical" importations that are frequently attempted in the discipline. If only because of a liberal tolerance for intellectual dissonance, International Relations has been welcoming of all schools of thought and all perspectives. I for one support this, believing it to be the embodiment of intellectual discourse and progress. Yet this has to be reconciled amid a notion of discipline, one that demands some

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[38] See the discussion in Keohane, R.O., (1988), "International Institutions: Two Approaches," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.32,No.4, pp.382-393.

degree of conformity in terms of subject matter, aims, approach and theory, save the very essence of our discipline dissipates into an intellectual free-for-all where anything goes, anything counts as theory, and where everything is assumed to fall within the purview of International Relations. This is simply not true, and most definitely inappropriate. To be sure, intellectual innovations are nearly always controversial, the seeding of new ideas is frequently derided as obtuse or unrelated, often requiring time to germinate and thereby grow and mature. But never are intellectual innovations attempts at deconstructing the basis of intellectuality by suggesting theoretical closure through deconstruction, or by initiating witch hunts that threaten to hunt down those implicated in the so-called "modernist project." Such "projects" fail the test of theory, falling short of the aims, ambitions, and purpose of a discipline that strives to understand, not to reproach.

My rejection of subversive post-modernism, and of that variety of scholarship that Ashley would see endemic in the discipline, is thus predicated on three simple questions. First, if we surrender theory to the post-modernists what exactly will we be left with? Second, if we engage in endless epistemological investigation and theoretical deconstruction, when, exactly, do we stop and begin the task of theoretical-knowledge development as a basis for decision, judgement, prescription and action? And finally, can International Relations really be content, as Ashley would have it, with "a view from afar, from up high?" As Nicholas Onuf asks, "what does this leave for dealing with those close at hand?"[39] What does it leave for those who would wish an understanding of international relations, those who would aspire through theory to the end of war and the maintenance of peace?

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[39] Onuf, N.G., (1989), *op.cit*, p.12.

Ashley's legacy all but abandons us to the dark chasm of nihilism, forsaking all knowledge but without telling us what method(s) might be appropriate for the study of international relations. But like it or not, theory in International Relations cannot be dispensed with. True, much theory might be ill conceived, poorly applied, biased, and in many ways flawed, yet at the same time it is altogether indispensable. Without it we would surely invent it, just as assuredly that with it, post-modernists now want to deconstruct it; a fact that would seem to make the act of deconstruction and thus the activities of subversive post-modernists, wholly pointless. To follow Ashley's path, then, and take up the creed of subversive post-modernism, no matter what the degree of exegesis, will inevitably take the discipline and its practitioners further away from the "comforts of theory" and closer to the ethical abyss of relativism and rampant perspectivism.[40]

Ashley thus has much to answer for in the discipline, generating a "sub-field" and mode of argumentation whose primary preoccupation seems to be disciplinary destabilization through theoretical deconstruction. Indeed, the time has come to turn the tables, as it were, and ask questions of Ashley, not just about his "project" but about the elemental basis and usefulness of his stock terms, phrases and claims. The notion of "post-modernity" itself, for example, upon closer examination proves to be as hollow and empty as that of "modernity." What precisely are these mega-historical divisions meant to imply or accomplish? As Fred Halliday notes, "[b]eyond the assertion of some large-scale, but pretty obvious changes in the world, it is dubious what empirical or ethical force can be attached to the concept 'post-modernity' at

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[40] *ibid*, p.8.

all."[41] Nor can these theorists refer to the "real world" for evidence of the correctness of their thesis. "[M]ost of those who have used...[the term post-modernism]...have precious little qualifications, or inclination, to talk about the real." In fact, post-modernists have become altogether "too inebriated," as Halliday puts it, with their own catchy phrases, and now run "the risk of becoming the new banality, a set of assertions as unlocated and useless as the vacuous generalities, be they balance of power or progressivist teleology, that they seek to displace."[42]

> Witty incantations about alterity, dissolution and freeze-frames, and exaggerated claims about what has indeed changed in the world, are no substitute for a substantive engagement with history or a plausible conceptualisation of the alternatives for political and theoretical change.[43]

It is thus somewhat ironic that in an era post-modernists characterise as unprecedented for its change and turmoil, that these same theorists turn not to theory, not to history or even politics, but to literary criticism for the answers to our times. The means to understanding lie, apparently, in the simulacra of images and words we consume through video display units, television, the movies, fashion shows, computer games and intertextuality; the "hypermedia" that blurs reality with MTV, voice overs, film clips and advertisements only to lose us in the non-space of "cyberspace" so that we become confused as to who, where, and what we really are. Yet it seems to me that the social sciences have become "rather too full of people telling us about 'post-modernity':" a phrase, one suspects that, rather than rendering an intelligible account of these changes and phenomena, will turn out to be just another faddish past-time as pointless as those declarations of the "end of ideology," "the new world order," or the "death

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[41] Halliday, F., (1994), *op.cit*, p.44.

[42] *ibid*.

[43] *ibid*, p.44.

of the novel" that preceded it. After all is said and done, the last books on the subject written, and as the conference papers that title themselves "post-modernist" begin to dwindle in number, one suspects we shall be no closer, and perhaps a good deal further, from understanding international relations, the solutions to war, the road to equality, and the means to realise peace. As Michael Wallack observes of another self declared dissident, Rob Walker, "[h]owever innocent of the complexities of the philosophical tradition...we may be, few of us expect the upward curve of deaths in war to be reversed by textual analysis and fewer still are apt to regard the untangling of puzzles in a very narrow band of international relations theory as a route to a better future." Post-modernism, especially in its subversive varieties, turns out to be less an attempt to clarify the philosophical puzzles of our times or the issues of international relations, than a rather pernicious attempt to change the subject itself.[44] And even where post-modernists have attempted to grapple with epistemology puzzles, such has been the paucity of these attempts, so bland and banal have been the generalities about the imminent closure and collapse of Western metaphysics, hermeneutics and dialectics, that post-modernists have "neither resolve[d] questions of [the] philosophy of science in general, nor contribute[d] to the theorisation of IR [in particular]."[45] Doubtlessly, orthodox practitioners have been far from successful in explaining and understanding international relations, in achieving peace and avoiding war, but their track record, I would suggest, and their commitments that, by and large, are laudable if only because of the motivations that drive them, have to date delivered far

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[44] Wallack, M., (1994), "Review of Walker, R.B.J., (1993), *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.27,No.1, March, p.204.

[45] Halliday, F., (1994), *op.cit*, p.40.

more, and in the future promises to do much more, than post-modernists could possibly hope to deconstruct in a lifetime. And while it is true that there are significant differences among orthodox theorists, vehement disagreement, factionalism, schools of thought and inter-paradigm disputes, as to how we conceive, study, and theorise international relations, at least among those who disavow deconstructionism and post-modernist subversion, there is a desire for theory, a wish to better understand and explain international phenomena and, within this ambit, to manipulate and control certain aspects of international relations and thereby improve them. This is not control for its own sake as post-modernists falsely accuse with Orwellian insinuations, but control and manipulation in order to improve, enhance, and better international relations such that world politics is not an anarchical realm populated by war prone states. Our professional preoccupations were founded on such laudable objectives. More is the pity that these have now been turned against us, as post-modernists paint a grim, and utterly unfounded picture of modernist obsession with the technical manipulation of history for the sake of control. How did the search for peace become an insidious desire for technical control over history, and why have we allowed such ludicrous accusations to be made in the absence of any evidence? The mystery of subversive post-modernism, of the obvious anger harboured by scholars like Richard Ashley, Rob Walker, Jim George, David Campbell, or James Der Derian, indeed of their contempt for the discipline, is still a mystery that cannot be answered satisfactorily by this thesis.

False Agendas and Misconceived Musings

As chapter three endeavoured to demonstrate, there are many varieties or thematic motifs evident in the literatures of post-modernist writings. Specifically, I identified four such

motifs; deconstruction or subversion, nihilism, critical epistemology, and what I termed technological or productionist post-modernism. While these categories are by no means discrete, they nonetheless illustrate how divergent are post-modernist writings that address issues as disparate as textual deconstruction, art, aesthetics, cultural, architecture, philosophy, linguistics, and technological innovation among others. Defining post-modernism, as chapter three also demonstrated, is thus problematic if only because post-modernist writings are no more united in aim, objective or focus, than are the doctrines of conservatism, liberalism, leninism, or socialism that post-modernists conflate under the "modernist" rubric.

It must seem peculiar to those in International Relations, then, that for the most part, we have only been treated to one of these thematic motifs, subversive or deconstructive post-modernism. The very diversity that otherwise defines post-modernist scholarship elsewhere in the social sciences is noticeably absent in International Relations. Having to admit to what Chris Brown terms the radical "unpredictability" and diversity of post-modernist writings, while doubtlessly true of such authors as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Fredric Jameson, Charles Jencks, Jean Baudrillard or Edward Soja, for example, is far from accurate of their would-be emissaries in International Relations.[46] Inside our discipline the thematic singularity of post-modernists to challenge and invert orthodox theory and the epistemological constructs upon which it is built, has become their sole defining purpose. Indeed, when transposed and imported into International Relations and distilled through the conduit of Ashley's penmanship,

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[46] A useful overview of the numerous strands in post-modernist thinking can be found in the edited volume by Jencks, C., (1992)(ed.), *The Post-modern Reader*. New York: St. Martins Press.

all of us are only too well aware of how predictable such writings have become.[47] Whether one reads Richard Ashley, Robert Walker, David Campbell, Michael Shapiro, James Der Derian, or Jim George, what strikes the reader is not differences but similarities; a singular unity or common project, a radical predictability which, with habitual monotony, rehearses time and again the deconstructive ethic endemic to that genre of "dissident." This, though, is a strange conundrum: unity where none should exist, similarity in the face of difference, purpose amid professed anti-foundationalism and perspectivism, and all of this in a post-modern world marked, supposedly, by randomness and disjuncture. The post-modern montage that celebrates diversity, deviation and irregularity, have all been conflated, it seems, into a kind of conformist straight-jacket in order that post-modernists can stand united against a discipline itself accused of rampant conformity and monotonal essentialism. And while, of course, there are subtle differences, minor disputes over esoteric nuances that inevitably infect each writer, apart from these minor quirks post-modernists in International Relations display a cohesiveness realists would surely envy.

How, then, in International Relations are we to account for the similarity of those who profess difference? Why has International Relations evolved only one dominant post-modernist motif to the detriment, if not invisibility, of other motifs? And why are post-modernists in International Relations singularly preoccupied with deconstruction as opposed to technological post-modernism or, say, issues of post-fordism and structural changes in the global political-economy and geo-strategic transformations?

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[47] Brown, C., (1994), "Review of Campbell, D., & Dillon, M., (1993)(eds.), *The Political Subject of Violence.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, & Sjolander, C.T., & Cox, W.S., (1994)(eds.), *Beyond Positivism: Critical Reflections on International Relations.* Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner," *Millennium*, Vol.23.No.1, Spring, p.,142.

Answers to such questions are, by their nature, extremely difficult, and I do not pretend to be able to offer a definitive reply. But let me, instead, offer a few observations which might account for this state of affairs. There are two, and I think interrelated, explanations that together give some insight as to why subversive post-modernism has tended to dominate post-modernist discourse in the discipline. The first stems from the unparalleled dominance positivism has enjoyed in International Relations until very recently. This alone probably explains the attraction subversive post-modernism holds for those who would wish an end to positivism and that variety of theory, scholarship, and research program which has been routine in International Relations — particularly in North America. Without question, deconstruction has proven an extremely useful tool for problematizing conventional research methods informed by positivist frameworks of inquiry and the language of science. Such research methodologies have been dethroned from the heights they once enjoyed in the discipline, and shown to be no more or less valuable than other methodological approaches. As a tool for attacking what was once the inner sanctum of the scientific method — positivism, subversive post-modernism has thus been the weapon of choice, enabling those opposed to this approach to go to the very heart of positivism's ontological and epistemological foundations, and systematically challenge them through suggesting their complicity in a less than scientific project. Thus, if only for the damage subversive post-modernism promises to inflict upon positivist methodological approaches, it has tended to hold an innate attractiveness for those whose mission in life has been the destruction of politics as science. Similarly, the relative dominance of realist theory in International Relations and, in the 1980s, the dominance of structural realist approaches, also made subversive post-modernism an attractive tool, particularly its ability to critique the

structuralist and economistic logic indicative of structural realism.[48] Subversive post-modernism has therefore provided detractors of realist and positivist approaches alike with a theoretical tool that not merely quibbles with peripheral elements of realist/positivist theory, but deconstructs the entire sub-structural basis on which such theory is founded.

The second explanation is, I think, more obvious, but no less important, and concerns the way in which post-modernist theory was introduced into International Relations. For reasons that have traditionally isolated International Relations from the broader philosophical debates in the social sciences, namely the discipline's perceived status as a distinctive *a*theoretical domain, practitioners and theorists alike have largely conducted their research programs, if not unaware of the new philosophical/theoretical trends sweeping the academy, then certainly unconcerned about them. Before Ashley's writings, for example, post-modernist theory was virtually unknown in the discipline. Consequently, those competent in International Relations to engage with post-modernist discourse and assess it critically, were few. More importantly, though, this provided post-modernists, or at least those masquerading as proponents of post-modernism, with a relatively benign intellectual sphere in which to propagate their views free of critical obstacles. And this, arguably, was precisely what happened: a series of intellectual importations of continental philosophy that, without critical appraisal or appropriate reflection, were allowed to colonise and spread.

Ashley, for example, was the first to explore the writings of Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard among others, and import into International Relations, albeit with substantial and

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[48] See, for example, the discussion in Ashley, R.K., (1983), "Three Modes of Economism," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.27,No.4, December, pp.463-496.

perhaps even gratuitous modifications, the motifs of these post-modernist thinkers.[49] As I attempted to demonstrate in chapters four and five, Ashley was the conduit through which those of us in International Relations came to know of post-modern theory. This probably explains the subsequent course of development of post-modernist scholarship in the discipline. First, those who were attracted to this variety of political program merely replicated it, rehearsing the ethic of deconstruction un-problematically, and widening its scope to demolish yet more theories and destabilise the discipline still further. In other words, deconstruction itself became an unreflective "research project" whose aim was to undermine the disciplinary mainstays of positivism and realism. Second, amid this unreflective onslaught most orthodox practitioners found themselves ill equipped to meet this challenge, often unaware or simply perplexed by the epistemological motifs of this deconstructive program. Ashley's politically motivated rendering of post-modern theory was therefore beyond critical appraisal, afforded an intellectual freedom unconstrained by questions about the authenticity of his interpretation of post-modernist thinkers and his representation of the imperative for deconstruction. As a result, Ashley was able to fabricate a series of false debates in the discipline. First, Ashley has been able to portray subversive post-modernism as representative of post-modernism generally, exploiting the lack of critical insight otherwise needed to expose his "post-modern" project. And second, this has fabricated a false dichotomy, creating an either/or divide between post-modernism and orthodox approaches.

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[49] See, for example, Baudrillard, J., (1988), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*. (Mark Poster: Trans., ed.) Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. See also, Foucault, M., (1984), *The Foucault Reader*. (Paul Rabinow ed.), New York: Pantheon. Foucault, M., (1980), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. (Colin Gordon, *et al*: Trans., ed.), Brighton, England: Harvester Press. Foucault, M., & Kritzman, L.D., (1988), *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*. (Lawrence D. Kritzman: Trans.), New York: Routledge.

However, as I attempted to demonstrate elsewhere in the thesis, it is not a question of whether post-modernism is or is not useful to the study of international relations, but of which particular versions are useful and which are not. Not all post-modernisms were created equal and indeed some were created more equal than others. In this respect we have a choice, although this is not apparent in the writings of subversive post-modernists, who, if only because of their haste to colonise International Relations and propagate their political program, have tended to plead ignorant (and perhaps are) to the very real differences within post-modernist thinking. Nowhere in Ashley's writings, for example, will one find even a suggestion that alternative motifs, that render extremely problematic the dominance of Ashley's deconstructive ethic, are available to those who would wish them. Rather, there is an obvious inference, in what is plainly a breach of Ashley's professed distaste for binary logic, that one is *either* for or against post-modernism, and that one must take sides: a sort of divisive old fashioned politics of left versus right.

Thus, although a counterfactual proposition, it is interesting to ponder for a moment how different post-modernist discourse might have been in the discipline had, for example, a motif that explores technological innovation and objective changes in the global political-economy been introduced rather than the familiar deconstructive motif that now predominates. Arguably, those varieties of post-modern theory that address issues of change in the geo-strategic global political-economy, and which offer new methodological insights and issue areas, would have been readily embraced by practitioners in the discipline. Indeed, there is still room for this to happen, but only once the concept of post-modernism has been debunked of connotations that associate it with the practices of deconstruction; practices which, quite

naturally, induce a deep aversion to its employment in International Relations for lack of its relevance and utility.

Perhaps, then, the only enduring legacy of Ashley's form of post-modernist scholarship is the false agenda he has fabricated and embroiled International Relations in. In many senses, this thesis too has fallen victim to that false agenda, having addressed an otherwise fallacious form of post-modernist discourse that in no way should be judged representative of post-modernist theory generally. By the same token, however, this thesis has also sought to demonstrate a way out of this false agenda, by contextualizing Ashley's discourse amid his political project in order that we can come to understand how Ashley has both manipulated and exploited certain strands of post-modernist scholarship in order to further his own partisan ends. Above all else, Ashley's project has been a political one, and the various theoretical motifs that might otherwise render useful certain varieties of post-modernist scholarship to the study of international relations, have all but been forsaken for reasons of political expediency. We need, then, look elsewhere for an understanding of post-modernism in all its varieties and of their possible utility to the study of international relations. Ashley, unfortunately, until now, has only distracted us from this project, coopting post-modernist scholarship in a project that has rendered impossible any meaningful debate or reflection.

Towards the Future: A Legacy for Post-modernism?

As a necessary prelude to thinking about and exploring the possible utilities of various other forms of post-modernist scholarship, this thesis has concentrated on debunking the myth fabricated by Ashley that subversive post-modernism is i.) useful and germane to the study and understanding of international relations and; ii.) representative of post-modernism generally.

Consequently, I have little explored those other varieties of post-modernist scholarship identified in chapter three. Indeed, such an undertaking is a thesis in itself and one that is much overdue in International Relations. So let me here comment, albeit very briefly, on future research directions that post-modernist scholarship might pursue productively in the discipline.

As I indicated in chapter three, technological or productionist post-modernism most obviously suggests itself to the study of international relations. Yet, surprisingly, this particular motif is virtually absent in post-modernist debates in the discipline. Instead, we need look toward departments of geography and sociology, for example, where an emphasis upon transnational and international political-economic relations, albeit reflecting the particular research biases of these faculties, has become a new growth area.[50] In these disciplines the broad canvas of political-economy and the eclecticism it naturally fosters, provide a methodological backdrop conducive to the amalgamation of diverse issue areas which would seem of direct relevance to International Relations.[51] In geography, for instance, the political-economy approach tends to meld a focus upon the nation-state with that of capitalist markets, international trade and regime formation and maintenance, and combine this with insights

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[50] This is not meant to discount the very considerable amount of work undertaken in international relations under the rubric of international political economy (IPE), but only to suggest that this body of work has not evolved research agendas whose concerns address issues such as the reflexive effects of spatial dialectics and political economy upon sovereignty or conceptions of territoriality; or of the spatial-territorial features of particular modes of production in terms of their influence upon the forces of imperialism-colonialism, state expansionism and war. See, for example, the discussion in Tooze, R., (1991), "International Political Economy: An Interim Assessment," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (eds.), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives on an Evolving Discipline*. Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National University, esp., pp.198, where Tooze identifies the major intellectual strands in current IPE research.

[51] See, for example, Peet, R. & Thrift, N., (1989)(eds.), *New Models in Geography: The political-Economy Perspective*. London: Unwin Hyman.

derived through French regulation theory[52] to produce exceedingly keen insights into the interrelationship between nation-states and capitalism — an area all too often overlooked in International Relations.[53] Indeed, such methodological approaches have produced excellent commentaries on the relative power and autonomy of states to operate in the new post-fordist era, especially with regard issues of declining sovereignty as nation-states are inter-penetrated by the structural constraints of international capital, financial and labour markets.[54] So too, the new post-modernist geographies that focus upon time, space and place, particularly of the reflexive interrelationships between new communications and transportations technologies and the mobility of capital and production sites, readily complement International Relations, offering interesting avenues to explore in terms of their effects upon conceptions of sovereignty over space and territory *vis a vis* the politics of power distribution and regime stability. In fact, there has been more scholarship conducted into the nature of place, space and territory by post-modernist geographers than by theorists of international relations; a condition that could be

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[52] See Aglietta, M., (1979), *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: The U.S Experience*. (David Fernbach: Trans.) London: New Left Books, Lipietz, A., (1987), "The Globalisation of the General Crisis of Fordism," in Holmes, J. & Leys, C., (eds.), *Frontyard Backyard: The Americas in the Global Crisis*. Toronto: Between the Lines Press. See also, Robles, A.C., (1994), *French Theories of Regulation and Conceptions of the International Division of Labour*. Basingstoke, England: Macmillan. Ruccio, D.F., (1989), "Fordism on a World Scale: International Dimensions of Regulations," *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Vol.21.No.4, pp.33-53.

[53] See, for example, Giddens, A., (1985), *Nation-State and Violence*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press. See also, Held, D., (1989), *Political Theory and the Modern State: Essays on State Power and Democracy*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

[54] See, for example, Lipietz, A., (1992), *Toward a New Economic Order: Postfordism, Ecology, and Democracy*. (Malcolm Slater: Trans.), Oxford, Polity Press. Schwartz, H.M., (1994), *States Versus Markets: History, Geography, and the Development of the International Political Economy*. New York: St. Martins Press. Porter, T., (1993), *States, Markets and Regimes in Global Finance*. Houndmills, England: Macmillan. Corbridge, S., Martin, R. & Thrift, N. (1994)(eds.), *Money, Power and Space*. Oxford: Blackwell. See also Harvey, D., (1991), *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, & Jameson, F., (1992), *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

remedied by exploring the motifs of productionist post-modernism as they have developed outside International Relations. This is also true of the "spatial revolution" to have hit elsewhere in the social sciences, a concept that surely lends itself to International Relations, concerned as it is with spatial relationships across geographic space and time, but one that remains all but unknown to the discipline.[55]

Such approaches are beginning to be explored, albeit tentatively, in International Relations. Recent studies by authors like Barry Gills, Ronen Palan and Graig Murphy among others, are welcome additions to expanding discourse in this direction.[56] In this respect, post-modernism in its non-subversive varieties doubtlessly will have a legacy in International Relations—one, hopefully, that will mark the closure of post-modernism's subversive phase in the discipline.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to explore the legacy of Ashley's variety of subversive post-modernism, especially of the dangers it poses to the discipline. To do so, I have endeavoured to defend the institution of theory against those who would deconstruct it for purely political purposes. My analysis has therefore attempted to identify the functions of theory in International Relations. I do not pretend to have been comprehensive in this task, let alone

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[55] See, for example, the excellent studies by Billinge, M., Gregory, D. & Martin, R., (1984)(eds.), *Recollections of a Revolution: Geography as Spatial Science*. London: Macmillan. See also, Gregory, D., (1994), *Geographical Imaginations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell. Pickles, J., (1985), *Phenomenology, Science, and Geography: Spatiality and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Peet, R. & Thrift, N., (1989)(ed.), *New Models in Geography: The Political Economy Perspective*. London: Unwin Hyman. Jenson, J., Mahon, R. & Bienefeld, M., (1993)(eds.), *Production, Space, Identity: Political Economy Faces the 21st Century*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

[56] See Palan, R. & Gills, B., (1994)(eds.), *Transcending the State-Global Divide: A Neostructuralist Agenda in International Relations*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner. Murphy, C.N. & Tooze, R., (1991)(eds.), *The New International political Economy*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner.

definitive. Rather, what I have ventured to do is impart some sense of what theory might look like and concern itself with in International Relations, so that we can evaluate theoretical approaches for their usefulness and relevance to our disciplinary concerns. Specifically, I attempted to make some observations about the paucity of Ashley's "theoretical" offerings, and that variety of post-modernism which Ashley would present as a contribution to the study and understanding of international politics. However, this chapter has not been an attempt to proscribe research agendas or specific forms of theory. On the contrary, my aim has been to delineate a broad spectrum into which our efforts might be focused, and thereby provide some semblance of disciplinary purpose to which we can collectively apply our labours.

When reviewing four critical works on international relations theory recently, Mark Hoffman affirmed the call for what he termed the *restructuring, reconstruction, reinscription and rearticulation* of international relations theory. The interpretive turn, he noted, would re-animate "the study of international relations and the development of international theory." Indeed, it was to be celebrated, signalling a movement away from what Hoffman called the "neo-positivist" view of theory "towards an interpretive view of theory as an endeavour at an ironic understanding and ambiguity, the uncertainty and the textuality of the world in which we live."[1]

This article struck me as somewhat peculiar, not because of any peculiarities distinctive to Hoffman, but because of the general penchant now evident in such works, indeed of its complete acceptability, that textuality, ambiguity, uncertainty, decentring, relativism, irregularity, and countless other instruments that detract from the Enlightenment enterprise, are reasons for celebration, that they somehow represent intellectual breakthroughs and a form of theoretical progress. Indeed, what struck me as even more bizarre was the ready acceptance by Hoffman of the need to restructure and reinscribe theory along lines proscribed by subjects other than International Relations. As with the social sciences generally, Hoffman represents the growing number of scholars who, without judicious reflection, reasoned analysis, or perspicacious deliberation, is fervent in his desire to import and apply post-modern theory to the sphere of international politics. In fact, there is an almost blind and unquestioning faith that these new creeds hold answers which, under "neo-positivist" theory, have remained hidden to

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[1] Hoffman, M., (1991), "Restructuring, Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation: Four Voices in Critical International Theory," *Millennium*, Vol.20,No.2, Summer, pp.169-170, 184.

us. This perhaps explains the impetuous haste with which admirers of post-modernist approaches have gone about promulgating their agendas and programs. What it doesn't account for, however, is the unreflective dogmaticism inherent in such impulsiveness--a phrase that seems to have lost favour in International Relations, imbued as we are with an ethic that now admonishes those who dare to display intolerance for the celebrants of perspectivism, deconstruction, intertextuality, and countless other mediums that wish to number among the growing litany of "approaches" to the study of international relations.

But let me for a moment pose a few questions by now familiar in this thesis. Let me for my own "ironic understanding" ask what is ambiguous about war, and what is ironic about peace? Or, we might equally ask, how does the admission of "uncertainty" change the face of theory, or how does textuality alter our experiences of the realities of international politics? Indeed, why, suddenly, are irony, uncertainty, ambiguity and textuality the prized attributes of theoretical endeavour? Are these to be our new epistemological motifs by which we judge the quality and usefulness of theory and research programs in International Relations? Are the problems of international politics and the answers to them hidden amid literary devices like *paradox* or the textual chicanery of *double entendre*?

If we believe Ashley, Hoffman, Walker, or James Der Derian, for example, then the answer is yes, in which case international theory must transpose itself into a form of literary criticism, employing the tools of textual deconstruction, parody, and the style of discontinuous narratives as a means of pondering the depths of interpretation. In doing so, however, we would approach the writings of Richard Ashley, who, utilizing such methods, can apprise

students of international relations only of the fact that "there are neither right interpretations nor wrong," there are just "interpretations imposed upon interpretations."[2]

But let me yet again pose still more questions, in part to explore whether this approach is adequate for the subject of International Relations. Thus, for example, to Somalian refugees who flee from famine and warlords, to Ethiopian rebels who fight in the desert plains against a government in Addis Abbaba, to Serbs, Croats and Muslims who fight one another among the ruins of the former Yugoslavia, to the policy bureaucrats who make foreign policy, to the statesmen and women who effect that policy, to the negotiators of international trade deals and international law, to the arbitrators of international disputes who render judgements about such laws, to the human rights advocates who fight for justice, and to the students who take it upon themselves to study international politics, what do the literary devices of "irony" and "textuality" say to them"? How does the reification of interpretivism and relativism assist such people in their understandings, problems, judgements, negotiations, and their disputes? Is Ashley suggesting that we simply announce to those in the fray of international politics that "there are neither right interpretations nor wrong," there are just "interpretations imposed upon interpretations." Is this to be the epiphany of post-modern international theory, its penultimate contribution to those who suffer on the "margins" for whom Ashley professes great concern?

As Robin Brown concludes, post-modernism does not speak to these problems other than to detect the limits of a particular "'text' by identifying origins, assumptions and silences."

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[2] See Ashley, R.K., (1991), "The State of the Discipline: Realism Under Challenge," in Higgott, R., & Richardson, J.L., (eds.), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives on an Evolving Discipline.* Canberra: Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National University, p.65. And Ashley, R.K., (1987), "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, Vol.12,No.4, pp.408-409.

But what it cannot do, he writes, "is deal with the practical problem of International Relations."[3] Similarly, Hoffman too gives no answers to these questions save this justification for the turn to interpretivism: "this move," he writes, "connects international relations, both as a practice and a discipline, with similar developments within social and political theory and within the humanities."[4] But what justification or rationale is this? So we are now doing what literary theorists do; ruminating over international theory as if such were the verses of lyricists written for the pleasures of reading and consumed only for their wit and romance. But surely there is a difference between the concerns and interests of, say, English departments and those of departments of Political Science or International Relations. Where literary criticism delights in the etherial play of words and has as its epistemic basis the belief that "one reads for pleasure," politics dabbles in the material, distributive, punitive play of power, whose consequences effect much more than a sensibility committed to reading fiction.[5] Why should we assume then that tools developed in English departments are useful to departments of Political Science? Why should we take heed of the writings of Jacques Derrida who never once addressed issues of international relations, but from whom post-modernists now claim a wisdom which they insist is reason enough to dispense with past theory and begin anew our theoretical and disciplinary enterprise?

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[3] Brown, R., (1993), "Introduction: Towards a New Synthesis of International Relations," in Bowker, M., & Brown, R., (eds.), *From Cold War to Collapse: Theory and World Politics in the 1980s*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, p.13.

[4] Ashley, R.K., (1991), *op.cit*, p.170.

[5] Onuf, N.G., (1989), *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p.12. See also Halliday, F., (1994), *Rethinking International Relations*. Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia Press, p.41.

One of the themes of this thesis has therefore concerned the elemental fault of attempting to fit round pegs into square holes, and the moral indignation of post-modernists who admonish those of us who dare to question the legitimacy of this enterprise in the first place. Specifically, I have attempted to demonstrate that theoretical devices developed elsewhere in the humanities and social sciences to address issues very different from those in International Relations, are *not* immediately translatable, useful or germane to the study of international politics. There has been no convincing demonstration by even the most ardent proponents of post-modernism that this is so. And yet, amazingly, the post-modernist colonization of every imaginable subject seems all but complete as post-modernists lay claim to an inter-disciplinary relevance that is unsurpassed in recent times. Similarly, I have attempted in this thesis to question those who, under the banner of post-modernity, announce new ages, new epochs, or who forewarn of the imminent end of modernity, its implosion and closure due to its material, environmental, and moral excesses. As political and literary commentaries on our age, they do not offend. But as apocalyptic prophecies of the future, and philosophical commentaries on the ethical condition of late-modernity, they should not be mistaken for methodological approaches, analytical constructs, let alone theories that might inform, explain, or enlighten us as to the workings of international politics, the problems of war, or any number of other dilemmas endemic to international relations. Certainly we can place such commentaries amid the disciplines' literature, but to suppose, as with subversive post-modernists, that this literature can be set aside in its entirety and replaced with a post-modern motif, is purely dangerous.

It is thus that this thesis has attempted an understanding of the various motifs of post-modernist writings, of their particular "origins, assumptions and silences."[6] However, this has not been an exercise inspired by the need to "deconstruct," but to understand so that we might approach post-modernism as a vicarious set of writings that offer both insights and distractions to the study of international politics. Arguably, until now our understanding of post-modernism in the discipline has been confined to those interpretations rendered through the lenses of adversaries like Richard Ashley for reasons of political expediency. This thesis has sought to rectify that, by offering a means of classifying certain types of post-modernism and of distinguishing those that might be germane to the study international relations from those that are not. This project is not concluded, however, but only begun. I have not attempted an exploration of those varieties of post-modernism that might otherwise be valuable to the study of international relations, but rather to clear the way in order for this to happen in the future. Instead, the primary task of this thesis has been an expose of that variety of post-modernism that has become endemic to the discipline and conveyed to us in the writings of Richard Ashley and subsequent adherents. To that end, I have constructed a methodology for *reading* Ashley in order that the underlying motifs of his "project" can be exposed, analyzed, and appraised critically for their contributions to the discipline. I have then applied this methodology via an exegetic analysis of Ashley's "project" and constructed a critical chronology of the development of subversive post-modernism in International Relations.

However, this undertaking has not been done exclusively within the context of post-modernist discourse, but more broadly by situating it within a discussion of the "Third Debate"

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[6] Brown, R., (1993), *op.cit*, p.13.

generally. In this sense, the rationale for the thesis has laid in its attempt to provide a means to understanding the "Third Debate," its consequences and thematic nuances. As I stated in the introduction, my intention has been to construct a *baedeker* to the "Third Debate" and post-modern discourse, thereby allowing us to navigate through the quagmire of recondite theoretical debate that now constitutes "theory" in International Relations.

The poignancy of this project, however, lies not in what it has done, but what, hopefully, it will lead to. And it is here that I hope this study might bear some future success. For my aim has not been merely a greater insight into the "Third Debate," but also its closure, at least those aspects of it that have become a vehicle for promulgating subversive post-modernism. Above all else, this thesis has been a defence of theory against the deconstructionists, and a call for a return to theory and to the project of studying international relations. If there is a message to the thesis, it lies in its call to reaffirm reason, reticulate relevance in our theoretical endeavours, and to resist the restructuring, reconstruction, and reinscription of theory proscribed by the soothsayers of post-modernism who promise untold rewards but only after we have joined them in the destruction of all that has gone before. Thus, contra the "new season of hope" proffered by the arrival of the "Third Debate" and post-modern theory, this study has sought to explain *how* and *why* this never eventuated, proving yet another fruitless distraction. Instead, as I have argued, the "Third Debate" and post-modern theory revealed themselves to be political instruments of "old" politics, only to become embroiled in the very "crisis" they sought to exploit. Hopefully, then, we have reached the end of this new beginning, and might now be able to return to the project of studying international relations.

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