The Vocabulary of Realism: A Contextual Critique of the Epistemology of Classical Realism in International Relations Theory

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October 2016

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Honours in International Relations in the College of Arts and Social Sciences

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where it is otherwise acknowledged in the text, this thesis represents my own original work.

All versions of the submitted thesis (regardless of submission type) are identical.

Parts of the Introduction, Chapters One, Two and Three were partially submitted as preliminary and final research design papers for the course *POLS4011 – Research Training: Scope and Methods* at the Australian National University, June 2016. Sections of Chapter One was included in a paper for the course *POLS4009 – Comparative Political Institutions* at the Australian National University, June 2016.

To Mum, forever my co-author.

Es war einmal

Abstract:

The way which the classical realist tradition of International Relations Theory has come to characterise the mechanics of world politics is predicated on the classics of political theory. As an explanatory theory of International Relations, realism seeks to account for international relations on the basis of political reality, irrespective of normative and ethical issues. Despite the explanatory basis of classical realism, it nonetheless relies on the themes and theorists of political theory in a 'softly normative' fashion – evidence of the influence of norms in explanatory theory. However, the inclusion of classics of political theory in the realist tradition is without regard to the context of the occurrence of those classics and their illocutionary dimensions of meaning. As such, if classical realism is to be revived in a way that is suggested by theorists of both International Relations and political theory, then it must be able to survive the rigours of more contemporary interpretive methods. This thesis will therefore apply the interpretive lens of the Cambridge approach to how classical realism relies on classical of political theory to determine whether the classification of texts of political theory in the realist tradition is defensible. By determining that the realist tradition does not account for the context of classics of political theory and their illocutionary dimensions, this thesis will suggest an alternative approach in which realism can engage with political theory. This approach will be a reassessment of the epistemology of classical realism.

Word Count: 19,001

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Introduction

"The beast lives unhistorically; for it 'goes into' the present, like a number, without leaving any curious remainder."[1]

Nietzsche's beast lives unhistorically, and in that way, it lives in a state of happiness; that every moment "can be nothing that is not honest."[2] Yet while the beast shows us that that a happy life is possible 'without remembrance', a life without forgetfulness is itself impossible. In this way, man cannot be blind to everything behind him, nor can he be bound by a 'historical sense' that has such scope to destroy the living thing, "be it a man or a people or a system of culture."[3] To live is to do so with both remembrance and with forgetfulness.

The disciplinary history of International Relations Theory (IRT hereafter)[4] has been characterised by the happiness of living unhistorically. In particular, of those traditions and theories which have constituted the discipline more broadly, the way by which classical realism has historically dominated much of the conceptual historiography of IRT is indicative of this happiness. The classical realist tradition is itself an expansive discipline, not necessarily constituted by a "fixed point of focus with sharp definition"[5] and yet each of its particular forms have, at varying times, stood as the authoritative basis for being able to account for the mechanics of international relations. Despite the

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History* (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2010), 5.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 7.
[4] This thesis relies upon the distinction outlined by Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 10, that the capitalised 'International Relations' refers to the discipline, and the lower case 'international relations' as referring to the international world.
[5] Jonathan Haslam, *No Virtue Like Necessity: Realist Thought in International Relations Since Machiavelli* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 249.

expanse of positions that form the general basis of classical realism, that tradition is, for the purposes of this thesis, defined as those texts, of a variety of forms, prior to the publication of Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* in 1979.[6] In terms of conceptual themes, the primary concerns of the classical realist tradition are anarchy, the balance of power and the fundamental character of human nature.[7] A genealogy of classical realism, however, reveals that what warrants inclusion in that tradition extends beyond that of the establishment of the discipline of IRT itself, to the political theory of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes. In this way, the classical realist tradition is predicated on the theoretical content of certain classics of political theory.

The instances of the reliance IRT has on political theory are varied and extensive. Even a cursory glance at a commentary on classical realism will reveal chapters on, for example, '*Thucydidean Realism: Beyond Athens and Melos*', '*Machiavelli: Realpolitik*' and '*Hobbes, the State of Nature and the Laws of Nature*'.[8] Similarly, those seminal theorists of classical realism who propose a positive theory of IRT underpin their theory on those classics of political theory, such that E H Carr, Hans Morgenthau and Hedley Bull, to varying degrees, rely on Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes in their constructions of the classical realist tradition. Despite being traditionally

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[6] William C Wohlforth, "Realism" in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 136.
[7] Michele Chiaruzzi, "Realism" in *An Introduction to International Relations*, ed. Richard Devetak et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 36 - 37.
[8] See Laurie Bagby, "Thucydidean Realism: Beyond Athens and Melos" in *Roots of Realism*, ed. Benjamin Frankel. (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1996), 169-193; Howard Williams, *International Relations in Political Theory* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), 45-55; and Cornelia Navari, "Hobbes, the State of Nature and the Laws of Nature" in *Classical Theories of International Relations*, ed. Ian Clark and Iver B Neumann (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 20-41.

associated with the English School, Martin Wight's realism, for example, is predicated on the Hobbesian conception of human nature.[9]

In relying on political theory, classical realism has exposed itself to those questions of interpretation relevant primarily to political theory. In particular, that "theories of international relations express the limits of modern political thought in ways that are open to conventional forms of critique."[10] One such conventional form of critique is expressed by Skinner and the historicism of the Cambridge School – which is concerned with the identification of the illocutionary dimensions of political texts, as well as the context in which they occur. The inherent historical character of the themes relevant to both classical realism and political theory, is the basis on which this thesis seeks to critique the relationship between the respective disciplines is that of Skinner's historicism.

An account of classical realism through the lens of the interpretive approach of the Cambridge School raises questions as to the relevance of such an inquiry. As classical realism has not held any substantive authority in IRT since Waltz's structural realism and more contemporary theories of IR, the usefulness of applying rigour to a tradition of limited contemporary relevance is indeed doubtful. That said, political realism more generally, as well as classical realism specifically, are believed to exhibit themes which continue to shape contemporary debates in political theory and IRT. Rossi and Sleat, for

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[9] Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (London: Leicester University Press, 1991), 25.
[10] R B J Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 16.

example, reflect on the ways by which 'new' realism has emerged.[11] With respect to classical realism specifically, Williams suggests that the relevance of Morgenthau, for example, is greater today than at any point in history.[12] Similarly, Lebow notes that the thought of the seminal theorists of classical realism are each undergoing revivals in contemporary discourse.[13] Despite the texts being critiqued by this thesis predating Skinner's interpretative method, for classical realism to be revived in the way that Williams and Lebow suggest, it must be able to withstand the forms of critique used in contemporary conceptual analysis.

The primary concern of this thesis is, essentially, the way by which classics of political theory have come to be relied on by seminal theorists of classical realism, such that Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes have each come to be classified as being part of the classical realist canon of IRT. Through the interpretative devices of the Skinner and the Cambridge approach, this thesis will illustrate that the way by which classical realism employs political theory is without regard to the extent to which Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes considers questions of international relations, the context of their occurrence, and the illocutionary dimensions of their texts. Subsequent to the primary critique, this thesis will then set out an approach which classical realism may take to avoid the interpretative fallacies to which it falls prey. The approach advocated here is, essentially a reassessment of the epistemology of classical

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[11] Enzo Rossi and Matt Sleat, "Realism in Normative Political Theory" *Philosophy Compass* 9:10 (2014): 696.

[12] Michael C Williams, "Morgenthau Now: Neoconservatism, National Greatness, and Realism" in *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*, ed. Michael C Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 216.

[13] Richard Lebow, "Texts, Paradigms, and Political Change" in ibid., 241.

realism, such that its theory is based on a given political reality to a greater degree.

In order to do so, it is necessary to first account for the basis on which classical realism relies on classical of political theory at all. In Chapter One, this thesis will first determine whether Wight's depiction of the beginnings of the discipline of IRT is satisfactory in explaining the relationship between classical realism and political theory. In the alternative, this thesis will propose that the character of the reliance is instead one of classical realism seeking a form of 'soft normative' value from certain themes and theorists of political theory, in a way contrary to its supposed status as an explanatory and scientific theory.

In Chapter Two, this thesis will then address the specific ways by which classical realism relies on Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes respectively, as well as the question as to whether that reliance takes the context of their occurrence and illocutionary dimensions of their texts. In doing so, this thesis employs the interpretative devices of the Cambridge approach; specifically, the Mythology of Doctrines, in two forms, and the Mythology of Coherence. This thesis will then turn to an inquiry into the context in which Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes each published their respective works, as well as what, in fact, they were doing by virtue of their texts.

Lastly, in Chapter Three, this thesis will explore the ways by which classical realism can resolve the issues raised by the preceding chapters. Specifically, following a review of the existing approaches set out by Skinner, Blau, Sil and Katzenstein and Armitage respectively, this thesis will then set out its preferred

approach for the ways that classical realism may continue to incorporate on

classics of political theory in future works.

Chapter One: Life Before International Relations Theory

Wight and the Paucity of International Theory

"And international theory, in this sense does not, at first sight, exist."[14]

The story of 'life before international relations' is told in a way that is "often short and snappy."[15] It is, as Walker describes, a story that is defined by absence, relative to its sequel, that is, the expanse of contemporary theories of International Relations. In a similar way, the theme of absence is one that resonates throughout the story of life before IRT. In order to be able to understand the way by which classical realism has come to rely on classics of political theory, it is necessary to explore this absence and to account for the basis on which realism relies on political theory at all.

The theme of absence is expressed to a greater extent in Wight's seminal essay '*Why is There No International Theory?*' where he bemoans the lack of any substantive and coherent body of classics of IRT prior to 1914. In doing so, Wight notes that a student of IRT cannot be directed to any such body, relative to the stature and expanse of the canon of political theory, as being concerned primarily with speculation about the state.[16] In other words, prior to 1914, there was essentially no body of classic works of IRT that could authoritatively

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[14] Martin Wight, "Why is There No International Theory?" in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Relations*, ed. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1966), 17.

[15] Walker, *Inside/Outside*, 88.

[16] Wight, *Diplomatic Investigations*, 17.

underpin any potential international theory.[17] Such an absence has, in turn,

lead scholars of international relations to seek authority in those texts classified

as being of the canon of political theory or concerned primarily with history.

Hobbes and Locke, for example, are relied on by virtue of "the identification of

international politics with the pre-contractual state of nature."[18] Similarly, the

characterisation of international relations as an approximation with diplomacy

validates reference to Thucydides, given the relationship between diplomacy

and history.[19] With respect to either political theory or history, IRT has, by

virtue of this supposed absence, turned its gaze outward to those associated

disciplines in search for a more coherent body of classics than any it can locate

internally. The fact of Armitage's *Foundations of Modern International*

Thought[20] being concerned entirely with theorists generally associated with

political theory further highlights this.

The absence explored by Wight is, however, not entirely without cause. In first

noting the relative status of international theory and political theory, Wight

proceeds to expand on the reasons why there is no identifiable canon of

classics relevant to international theory. This is identified in two separate

trajectories: the 'external reasons', that any contributions to international

theory prior to 1914 are marked by both 'paucity', and an "intellectual and

moral poverty"[21] and secondly, the 'internal reasons': the relative status of

international and political theory. Each of these reasons are the basis on which

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[17] Ibid., 17-18.
[18] Ibid., 30-31.
[19] Ibid., 32.
[20] See David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 75-89 and 172-191 for example.
[21] Wight, *Diplomatic Investigations*, 20.

Wight considers any texts of international relations prior to 1914 as insufficient in forming a coherent canon.

As will be demonstrated, Wight's concern includes an array of texts relevant to the discipline of IRT more broadly, rather than those specific to the classical realist tradition. The basis on which this thesis abstracts its concern with classical realism to that of the discipline generally is that firstly, Wight's own Realist tradition is predicated on his account of the historical paucity of international theory. Secondly, Wight's search for an international theory, and his discussion of the construction of traditions, remains one of the more authoritative on that topic. As Bartelson notes, "[a]t least since the appearance of *Diplomatic Investigations*…references to distinct traditions of thought have permeated theories of international society."[22] Similarly, Schmidt notes that there have been few attempts to undertake a sufficiently substantive historiography of international relations.[23] In this way, any account as to the relationship between political theory and IRT must necessarily begin with Wight.

External Reasons: International Theory as 'Scattered and Unsystematic'

The theme of absence in the story of life before IRT is expressed primarily in Wight's external explanation. In particular, despite (as Wight points out) international law gained academic recognition in England prior to political

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[22] Jens Bartelson, 'Short Circuits: Society and Tradition in International Relations Theory' *Review of International Studies* 22:4 (1996): 346.
[23] Brian C Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 21.

theory, IRT has been unable to rely on any classics of its own due to the fact that such a body did not exist.[24] In characterising this absence, Wight looks to a variety of disciplines, texts and traditions where an 'international theory' could be located, and lists (a) the 'irenists', including Erasmus and Abbe de St Pierre; (b) the collection of those who Wight terms the 'Machiavellians'; (c) the *parerga* of the philosophers and historians who have tuned their mind to international relations; and (d) contributions regarding the mechanics of international relations by statesmen and diplomats.[25] Each of these possible sources are deemed unable to form such a body of classics as they are, for various reasons, "scattered, unsystematic, and mostly inaccessible to the layman."[26] Of each of these possible sources, those that garner the greatest interest (despite being supposedly 'scattered and unsystematic'), are the authors and texts that would traditionally be associated with political theory. In particular, these texts include Hume's *The Balance of Power*, Rousseau's *Project of Perpetual Peace*, Bentham's *Plan for a Universal Peace*, as well as Grotius' *On the Law of War and Peace* and Kant's *On Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*.

The characterisation of the texts identified above is not only a comment as to the relevance or merits of the particular texts, but also constitutes an assessment of their respective author. Each of Hume, Rousseau, Bentham and Kant for example, had been essentially drawn from their primary philosophical concerns and turned their minds to the questions of international relations.

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[24] Wight, *Diplomatic Investigations*, 17.
[25] Ibid., 19-20.
[26] Ibid., 20.

Despite the weight afforded to each of these theorists generally, their contributions to international relations are of little interest relative to their usually considered topics – Hume's characterisation of the balance of power, for example, contains little "intellectual nourishment"[27] given the influence and interest garnered by the *Treatise of Human Nature*, or the various *Enquiries*. Similarly, Rousseau is known primarily for his *The Social Contract*, rather than the *Project for Perpetual Peace*, and Kant for the three *Critiques*, most notably the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as opposed to *Perpetual Peace*. This is apparent given the relative weight afforded to political theory and IRT respectively; that works including *Perpetual Peace* have historically been seen as subservient to Kant's contributions to epistemology, metaphysics and moral philosophy. Even those theorists and texts that make explicit reference to international relations are similarly characterised as 'scattered and unsystematic'. Grotius, for example, despite being considered one of the more authoritative theorists of international law,[28] "has to be read at large to be understood".[29] Similarly, Wight believes that "[s]tudents cannot be expected to tackle"[30] Pufendorf's *De Iure Natura et Gentium* ('The Law of Nature and Nations). In either case, the authority of Grotius and Pufendorf, for example, in addition to those other sources considered by Wight, are deemed insufficient to form any consistent and coherent body of classics text on which any contemporary IRT can rely.

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[27] Ibid., 20.

[28] Martin Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant, and Mazzini* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31.

[29] Wight, *Diplomatic Investigations,* 20.

[30] Ibid.

The basis on which Wight characterises those texts prior to 1914 as 'scattered and unsystematic' is dependent on a specific understanding of what constitutes a 'tradition'. In other words, while it may be seen that those texts possess no common narrative warranting their classification as being of a particular tradition, the question of classification is dependent on the definition of a tradition itself. Wight's assumption that those works are 'scattered and unsystematic' is therefore, framed by his own basis of classification, and his own trichotomy of traditions - Rationalism, Realism and Revolutionism. The way by which Wight distinguishes the conceptual boundaries of those traditions is through an emphasis on respective elements of the condition of international relations. Specifically, Realists on international anarchy, the Rationalists on international discourse, and Revolutionists on international society.[31]

The way that Wight comes to include a given text or author into one of his respective traditions is, therefore, through the location of an underlying and common narrative or causal mechanism. As such, Wight's basis of classification is an essentially 'presentist' one, that "Wight displays a clear preference for coherence over continuity".[32] The application of such an approach to the history of political thought would resemble imposing what Jeffery terms "a set of retrospectively determined parameters."[33] This is evident, for example, where Kingsbury and Roberts (in discussing what it means to be 'Grotian'), argue that Wight's approach would be "the

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[31] Wight, *International Theory*, 9-10.
[32] Bartelson, "Short Circuits", 347.
[33] Renee Jeffery. "Tradition as Invention: The 'Traditions Tradition' and the History of Ideas in International Relations" *Millenniums: Journal of International Studies* 34:1 (2005): 76.

identification of distinctively Grotian strands of thought in the history of ideas about international relations".[34] As a result, the way by which Wight distinguishes Realism, Rationalism and Revolutionism is, by his own admission, a "rough and initial distinction".[35] In all fairness to Wight, he does proceed to outline the conceptual boundaries in greater detail, the basis on which he classifies ideas into those traditions impacts on which texts and theorists are deemed worthy of inclusion. Any change to the parameters imposed on a text would, however, have consequence for the process of inclusion in a given tradition.

The classification of texts into the respective traditions outlined by Wight is indicative of the extent to which an understanding of classic texts of political theory is dependent on the construction of a tradition itself. While many of the interpretative questions of concern to this thesis are specific acts of textual interpretation, accounting for the role and reason of the tradition is a necessary part of understanding the relationship between IRT and political theory. As we shall see, the specific way by which a theorist of IRT defines a tradition has scope to impact on whether they rely on political theory in a way similar to Wight. An understanding of paradigm or tradition-bound thought is, therefore, central to the basis on which IRT relies on classics of political theory.

The concept of a tradition has, historically, come to be implicit in any positive theory of International Relations. Following Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific*

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[34] Benedict Kingsbury and Adam Roberts, "Introduction: Grotian Thought in International Relations" in *Hugo Grotius and International Relations*, ed. Hedley Bull et al (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990), 54-55.
[35] Wight, *International Theory*, 8.

Revolutions, in which he argues that the "criteria of scientific knowledge…were paradigm specific",[36] the paradigm-centered understanding of scientific knowledge has come to occupy a primary means of distinguishing knowledge in the social sciences. With respect to IRT specifically, the array of traditions that define that discipline is indicative of the continuing relevance of paradigm bound theory.

Traditions in IRT have now come to possess their own set of defining characteristics, albeit somewhat distinct from Kuhn's initial definition of a paradigm.[37] The broader definitional properties of traditions in IRT include the existence of conceptual boundaries that distinguish the tradition, as well as an emphasis on continuity. In other words, traditions generally share the process of classification, continuity, abstraction and exclusion.[38] Nardin for example, defines a tradition as that which is passed down, "a belief or custom transmitted from one generation to another."[39] Similarly, in equating a tradition with a paradigm, Sil and Katzenstein define a tradition as "posit[ing] clusters of theories or narratives that assign primacy to certain kinds of causal factors than others."[40] Those general characteristics are then expressed in a more specific fashion. In outlining a 'taxonomy of traditions', Dunne frames what

[36] Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy*, 7.

[37] Kuhn defines a paradigm as "some accepted examples of actual scientific practice – examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together – provide[ing] models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research." - Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p 10.

[38] Timothy Dunne, "Mythology or Methodology? Traditions in International Theory" *Review of International Studies* 19:3 (1993): 308.

[39] Terry Nardin, "Ethical Traditions in International Affairs" in *Traditions of International Ethics*, ed. David Mapel and Terry Nardin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6.

[40] Rudra Sil and Peter Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms: Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1.

constitutes a tradition as being one of 'tradition as paradigm', 'tradition as ideology', 'tradition as method', 'contextual traditions', or 'critical traditions'.[41] Jeffery further makes the case for an understanding of 'tradition as invention'.[42] Specifically, tradition as *Paradigm*[43] emphasises the scientific character of the practices of a community. *Ideology* is similar insofar as it relates to the passing down of practice, however it expands to include symbols and institutions. *Contextual* traditions are those related to the critique of timeless and universal concepts of political ideology, in a way similar to this thesis, and *Critical* traditions which question the very foundation of the more established traditions, a form of 'post-tradition' understanding of tradition building. Lastly, and most relevant in the present context, tradition as *Method*, which emphasises the role of traditions in classifying ideas in the history of thought. Wight's basis of classification is, with respect to Dunne's taxonomy, a form of 'tradition as method', given the extent to which he places primacy in the location of common narratives as determining inclusion in a given tradition.[44] The basis on which Wight characterises those texts as 'scattered and unsystematic' is, therefore, a consequence of his inability to locate a consistent set of themes across those texts. Similarly, as each of those texts Wight identifies do not necessarily make reference to the three conditions of international relations that distinguish Rationalism, Realism and Revolutionism, those are not afforded inclusion in Wight's own traditions.

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[41] Dunn, "Mythology or Methodology?", 309 - 310.

[42] Jeffery, "Tradition as Invention", 57-84.

[43] Although I have associated Nardin with respect to traditions as being that which is handed down (as a broader definitional property of a tradition) Nardin is generally associated with the variant of tradition as *Paradigm*.

Wight's assessment is, therefore, a victim of its own internal logic. By charactering his trichotomy of traditions on the basis of their association with international anarchy, discourse and society respectively, Wight has excluded any alternative common narrative that may classify those texts prior to 1914 as forming a body of classics. Those texts Wight identifies can instead be classified with an emphasis on the study and prevention of war – that is, war being the theoretical narrative which associates this body of classics which relate to international relations. Hoffman's characterisation of IRT as a discipline being originally constituted as a "search for a remedy to the problem of war in an international system populated by sovereign political entities"[45] reinforces the scope for those texts to be classified in such a manner. In Orend & Johnston's recent edition of Kant's *On Perpetual Peace*, for example, in addition to Kant's essay forming the substance of that edition, the issue contains excerpts from de Saint-Pierre's *Project for a Perpetual Peace in Europe*, Rousseau's *A Lasting Peace Through the Federation of Europe* and Bentham's *A Plan for a Universal and Perpetual Peace*.[46] Each of these texts can be classified as being of a tradition concerned with the understanding and prevention of war.

The imposition of an alternative common narrative to those texts deemed scattered and unsystematic again highlights the extent to which classification is dependent on the understanding one has of a tradition. The logic of Wight's

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[45] Mark Hoffman, "Normative International Theory: Approaches and Issues" in *Contemporary International Relations: A Guide to Theory*, ed. John Groom and Margot Light (London: Pinter Publishers Ltd, 1994), 27.

[46] Immanuel Kant, *On Perpetual Peace*, ed. Brian Orend, trans. Ian Johnston (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2015), 105-113.

external reasons is, therefore, flawed to such an extent that if we are to account for the way that IRT relies on political theory, it cannot be with reference to Wight's external reasoning. Where Wight characterised the story of life before IRT as one defined by absence, having broadened the scope for a common narrative, that is, as the study of war, it becomes apparent that such a body exists in the very texts he considered unsatisfactory. To say that IRT relies on political theory on this basis is unsatisfactory, given the flaws inherent in the logic of this reasoning. We must, therefore, look to internal reasons.

Internal Reasons: The Primacy of the State

While the story of life before IRT is one supposedly defined by absence, the story of political theory (as "the tradition of speculation about the state"[47] and the fundamental question of politics) is instead one of a substantive and expansive discipline. Wight's internal reasons are, essentially, the greater degree of academic weight afforded to political theory, relative to IRT. Given the primacy of the sovereign state in both classical and contemporary political theory, as well as what constitutes the fundamental question of politics, such an imbalance is readily apparent. The social contract tradition, for example, posits the state as being that which secures the conditions stipulated by the social contract, and is characterised as the pre-eminent political authority. Alternatively, Rawls, as the figurehead of the modern liberal tradition, in both *A Theory of Justice* and *Political Liberalism* looks "to reason to adjudicate what he sees as the fundamental question of politics: the conflict between

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[47] Wight, *Diplomatic Investigations,* 18.

liberty and equality."[48] In either case, what constitutes the 'fundamental question of politics' is, essentially, not concerned with matters explicitly relevant to international relations. As Wight describes it, irrespective of the particular tradition, the fundamental belief in the sovereign state "has absorbed almost all the intellectual energy devoted to political study."[49] Despite what constitutes the 'fundamental question of politics' being dependant on the particular tradition, text or author, political theory more generally has (historically) not turned its attention to the question of international relations to any substantive extent, relative to questions of the state or equality.

The primacy of the sovereign state in political theory has an inherently historical basis. In particular, Wight notes that each of the three more substantive events which have impacted on the history of political thought have resulted in notable works of political theory, as opposed to IRT.[50] In particular, the Reformation (and Counter-Reformation), French Revolution and the various totalitarian revolutions throughout the 20th century are each concerned with the internal mechanics of the state, and the resulting texts are necessarily considered as belonging to the history of political thought, rather than international thought. As the common theme of each of these events is their concern with the fundamental character of the state and its relationship with society, the scope for any relevance to the tenets of IRT is diminished by virtue of the immediate relevance of the state. Where, for example, such an upheaval has some (if any) relevance to questions IRT, those questions are often

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[48] John Dryzek et al, "Introduction" in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory*, ed. John Dryzek et al (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9.
[49] Wight, *Diplomatic Investigations*, 21.
[50] Ibid., p 24.

consigned to the status of 'foreign affairs' or as being relevant to foreign policy.[51] Alternatively, any theory explicitly relevant to international relations is often simply diverted to concerns regarding the state – Morgenthau, for example, argues that "a theory of international politics must be focused on the concept of the national interest."[52] As such, the centrality of the role of the sovereign state in political theory, relative to IRT, has had the broader effect of IRT being consigned to the margins of the Western philosophical tradition.[53]

In this way, Wight's characterisation of the relative academic status of political theory and IRT is indeed accurate. Coupled with the flawed logic of Wight's external reasoning, this thesis relies on the historical authority of political theory as the *general* basis on which IRT justifies its reliance on that discipline. However, Wight's internal reasons do not account for the relationship in a complete sense. The characterisation of the disparity of IRT relative to political theory is intended primarily as a commentary on the status of IRT itself, as opposed to seeking to explain its relationship with political theory as such. In other words, while the status of political theory relative to IRT allows us to explain *why* IRT relies on political theory, it does not necessarily explain *how*. Similar to Schmidt's disciplinary history of IRT,[54] this thesis therefore employs Wight's internal reasons as being 'instructive' for the subsequent inquiry into the relationship itself.

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[51] Ibid., p 21.
[52] Hans J Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 54.
[53] Ian Clark, "Traditions of Thought and Classical Theories of International Relations" in Clark and Neumann, *Classical Theories of International Relations*, 2.
[54] Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy*, 21.

The Normative and the Empirical

"[T]he normative and the empirical are not separate worlds."[55]

To say that political theory has occupied a central role in the history of Western philosophical thought is, essentially, to say that political theory has a form of normative weight. While questions concerning the fact/value distinction are often with regard to the content of a given theory, the normative weight possessed by political theory is 'softly normative', in that themes relevant to political theory, and those who have authoritatively considered those themes, are valued in a normative fashion. It is, in this way, that an explanation as to how IRT relies in political theory can be set out. That is not to say that this form of normativity is exclusive to IRT, yet it pertains particular relevance for accounting for the relationship between classical realism and classics of political theory.

It is, at this point, that the focus of this thesis turns its attention to classical realism specifically. As idealist theories of IR are explicitly normative, their reliance on norms expressed by political theory is an inherent part of that tradition – for example, and in part, that idealism is necessarily concerned with progress and the inherent immorality of war.[56] The normativity of idealism is therefore uncontroversial. Conversely, as classical realism seeks to describe international relations "consistent with the facts" and without regard to

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[55] James L Richardson, in Devetak, *An Introduction to International Relations*, 54.
[56] Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, 19 - 20.

"universally valid abstract principles"[57] the scope for soft normative tendencies of classical realism warrants further enquiry.

If it was the case that classical realism was premised entirely on empirical observation, then it would not necessarily rely on political theory in such a way. This is not to say that realism is a normative discipline generally, rather that the way by which realism relies on classics of political theory is done so based on its 'soft normative' value, such that the fact/value distinction becomes blurred to a certain degree.

In doing so, this thesis will first set out the way by which realism is described as having its foundations in the philosophy of science, as seeking to account for social phenomena by way of empirical observation. This thesis will then argue that, despite the characterisation of classical realism as a primarily explanatory theory, it in fact expresses a normative reliance on both themes and theorists traditionally associated with political theory.

The Philosophy of Science

Theories of IR are, in many respects, characterised by their necessary reliance on a set of philosophical foundations.[58] Monteiro and Ruby note that IR scholarship is scattered with instances where theorists believe their approach must be predicated by a particular philosophical foundation.[59] As for the

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[57] Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 4th Edition* (New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc, 1967), 4.
[58] As may be obvious, Marxist approaches are, for example, underpinned by a general conception of Marxist philosophy, or feminist theories of IR premised on feminist theory.
[59] Nuno Monteiro and Kevin Ruby, "IR and the False Promise of Philosophical Foundations" *International Theory* 1:1 (2009): 16.

present context, the philosophical foundations of classical realism are the general tenets of the philosophy of science.

What, in fact, constitutes scientific explanation is subject to conjecture, as Hollis and Smith note, the present position of the status of philosophy of science cannot be so succinctly captured – "there is no neat position to summari[s]e".[60] That is not to say that the state of the philosophy of science is in disarray, rather that the field is so expansive that it is near well impossible to determine any one consistent and accepted position. More contemporary accounts of the philosophy of science are, in this respect, vast and varied,[61] such that Feyerabend, for example, believes that "there are no useful and exceptionless methodological rules governing the progress of science or the growth of knowledge."[62] As such, the only abstract principle that applies to science in any and all circumstances is that "anything goes."[63] Despite this plurality, the variant of the philosophy of science that we are concerned with here, and that which Morgenthau, Bull and Carr rely on, is that described by Hollis and Smith, that "[t]he tasks of a scientific theory are to *abstract*, to *generalize*, and to *connect*."[64] Kenny, in a similar fashion, notes that scientific method has historically consisted of four stages: systematic observation, the

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[60] Hollis and Smith. *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, 67 [original emphasis].

[61] See for example: Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Routledge, 2002); Willard van Orman Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961) and Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

[62] John Preston, "Feyerabend" in *The Companion to the Philosophy of Science*, ed. William Herbert Newton-Smith (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), 146.

[63] Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: Verso, 1988), 19.

[64] Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, 61.

proposition of a theory, a prediction relating to phenomena outside the initial observation, and finally, the prediction being empirically tested and falsified.[65]

Realism and the Philosophy of Science

Classical realism, as an explanatory theory of IR, advocates scientific analysis as being able to explain and predict the existence of social phenomena. In this way, realism is concerned with "testing hypotheses [and] proposing causal explanations with a view to identifying main trends and patterns in international relations"[66] In rejecting the explicit and inherent normativity of the idealist tradition, Morgenthau and Carr argue that the application of universal norms is inconsistent with the practical reality of international relations. Morgenthau, for example, advances a theory of international politics which, premised on his six principles of realism, and that "[t]he test by which such a theory [of international politics] must be judged is not *a priori* and abstract but empirical and pragmatic."[67] Similarly, Carr's approach "places its emphasis on the acceptance of facts and on the analysis of their causes and consequences."[68] This is further apparent in the realist understanding of international anarchy – that is, that anarchy does not necessarily involve any particular normative content, rather that those theories simply characterise anarchy as being an observable fact, from which subsequent analysis into its causes and consequences is then undertaken. This account of realism as it

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[65] Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), 625.

[66] Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater, "Introduction" in *Theories of International Relations, 4th Edition*, ed. Scott Burchill et al (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 16.

[67] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 3.

[68] Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939, 2nd Edition* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1948) 10.

relates to IRT is distinct from realism in the philosophy of science, as the latter is concerned with the nature of the world as existing independently of us, and that "any proposition about the world has a truth-value that is dependant…upon the way the world is."[69] The former, however, though necessarily related, is the rejection of the "subordinating [of] political considerations to moral considerations."[70] That said, classical realism necessary seeks to employ a form of analysis historically associated with the philosophy of science.

Explanatory and Normative Theory

Despite the extent to which classical realism seeks to exclude explicitly normative concerns from its account of international relations, there are still ways by which classical realism exhibits normative tendencies. This is a consequence of both the conceptual character of 'theory' generally, as well as instances whereby classical realism tradition evokes themes and theorists in a normative fashion.

The methodological character of a 'theory' is, more generally, not confined by a characterisation as either explanatory or normative. Explanatory theory is, in many respects, underpinned by normative questions or concerns, or (to a lesser extent) carries 'normative baggage'. Dowding's description of 'theory' as being perspectival, explanatory or normative is one such account of this, especially in the case of a particular theory being both explanatory

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[69] Keith Dowding, *The Philosophy and Methods of Political Science* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 10.

[70] Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, 27.

(descriptive) and normative.[71] This dual characterisation of theory is evident with respect to a variety of disciplines beyond IRT, where, for example, Deluze notes that "[e]mpiricism is by no means a reaction against concepts, nor a simple appeal to lived experience"[72] and Jackson, who advocates the role of conceptual analysis in the context of analytic philosophy.[73] As such, despite the apparent extent to which explanatory seeks to exclude normative content, there is scope for normative concerns to be inherent in that explanation, given the very character of what constitutes a 'theory'.

This is particularly relevant to IRT more broadly. Returning to Hoffman's description of the beginnings of the discipline of IRT, he states that its establishment was normative, in that it viewed war as being an undesirable occurrence in international relations.[74] Similarly, Nardin and Mapel, in tracing the origins of IRT to its foundations in international law, further characterise international affairs as being defined by its concern with ethics – "[e]thical concerns have always been part of international affairs."[75] Similarly, the way by which issues including human rights, the ethics of intervention, distributive justice and environmental degradation have come to occupy part of the fundamental theoretical concerns of IRT is indicative of the primacy of normative concerns.[76] This is further discussed by Reus-Smit and Snidal, who

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[71] Dowding, *The Philosophy and Methods of Political Science*, 71.
[72] Gilles Deluze, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014), xvii.
[73] See for example Francis Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics – A Defence of Conceptual Analysis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 56.
[74] Hoffman, *Contemporary International Relations*, 27.
[75] Nardin, *Traditions of International Ethics*, 1.
[76] Hoffman, *Contemporary International Relations*, 30-38.

locate the existence of this duality with respect to more contemporary theory, including critical theory, postmodernism and feminism.[77]

Classical realism is not immune to the permeation of normative concerns. Despite the apparent arbitrary distinctions of the first 'great debate' of realism and idealism, as well as the extent to which Carr, Morgenthau and Bull seek to limit the scope for the normative, classical realism is nonetheless susceptible to normative questions. Morgenthau, for example, rails against "the concern with motives and the concern with ideological preferences"[78] but, at the same time, notes the scope for moral and ethical limitations on the practise of international relations. Specifically, given the plurality of individual moralities expressed by statesmen whose actions impact the international arena, Morgenthau rejects the potential for any universal set of norms which could govern behaviour in that sphere. That said, Morgenthau nonetheless concedes the existence of moral limitations on indiscriminate acts of killing in war.[79] Similarly, Morgenthau believes that a belief in politics as a science would result in reason transcending the political, which he opposed.[80] In a similar fashion, Carr notes the scope for morality to impact on international relations, albeit in a way that is vastly subservient to the role of power and *realpolitik*. Carr's realism, though primarily concerned with the realities of political practice, nonetheless relies on the harmony of both utopia and reality.[81] As such, despite realism seeking to

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[77] Christian Reus-Smit, Christian and Duncan Snidal, "Between Utopia and Reality: The Practical Discourses of International Relations, in Reus-Smit and Snidal, *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, 23.
[78] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 5.
[79] Ibid., 241, 228 and 229.
[80] Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, 23.
[81] Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939*, 13.

advance a theory of IR that is characterised by the acceptance of empirically observable facts, realism still accepts the scope for normative tendencies to a certain degree.

The Value of Themes

The way that classical realism relies on certain themes as being relevant to international relations is indicative of its reliance on political theory as softly normative. The fact of classical realism relying on certain themes, as opposed to others, is highlighted by the distinction between classical realism and its more contemporary incarnation in neorealism, or structural realism. In particular, the primary concerns of classical realism are the balance of power, international anarchy, human nature, as well as the practical reality of the political. Conversely, neorealism (or structural realism) instead subjugates any relevance of domestic politics and human nature to the structural mechanics of the international arena. Waltz for example, in his theory of structural realism, "rejects the classical realist arguments that human nature of the domestic character of states are relevant factors in explaining fundamental aspects of international relations."[82] As such, Waltz places no soft normative value on those subjects, and instead values the more structural components of the balance of power. As such, the classical realist tradition places soft normative value in each of those themes as being relevant to international relations.

This form of normativity is evident in a variety of themes considered relevant by classical realism. While *raison d'etat* and state interest is believed to have

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[82] Chiaruzzi, "Realism" in Devetak, *An Introduction to International Relations*, p 41.

priority over normative concerns, Donnelley provides that questions of *raison d' etat* are ethical, in that "they concern *which* values are appropriate to international relations".[83] The same can be said for each of the other themes which classical realism believes to be relevant to the study of international relations. While a classical realist account of human nature and anarchy may be premised by a view of those themes as they exist, rather than how they ought to function, the fact of those themes being valued is indicative of having a soft normativity. Returning to Morgenthau's account of the unreliability of the plurality of moral codes expressed by international statesmen, his value of the role of the international stateman is itself softly normative. The level of analysis here is not the content of a given theme deemed relevant to classical realism, rather the fact of it being deemed relevant itself. Classical realism is therefore characterised as expressing this form of soft normativity on this basis, that it places a normative value in determining which topics are relevant to its theory.[84]

The Value of Theorists

The soft normative value of themes extends in a similar way to theorists traditionally associated with political theory. Contrary to Gallie's assertion that "the ablest minds of previous ages had…either ignored or by-passed [IRT]",[85] each of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes have value due to their standing

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[83] Jack Donnelly, "The Ethics of Realism" in Reus-Smit and Snidal, *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, 154 [original emphasis].

[84] This form of soft normativity is not exclusive to classical realism and political theory. The same can be said of any scientific discipline that places value in certain themes in explaining a given position, as opposed to others. In theoretical physics for example, Brian Greene 'values' string theory in explaining certain physical phenomena, while Lawrence Krauss rejects that approach.

[85] Walter B Gallie in Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought*, 4.

in the history of thought. As is immediately apparent, Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes are indeed some of the more prominent political theorists of the Western philosophical tradition, so that to refer to them in advancing a theory of IRT is to place soft normative value on that theorist.

This form of reliance is not exclusive to classical realism as such. Rawls, for example, as a more contemporary liberal, is considered part of the 'Kantian' tradition of contemporary liberal theory. Noting that liberal theory, both that of Kant and Rawls, is inherently normative, the tradition nonetheless relies heavily on the authority of Kant, as further underpinning their theoretical positions. The way by which Rawls invokes Kant is apparent in the case of both his political theory, where he provides that "the theory of justice is highly Kantian in nature"[86], and his international theory, noting that *The Law of Peoples* is, essentially, an extension of the principles in *A Theory of Justice* to international relations. Even returning to Wight's trichotomy of traditions of Realist, Rationalist and Revolutionist, Wight "anointed Kant as intellectual figurehead of what he labelled the 'Revolutionist' tradition."[87] Despite this evocation of Kant, Wight (at the same time) "does little to promote the idea that his work should be required reading for students."[88] In this way, referring to a theorist such as Kant, without substantiating his theory, is seeking to merely obtain a measure of value from that reference.

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[86] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), xviii.
[87] Howard Williams and Ken Booth, "Kant" Theorist Beyond Limits" in Clark and Neumann, *Classical Theories of International Relations*, 71.
[88] Ibid., 72.

Classical realism expresses a soft normativity in a similar way. Just as certain themes are valued for their relevance to IRT, a reliance on Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes is an instance of those theorists having their own value. Carr stating that Machiavelli is the first important political realist[89] before proceeding to outline the realist tenets implicit in Machiavelli indicates that Carr not only relies on the political theory of Machiavelli, but also that he places value in Machiavelli as a political theorist. Wight's realism places Hobbes as the peer to Machiavelli.[90] This is similarly evident in that, despite classical realism being defined as the vast expanse of texts prior to Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes have come to have a measure of value amongst the expanse of alternative realist theorists.[91] In each of these cases, the soft normative value of those theorists is a consequence of the content of their theory, but not necessary to it. As with the case of Wight's use of Kant, this form of value is independent of theoretical content.

Conclusion

As such, the normative and the empirical are not separate worlds. While the ascendancy of political theory over IRT is, in and of itself, of no great consequence outside of the present context, it allows us to account for the basis upon which classical realism relies on political theory. Despite seeking to describe the mechanics of world politics through empirical and scientific

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[89] Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939*, 63.

[90] Wight, *International Theory*, 17.

[91] Again, this form of soft normativity is not exclusive to classical realism. This thesis, for example, places a measure of value in Quentin Skinner as the 'figurehead' of the Cambridge approach to political theory.

means, the permeation of normative concerns through classical realism is the way that a soft normativity of themes and theorists arises. This permeation is such that themes that are otherwise viewed by classical realism as explanatory become ethical by virtue of the value in the themes itself. As seminal theorists of history and political theory, Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes have come to have soft normative value in a similar way. Coupled with the flaws inherent in the logic of Wight's understanding of a tradition, the relationship between classical realism and political theory can therefore be described as classical realism relying on the normative weight possessed by those themes and theorists of political theory.

Just as the ascendancy of political theory has consequences for its relationship with IRT, the way the IRT values themes and theorists of political theory raises further questions in relation to the way they are valued. In particular, similar to Wight's understanding of a tradition, classical realism is of the view that "political ideas do not change over time."[92] The way that classical realism understands power, for example, is relied upon on a softly normative fashion, but also in a way that understands power as having a timeless relevance. Furthermore, the way that classical realism values Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes is in a way that essentially abstracts themes from those theorists and then applies them as defining aspects of the international arena. In this way, the more substantive premise of this thesis takes issue with that characterisation of political ideas and theorists as ahistorical. As we shall see, it is indeed the case that the political theory on which classical realism relies, is

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[92] Wight, *International Theory*, 5.

in fact, distinguished by its historical and ideological context to such a degree that there is a basis to question whether classical realism can rely on political theory (in the way that it does) at all.

Chapter Two: The Vocabulary of Realism

"[C]onceptual analysis is the very business of addressing when and whether a story told in one vocabulary is made true by one told in some allegedly more fundamental vocabulary."[93]

The 'vocabulary of realism'[94] is premised on the notion that political concepts can be abstracted from the context of their occurrence to apply to the characterisation of international relations. In this way, the vocabulary of political theory exists as a fundamental set of concepts which predicate much of the theoretical content of classical realism. The way by which those concepts are relied on by realism is in a way that understands those concepts as having timeless relevance and applicability – that those theories assume perennial meaning, independent of historical context. Relying on concepts (as well as certain themes and theorists) in this way is not exclusive to classical realism; Skinner, for example, notes that this assumption has come to occupy a central role in the history of thought.[95] Yet its expression by classical realism, told by the story of life before IRT, has particular resonance, by virtue of its own disciplinary history.

Through the interpretative tools of Skinner and the Cambridge School, this thesis now turns to the content of the reliance of classical realism on classics of political theory. By identifying those theorists of political theory in their

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[93] Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics*, 28.

[94] Borrowing Wolin's phrase 'the vocabulary of political philosophy' – see Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 12.

[95] Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57.

historical and ideological context, we can determine the extent to which classical realism is consistent with that context. In other words, our concern is whether the story of life before IRT in the vocabulary of realism is made true by the story told in the vocabulary of political theory.

To achieve this, this thesis will first outline the general tenets of the Cambridge approach, and the specific rhetorical 'tools' that constitute that interpretive method: Skinner's Mythology of Doctrines (in two parts) and the Mythology of Coherence. In turn, our focus is then to determine the extent to which the illocutionary dimensions, and ideological and historical context, of each of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes are concerned with questions relevant to international relations.

The Cambridge Approach

"I think history is a system of roads, and there's nowhere it doesn't go."[96]

The use of a particular methodological approach is, in many cases, an academic predilection or matter of preference. In this way, the interpretative method with respect to the social sciences is such that it predicates the way by which a theory is formed or informed. An approach to method is, essentially, the way by which one views the world. Returning to Hollis and Smith's characterisation of the status of the philosophy of science, the fact of there being no one accepted position as to that discipline is an indication of the variety of views which constitute scientific method. With respect to method in classical realism,

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[96] Jordan, D (La Dispute). *SCENES FROM HIGHWAYS 1981-2009* (Philadelphia: Better Living Records, 2014).

the explanatory and 'scientific' approach preferred by Morgenthau for example, informs the content of his theory of international politics as the inapplicability of universal norms to *realpolitik*. Similarly, the historicism of Skinner and the Cambridge approach informs the content of his specific acts of textual interpretation or political theory. Skinner's account of Hobbesian political theory, in Volume 3 of V*isions of Politics*, is one that is deeply embedded in the broader method of 'ideas in context'.

The method that informs this thesis is, essentially, that of Skinner and the Cambridge School. The reasoning for this 'selection' is underpinned by the pervasiveness of history in conceptual analysis. In this way, history is indeed a system of roads, there is nowhere it doesn't go. As such, this thesis will not defend its use of the Cambridge approach, but instead will first set out the specific formulation of the Cambridge approach applied here, before proceeding to examine those seminal texts of classical realism in the context of that approach.

Similar to the philosophy of science, what constitutes the Cambridge approach to political theory is not necessarily settled. For example, in *Political Philosophy: The View from Cambridge*, Skinner chaired a panel at which each invited member[97] proposed their own view as to what is, in fact, 'the view from Cambridge'. Despite some variation between each of their respective positions, the 'view from Cambridge' is broadly concerned with the reading of texts in their historical context. While Geuss noted that if the object of study is the

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[97] Quentin Skinner, Partha Dasgupta, Raymond Geuss, Melissa Lane, Peter Laslett, Onora O'Neill, W. G Runciman, and Andrew Kuper.

historical identity of a text, then its context is a necessary consideration in that study, he also cautioned against pursuing an overly historical approach.[98] Instead, Geuss promoted an approach which is concerned with being 'historically informed' in undertaking an interpretation of a historical text.[99] However, the way by which this thesis is informed by the Cambridge approach is subject to qualification – that the object of study is not solely the historical identity of the considered texts, but instead an analysis of those texts which is necessarily informed by their context.

Skinner's approach is, in addition to the premise of 'ideas in context', underpinned by Wittgenstein's characterisation of language, that "words are also deeds".[100] One of Skinner's foremost concerns is not simply what a theorist or text says, but what that particular theorist or text is *doing* in making a given statement.[101] In turn, this emphasis on the understanding of speech acts, what Austin termed the 'illocutionary force',[102] is one of two particular dimensions that Skinner distinguishes, the other being the dimension of meaning or the sense and reference attached to a given word and/or sentence.[103] Such a distinction is also highlighted in Skinner noting the separation between "the political point a text serves in its political context and

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[98] Quentin Skinner et al, "Political Philosophy: The View from Cambridge" *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 10:1 (2002): 3.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans Gertrude Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott Ltd, 1968), 146.
[101] Skinner, "Political Philosophy*"*, 3.
[102] John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 99-100.
[103] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume I*, 3.

the author's political point in writing it."[104] Any understanding of a given text, therefore, must necessarily engage with these respective dimensions of meaning.

That said, we are not necessarily concerned with the entirety of the Skinnerarian approach to political theory as such. For example, Tully identified a set of five themes or approaches that constitute his procedure, being: (a) the location of the historical meaning of a text as a consequence of both its locutionary and illocutionary dimensions; (b) the impact of the illocutionary dimension of meaning on the contemporary ideological conventions; (c) the way by which ideologies are constituted; (d) the relationship between political action and political ideology; and (e) the role of political thought and action in ideological change.[105]

For the purposes of this thesis, we are concerned primarily with (a), (b) and (c), insofar that classics of political theory relied on by IRT are used as a means of forming ideology, reflected in contemporary ideological conventions; that the reliance does not necessarily engage with both locutionary and illocutionary meaning. The specific methodological tools by which this thesis applies these facets of Skinner's historicism are the Mythology of Doctrines and Mythology of Coherence and, in turn, the 'complex interplay' between the locutionary and illocutionary dimensions of meaning. The following examination of seminal texts of classical realism will be through the lens of these Mythologies in order

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[104] James Tully, "The Pen is a Mighty Sword: Quentin Skinner's Analysis of Politics" in *Meaning & Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988), 12.
[105] Ibid., 8-16.

to determine the extent to which those texts, and the tradition more broadly, assumes the myth of timeless relevance to classics of political theory.

According to Blau however, there be always some degree of uncertainty when undertaking a subjective textual interpretation. As a result, the use of the Cambridge approach is qualified by the interpretative difficulties discussed by Blau, in particular, by recognising that 'undertermination', as there always being varying ways of explaining evidence, is a necessary consequence of textual interpretation.[106] Additionally, in order to mitigate the scope for a greater deal of subjective uncertainty, the conclusions of this thesis are not presented as objective fact, rather they are a review of the 'evidence' for those claims made by classical realism. In Blau's words, "we are not telling our readers what the facts are: we are telling our readers how strong we think the evidence is for our claims."[107] By making the evidence itself the object of this inquiry, we can minimise the impact of any weaknesses of subjective textual analysis.

The Mythology of Doctrines, in Two Parts

"A myth is not necessarily sacred."[108]

Part One

The first form of the Mythology of Doctrines is concerned with the way that doctrines or ideologies are created. Specifically, converting "some scattered or

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[106] Adrian Blau, "History of Political Thought as Detective-Work" *History of European Ideas* 41:8 (2015): 1184.

[107] Ibid., 1183. [emphasis removed].

[108] Lihui Yang, et al, *Handbook of Chinese Mythology* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 2.

incidental remarks by a classic theorist into their 'doctrine' on one of the expected themes."[109] This is comprised by crediting a text or theorist with a meaning that they had not necessarily intended, as well as the 'danger' of expecting a particular theorist to promote a particular topic.[110] Skinner's illustration of this aspect of the Mythology is that of Coke's remarks on the scope for English common law to override statute in the *dictum* of *Bonham's Case*[111] are determined as contributing to a doctrine of judicial review, despite the doctrine not coming about until much later.[112] To say that a theorist has set out a doctrine on a given topic, therefore, must be warranted by the extent to which they actually set out an authoritative and expansive account of that topic.

In the present context, we are concerned primarily with the extent to which an incidental remark of an author or text of classics in political theory is credited with forming part of the classical realist doctrine more broadly. This is evident particularly with respect to Hobbes, who's inclusion in the classical realist canon is, as noted by Walker, despite "Hobbes himself [writing] very little explicitly on international politics as such."[113] Walker further notes, "the interpretation of writers like…Hobbes is a notoriously difficult enterprise".[114] While this thesis does not attempt to capture the entirety of the Hobbesian canon; it will nonetheless illustrate that the characterisation of Hobbes as a

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[109] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume I*, 60.
[110] Ibid., 61.
[111] *Thomas Bonham v College of Physicians (1610) 8 Co. Rep 107*
[112] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume* I, 60-61 - In the United States, the origin of the legal doctrine of judicial review is cited as the case of *Marbury v Madison* (1803) 5 U.S 137. – See Saikrishna Prakash and John Yoo, "The Origins of Judicial Review" *University of Chicago Law Review* 70 (2003): 887 – 982.
[113] Walker, *Inside/Outside*, 110.
[114] Ibid., 112.

realist is contrary to the extent to which themes relevant to international relations are present in his work.

The basis upon which Hobbes has come to be classified as being part of the realist canon is a consequence of anarchy being a defining conceptual theme of classical realism. In turn, anarchy in international relations has necessarily been equated with the Hobbesian metaphor of the 'state of nature'. As Bull argues, we are "entitled to infer that all of what Hobbes says about the life of individual men in the state of nature may be read as a description of the condition of states in relation to one another".[115] We are, however, not necessarily concerned with the particular merits of this analogy, and whether Hobbes' logic with respect to the individual applies equally to the international. In this respect, there seems to be some conjecture. While Bull, as we have seen, espouses the merits of that logic, Heller, on the other hand, proposes that the state of nature in respect of the individual and the international are not logical equivalents. Instead, Heller describes the "seductive power of the *Leviathan's* logic"[116] as explaining the persistence of the analogy in international thought. Instead, the difficulty in being able to classify Hobbes as a classical realist is that his remarks on international relations are, returning to Wight's language, 'scattered or incidental'. In other words, the relative space afforded to comments on the international raise questions as to whether Hobbes' contributions to IRT are substantive enough to constitute a doctrine on that topic.

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[115] Hedley Bull, "Hobbes and the International Anarchy" *Social Research* 48:4 (1981): 720 – 721.
[116] Mark Heller, "The Use & Abuse of Hobbes: The State of Nature in International Relations" *Polity* 13:1 (1980): 23.

In terms of statements specific to questions of international relations, much of what exists across Hobbes' body of works is indeed scattered. In each of the *Elements of Law*, *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, we can locate various statements which equate the general tenets of Hobbes' civil science with international relations. In the *Elements of Law*, Hobbes noted that what indeed constitutes the law of nations had not yet been settled, before proceeding to outline what Armitage terms a 'cursory statement'[117] on the law of nations:

> "And thus much concerning the elements and general grounds of law natural and politic. As for the law of nations, it is the same with the law of nature. For that which is the law of nature between man and man before the constitution of commonwealth, is the law of nations between sovereign and sovereign after."[118]

Expanding on this albeit brief statement regarding the equivalence of the law of nature and law of nations, Hobbes, in *De Cive*, proceeds to further describe the way that the law of nature, as applying to the individual, is equivalent with the law of nations. In particular, that Law (in a general sense) is able to be divided into each of *Divine* and *Humane*. *Divine* law is expressed in both the *Natural* (or *Morall*) law and the *Positive* law. *Naturall* law is then divided into that of the '*Law of nature*' and '*that of Cities*', also termed '*that of Nations*'.[119] As a result, the Law of Nature and the Law of Nations possess similar precepts,

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[117] Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International* Thought, 63.

[118] Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, *Natural and Politic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 151.

[119] Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive: Philosophicall Rudiments Concerning Government and Society* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1983), 170-171.

insofar that Nations assume the characteristics of man, once instituted.[120] In *Leviathan,* Hobbes makes an explicit statement as to the international sphere as being akin to a 'state of nature' – that:

> "in all times, kings, and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms; and continual spies upon their neighbours; which is a posture of War."[121]

Similarly, in Hobbes' *Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England*, the Student of the Common Laws provides that "[y]ou are not to expect such a Peace between two Nations, because there is no Common Power in this World to punish their Injustice: mutual fear may keep them quiet for a time, but upon every visible - advantage they will invade one another".[122] Each of these fragments contribute to topics considered to be the bases of the classical realist tradition.

Irrespective of the merits of each of these statements, and whether the logic of the state of nature as it relates to the individual applies equally to the international, it is apparent these varied statements form the basis of Hobbes' position on the question of the ways states interrelate. Again, what we are

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[120] Ibid., 171.
[121] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 85.
[122] Thomas Hobbes, *A Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971), 57.

concerned with is whether these contributions are sufficient in forming a 'doctrine' that warrants inclusion in the canon of classical realism. Given the expanse of the Hobbesian canon and that those statements relevant to the external character of the state forms some four paragraphs across each of the primary texts, it is evident that, as Forsyth notes, the "external relations of Leviathan are…on the fringe of Hobbes' theory."[123] This is further evident in the way in which *Leviathan*, *De Cive* and the *Elements of Law* are concerned with questions other than that of the international dimensions of the state.

In summary, the extent to which Hobbes makes reference to questions of international relations, and international anarchy specifically, is minimal relative to his conception of civil science more broadly. In comparison, McNeilly notes that a more than substantive part of *Leviathan* is concerned with an account "in physical, mechanistic terms, of what is involved in perception and thought."[124] Following his account of method, Hobbes's theory of the sovereign state is the basis for his characterisation, by Skinner for example, as the "first…modern theorist of the sovereign state".[125] In each of these cases, the extent to which these topics are considered by Hobbes is sufficient in the description of those accounts as being a 'doctrine' on those topics. As noted by Armitage, "the balance of Hobbes's own writings justified this focus on the internal dimension of the state."[126] On this basis alone, the

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[123] Murray Forsyth, "Thomas Hobbes and the External Relations of States" *British Journal of International Studies* 5:3 (1979): 196.

[124] Frederic S McNeilly, *The Anatomy of Leviathan* (London: MacMillan & Co Ltd, 1968), 29.

[125] Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume II: Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 413.

[126] Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought*, 59.

inclusion of Hobbes's into those traditions including the social contract tradition is justified, given the relative weight afforded to that particular theme.

The process whereby Hobbes came to be classified as being of the classical realist tradition is, to borrow Armitage's language, that of being 'co-opted'.[127] As a result, set against the First Form of the Mythology of Doctrines, those statements of Hobbes in referring to the international arena are insufficient to warrant Hobbes inclusion into the canon of classical realism and even his description as a 'great realist'.[128] That is not to say that those comments regarding the external relations of the state in Hobbes' thought are not worthy of consideration, however the characterisation of those comments as a 'doctrine', in light of the above, is indeed a myth.

Part Two

The second Form of the Mythology of Doctrines is similarly concerned with a historian or theorist being 'set' in approaching the interpretation of a text. Where a classic theorist fails to outline a doctrine on a topic deemed to be 'appropriate' to their subject, they are then criticised for that failure.[129] In many respects therefore, the existence of this form of the Mythology is a continuation of the first. As we have seen, despite the external relations of the state not forming a significant part of Hobbes' thought, the assumption that those relations are appropriate to Hobbes 'doctrine' is what gives rise to examples of this myth.

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[127] Ibid., 71.
[128] Wight, *International Theory*, 30.
[129] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume* I, 64-65.

Much of the classical realist doctrine believes that the external character of the state is a topic proper to Hobbes' subject, and one to which he ought to have paid greater attention. Morgenthau, for example, argued that the inevitable logic of Hobbes doctrine on the state would have led him to "conclude that peace and order among nations would be secure only within a world state comprising all the nations of earth."[130] Similarly, Carr quotes Treitschke that the "'terrible thing' about Machiavelli's teaching was 'not the immortality of the methods he recommends, but the lack of context of the state, which exists only in order to exist."[131] In the secondary literature, for example, in Vincent's summary of the impact of Hobbes on twentieth century thought, Hobbes not turning to questions concerning the international are, at various times, characterised as both 'complacency' and as a 'failure'.[132]

Returning to the way that Skinner defines the second form of the Mythology, each of these cases are, essentially, a result of Morgenthau, Carr and Vincent having a preconceived position, prior to outlining their reliance on the respective theorist. In the case of Morgenthau, his project is concerned with the presentation of a comprehensive account of the realist approach to international politics. The extension of Hobbes' logic of the internal functions of the state to the external is one that suits the purposes of his project. Similarly, with Carr and Vincent, while their criticisms are minor, relative to their bodies of work more generally, the mindset that predicates such a criticism is an indication of seeking to attain some form of authority from texts of political theory, and not

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[130] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 483.
[131] Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939*, 89.
[132] John R Vincent, "The Hobbesian Tradition in Twentieth Century International Thought" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10:2 (1981): 95.

being able to derive that authority to the extent the historian had hoped. Indeed, criticism is commonplace in political theory; Blau for example, notes that being corrected on empirical claims is simply a "scholarly hazard and nothing to be ashamed of."[133] In respect of more subjective questions of political theory, such a hazard similarly exists; it is a feature of academia that we will believe others to be incorrect on a particular theory or position. Therefore, the illocutionary dimensions of meaning become increasingly relevant – the intention of a theorist reveal that a topic believed to be appropriate to their subject, may not necessarily be so.

A Supplying of Beliefs

While not necessarily a central component of this form of the Mythology, Skinner notes that it may occur where a classic theorist is supplied with a set of beliefs. This is, again, evident in the case of Hobbes, but Machiavelli and Thucydides also. According to Gauthier, "Hobbes would have approved [of] our phrase 'cold war'".[134] Similarly, with Thucydides, Rahe tells us that Thucydides would have been "overjoyed at the prospect that a modern American statesman, such as George C Marshall, should look to him".[135] More broadly, Welch notes the state of the secondary literature on Thucydides as being littered with the phrase "Thucydides means to tell us…"[136] In the case of Bull's *Hobbes and the International Anarchy*, much of the latter part of that paper is dedicated to exploring what Hobbes may have said regarding the state

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[133] Blau, "History of Political Thought as Detective Work", 1185.
[134] David Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969) 207.
[135] Paul Rahe, "Thucydides' Critique of Realpolitik" in Frankel, *Roots of Realism*, 107.
[136] David Welch, "Why International Relations Theorists Should Stop Reading Thucydides" *Review of International Studies* 29 (2003): 313.

of politics in our own time. This act of attributing sentiments to Hobbes follows Bull stating, rather explicitly, that the relations among states did not "occupy more than a small cupboard"[137] of Hobbes thought. Despite this qualification, Bull proceeds to argue that a theorist such as Hobbes who had translated Thucydides to English must surely have turned to questions of international conflict at some point. While, as we have seen, Hobbes did indeed turn to the external relations of the state to a minor degree, this assessment of Hobbes is one that is informed by Bull's belief that Hobbes' state of nature is analogous to the international arena. In further outlining this understanding of Hobbes, Bull relies on the historical context in justifying that analogy. Yet despite Bull's concern with the context of Hobbes' thought, as well as by Gauthier and Rahe, each of these instances are, essentially, an act of supplying those theorists with the prejudices of their reader, with the pretence of historical analysis. These absurdities are instances whereby "[h]istory then indeed becomes a trick we play on the dead."[138] To a certain extent, the imposition of prejudice on what a certain theorist may have meant is, as Blau notes, a feature of textual analysis generally[139] and the inherently subjective character of political theory seemingly exacerbates this tendency.

That is not to say that each of these statements, as well as the literature more broadly, are not founded on a genuine belief on the part of the historian that Hobbes and Thucydides would have felt those sentiments. Gauthier, Rahe and Bull, for example, are well-versed in their subjects and premise their

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[137] Bull, "Hobbes and the International Anarchy", 718-719.
[138] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume* I, 65.
[139] Blau, "History of Political Thought as Detective Work", 1183.

characterisation of Hobbes and Thucydides on that basis. That said, despite these statements being seemingly 'quaint' and minor, relative to the context of their interpretation of Hobbes and Thucydides generally, there is a danger in providing a theorist with sentiments that they may not have necessarily felt. Skinner, in particular, suggests that this may reflect 'sinister undertones'.[140] While this thesis does not assume any malice in this practice, the act of "fixing one's own prejudices onto the most charismatic names under the guide of innocuous historical speculation"[141] is fraught with danger. Were those statements merely 'historical speculation' simply presented as such, or qualified in a way that Blau suggests,[142] then the 'consequences' may be mitigated to some degree. Given the uncertainties inherent in textual interpretation, the danger exists in presenting a claim such as Rahe's as fact, which he, by all indications, appears to do. Rahe's claim regarding Thucydides supposed sentiments on hearing that a modern American statesman would turn to his work is, instead, an inference from evidence, not a historical 'fact'.

The second form of the Mythology of Doctrines, expressed in either the criticism of a theorist for failing to consider an 'appropriate' topic or the act of supplying sentiments to a theorist, are an indication of the dangers of being 'set' with a preconceived notion prior to the interpretation of a text. While, as Carr notes, the removal of the subject from historical interpretation is difficult, if not impossible;[143] the way by which a theorist of classical realism has

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[140] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume I*, 65.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Blau, "History of Political Thought as Detective Work", 1183.
[143] Edward Hallett Carr, *What Is History?* (London: Penguin Books, 1990) 29-30.

embedded himself in classics of political theory has a great deal of scope to distort the intentions of the original theorist.

In this way, theorists of classical realism have, essentially, interpreted classics of political theory with a pre-existing belief that certain themes are appropriate extensions of political theory, and have ought to be turned to at some point. Where that does not occur, those theorists of political are the criticised for the failure to do so. Similarly, the act of providing a theorist with a particular sentiment is one whereby, under the pretext of historical knowledge, prejudices are imposed on classic texts. In either case, in seeking the form of normative value from political theory, classical realism has imposed their own prejudices where the scope for obtaining that value is diminished.

The Mythology of Coherence

"Could you possibly be a little more incoherent?" asked Olivenko. "There are bits of this I'm almost understanding, and I'm sure that's not what you have in mind."[144]

The Mythology of Coherence is, according to Skinner, pervasive throughout the writings of moral and political philosophy. This Mythology is, essentially, that where there is an apparent lack of coherence or consistency across a body of texts, a historian may believe it to be their 'task' to provide that consistency.[145] This may arise not only where a theorist writer may not be consistent in their theory, but also where they fail to give any systematic account on a certain theme.[146] Skinner again illustrates this Mythology with

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[144] Orson Scott Card, *Ruins* (New York: Simon Pulse Publishing, 2012), 70.

[145] Skinner Q, *Visions of Politics – Volume I*, 67.

[146] Ibid., 65.

reference to Hobbes, that if a historian doubts what may, in fact, be the more central themes of his philosophy, the duty of the historian is to read his texts repeatedly, to a point where the historian believes coherence can be found. Strauss, for example, is an obvious proponent of the Mythology of Coherence, in that, by way of 'reading though the lines',[147] interpreters are able to discern meaning hidden by the original theorist, due to the threat of persecution. Strauss' belief that theorists including Machiavelli and Hobbes were subject to persecution is such that there is an inner coherence to be found in their respective works. [148]

Although this Mythology was originally framed as an interpretive device with respect to individual authors of classic texts, it can nonetheless be abstracted to the canon of classical realism more broadly. In this way, the very act of classification of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes as forming a systematic account of realism is an expression of this Mythology. As with the process of classification previously explored, the way that one defines a tradition impacts upon whether a process of classification exhibits the Mythology of Coherence. For example, an understanding of a tradition as that which is passed down does not necessarily exhibit the Mythology of Coherence, as the passing down of ideas can be located with respect to these classic theorists of political theory. As we have already seen, the fact of Hobbes translating Thucydides *History* into English is an indication of the way by which ideas in the history of thought come to be passed down. The formation of traditions as the transmission of

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[147] Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 24.
[148] Ibid., 33.

ideas does not necessarily fall foul of this Mythology as, in the case of Hobbes for example, the passing down of ideas in this way is simply historical fact. While Skinner doubts claims of the influence of one theorist over another, for example, that "Hobbes in turn is said to have been influenced by Machiavelli"[149], the existence of traditions generally gives credence to ideas in the history of thought being passed down to a certain degree.

The understanding of a tradition which Wight employs is one such instance of the Mythology of Coherence. As we have seen, the way by which Wight classifies ideas in the history of thought as belonging to one of his respective traditions is not that of 'passing down', but rather the identification of common themes shared by a given set of theorists - indicated by Wight classifying a theorist in the Grotian tradition though the identification of 'Grotian themes'. Similarly, in relation to the elements of classical realism, the seminal thinkers of that tradition have identified particular themes from each of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes that suit their particular theoretical position. This process of classification, by Wight for example, occurs despite theorists of political theory not necessarily producing a coherent and consistent account of realism relevant to international relations. In other words, these is no apparent realist 'system' which can be identified across texts of classics of political theory, where those texts are watermarked by their context, and illocutionary dimensions.

While Wight characterises Machiavelli as the founder of classical realism, in a way similar to Carr and Morgenthau, who each characterise Machiavelli as

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[149] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume I*, 75.

outlining principles central to the realist canon, there is "no clear statements to the effect that the ends justifies the means"[150] and "no clear notion of national interest defined as power"[151] to be found in Machiavelli's writings. As we shall see, the absence of any coherent and systematic account of political realism is evident in Thucydides and Hobbes in a similar fashion. While there may indeed be self-contained statements as to the nature of politics or human nature inherent in each of their respective texts or bodies of work, that does not necessarily mean that those self-contained statements can be abstracted to form some system generally. Similarly, returning to Wight's characterisation of life before IRT as being defined by paucity, the fact of him proceeding to attempt to locate a body of classics of IRT is indicative of this Mythology. Despite being supposedly unable to identify a coherent body of classics, in the introduction of his *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Wight proceeds to outline the way by which a theory of international relations can identified in scattered accounts of political theory. That is, Wight states quite explicitly "what I am going to try to do."[152] Therefore, the belief that where there is an intellectual poverty of theories of international relations and that a theory can be located by seeking the coherence hidden in classic texts of political theory, is indeed a Mythology of Coherence.

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[150] Walker, *Inside/Outside*, 43.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Wight, *International Theory*, 6.

Locutionary/Illocutionary Meaning and the Context of their Occurrence

> *"Knowledge and conviction do not depend on…neutrality, but on a commitment to the perspective from which one speaks, a commitment one cannot possibly without."*[153]

The Mythologies discussed above are, essentially, concerned with practices that Skinner sees as being prevalent in the study of the history of ideas. In turn, Skinner provides that the 'deeper reason' for his criticism is a scepticism with the practice of "abstracting particular arguments from the context of their occurrence in order to relocate them as 'contributions' to allegedly perennial debates."[154] Either of the mythologies in their specific formulations can, in turn, be attributed to failures by historians to account for the illocutionary dimensions of meaning. The first form of the Mythology of Doctrines arises, in part, from ignoring the fact that if a theorist had intended to set out a doctrine on a given theme, they simply would have. The Mythology of Coherence is, in a similar way, a consequence of the "discount [of] statements of intention that authors themselves make about what they are doing, or even to discount whole works that may seem to impair the coherence of their systems of thought."[155] In each of those classics of political theory on which classical realism relies, including the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, *The Prince*, *Leviathan* and, according to Wight, even Tolstoy's *War and Peace*,[156] questions of the

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[153] Stanley Fish, "Interpretation and the Pluralist Vision" *Texas Law Review* 60:3 (1982): 501.
[154] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume I*, 86.
[155] Ibid., 69.
[156] Wight, *International Theory*, 19-20.

international are not necessarily part of the 'context of their occurrence', nor the intended topic of their respective author.

Thucydides

Thucydides, specifically, his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, is classified as being of the classical realist tradition insofar as he sought to provide an account of history, and of human nature, as expressed through political action. Given the extent to which these themes permeate throughout the classical realist canon, its "embrac[ing] Thucydides as their founder and inspiration"[157] is immediately apparent. Mearsheimer, for example, relies on Thucydides in characterising the way that states act in the international arena, in addition to state strategy.[158] Waltz, although classified as belonging to structural realism, relies on Thucydides as underpinning, in part, his 'third image'; that a state must rely on its own devices in order to advance its particular interests.[159] Similarly, Morgenthau turns to Thucydides in outlining the basis of what constitutes 'interest'.[160] In any event, the way by which the canon of classical realism turns to Thucydides is in a fashion whereby the context of the *History*'s occurrence is incidental to those themes considered relevant to that tradition.

The blurred distinction between the *History* as a historical explanation of events and a philosophical inquiry is, according to Gustafson, a consequence of

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[157] Welch, "Why International Relations Theorists Should Stop Reading Thucydides", 304.

[158] John J Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 38; 163.

[159] Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 159.

[160] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 8.

the translation of the Greek term for 'history' as meaning 'inquiry'.[161] As a result, this thesis relies on the *History* as a primarily philosophical inquiry into human nature, and the character of war between great powers. That is not to deny that the *History* is presented as an account of historical fact, rather that Thucydides did not see history as simply a record of facts, but as an "opportunity to come to understand something permanent and profound."[162] In this respect, Thucydides wrote the *History* as "not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last forever."[163] Such a design is, according to Crane, the basis on which classical realism has turned to Thucydides - that Thucydides had 'set the stage' for his appropriation by the classical realist tradition – that:

> "[t]he greatest strengths of Thucydides' narrative are also among its greatest weaknesses. On the one hand, he fashioned a model that not only proved extraordinarily compelling and powerful for the events of his own time but also laid the foundations for a realist paradigm that still exerts force today."[164]

Although this is an example of an author intending perennial relevance, that the illocutionary dimension is, in part, to contribute to ongoing debates, the context

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[161] Lowell Gustafson, "Introduction" in *Thucydides' Theory of International Relations: A Lasting Possession*, ed. Lowell Gustafson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 2.

[162] David Cartwright, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides: A Companion to Rex Warner's Penguin Translation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 4.

[163] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1954), 2.

[164] Gregory Crane, *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity: The Limits of Political Realism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 18–9.

of the *History*'s occurrence is such that its meaning is, borrowing Welch's language, "a function of some complex interplay between, author, text and reader."[165] In other words, the illocutionary dimension of the *History* alone is insufficient in characterising that text as having timeless relevance – we must pay heed to the context of its occurrence.

The context of the occurrence of the *History* is immediately apparent. Despite this thesis viewing the *History* as a primarily philosophical text, its context is, essentially, the historical circumstances that Thucydides was, in part, seeking to describe. Specifically, this context is "an analysis of the causes and consequences of Athenian imperialism insofar as it affected both the domestic body politic and its external relations with the other Greek city states."[166] As such, the fact that the more philosophical themes of the *History* arose out of that context means that any subsequent analysis if the *History* is 'watermarked' by its context. Just as Aristotle's *polis* and the Hobbesian state are, according to Collingwood, not logically equivalent,[167] the city-states of Ancient Greece and the modern state are not necessarily equivalent with respect to their conceptualisation of 'interest' and political action.[168] For example, seminal texts of classical realism characterise the state is as a sovereign entity, such as that which followed the Treaty of Westphalia and is central to the classical

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[165] Welch, "Why International Relations Theorists Should Stop Reading Thucydides", 309.
[166] Ashley Tellis, "Reconstructing Political Realism: The Long March to Scientific Theory" in Frankel, *Roots of Realism*, 14.
[167] Robin George Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 64.
[168] While both Plato's *polis* (for example) and the Hobbesian state are thought devices for illustrating certain philosophical themes, as opposed to actual and historical political entities, the analogy nonetheless highlights how Thucydides account of interest and state behaviour are not necessarily logical equivalents and bound by their respective contexts.

realist understanding of national interest. Morgenthau for example, provides that states "are sufficiently important actors that any positive theory of international relations must place them at its core".[169] As such, Thucydides' understanding of international relations as being shaped by its context becomes increasingly apparent, insofar as '[t]he idea of sovereignty was not part of the ancient classical Greek world."[170] Alternatively, the political entities which are present in the *History* are, in fact, 'city-states'. Instead of being concerned with the expression of national interest in the way realism defines sovereign states, city-states, such as Athens and Sparta, were instead dedicated to the principle of civic virtue and the realisation of 'the good'. Indeed, "[h]umans could only properly fulfil themselves and live honourably as citizens in and through the *polis*."[171] As a result, the relevance of context as an interpretive device is particularly evident; in that, despite classical realism not necessarily equating the *polis* and the state, it nonetheless assumes that the defining characteristics of each apply equally, irrespective of context, where that may not be the case. The context in which a theory may arise has the scope to qualify any potential to contribute to an allegedly perennial debate.

In the present context, the distinct character of the *polis* and sovereign state is such that it is doubtful whether Athens, for example, and any given state in the contemporary international arena, would behave in a similar fashion. If classical realism is concerned with the way that national interest is a expression

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[169] David Lake, "The State and International Relations" in Reus-Smit and Snidal, *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, 42.
[170] David Held, *Political Theory and the Modern State: Essays on State, Power and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 216.
[171] Ibid., 217.

of sovereign authority, it cannot hope to authoritatively rely on Thucydides in advancing a theory as such, given the context-dependency of Thucydides' understanding of human nature and political action.

Machiavelli

At a conference held in Florence in 1949, Merleau-Ponty posed the question, "[h]ow could he [Machiavelli] have been understood?"[172] While Merleau-Ponty proceeded to outline his own understanding of Machiavelli as combining "contingency in the world and consciousness in man",[173] the question itself is an indication of the difficulty inherent in undertaking any inquiry into Machiavelli's political theory. As with Thucydides and Hobbes, various and divergent interpretations of 'Machiavellian' thought exist. Althusser, for example, considers Machiavelli through the lens of Gramsci and Marx in order to outline his conception of beginnings – that Machiavelli is, essentially, concerned with "the constitution of Italian national unity."[174] The understanding of Machiavelli of concern to this thesis, however, is that which places him at the forefront of classical realism, as "in a real sense the inventor of realism."[175] Much of the association between Machiavelli and the canon of classical realism is on the basis of his removal of ethical considerations from the practice of politics, that "no attention should be paid either to justice or

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[172] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 211.
[173] Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 1999), 6.
[174] Ibid., 53.
[175] Wight, *International Theory*, 16.

injustice, to kindness or cruelty, or to its praiseworthy or ignominious."[176] In addition to to Wight anointing Machiavelli as the founder of his Realist tradition, Carr identifies three tenets implicit in Machiavelli that cement his status as being of the realist philosophy - an understanding of history as cause and effect, that "theory does not…create practice, but practice theory, and thirdly, that politics and ethics entertain separate functions.[177] Similarly, Morgenthau describes Machiavelli's account of politics as "acute and candid".[178] As a result, Machiavelli's association with classical realism is clear.

That said, consistent with Thucydides, it remains doubtful whether the classification of Machiavelli as being of the classical realist tradition survives an inquiry into his context. Following the exploration of the earlier distinction between the *polis* and the state in Thucydides, the presumption that "the conditions of world politics in the middle of the twentieth-century map onto early Renaissance Italy is problematic for realist thinking."[179] The extent to which Machiavelli is conditioned by his context is such that his account of human nature and of politics cannot be separated from his temporal and contextual place in Renaissance Italy. In particular, *The Prince* is, at the outset, dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici,[180] encouraging his house to adopt his wisdom in saving Italy from the 'barbarians' (French, Spanish and Swiss), who have

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[176] Niccolo, Machiavelli, *The Discourses of Niccolo Machiavelli: Volume I*, trans. Leslie J Walker (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1975), 573.
[177] Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939*, 63-64.
[178] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 220.
[179] Michael Jackson and Thomas Moore, "Machiavelli's Walls: The Legacy of Realism in International Relations Theory" *International Politics* 53:4 (2016): 454-455.
[180] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. N H Thomson (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1992), vii-viii.

"overtaken the peninsula."[181] Jackson and Moore, for example, identify the continuing theme of 'walls' in Machiavelli, whereby Machiavelli prescribes a process of ensuring the outside walls are built and durable, before stability inside the walls can be secured by way of a republican government.[182] While Thucydides had his eyes turned to the future, in addition to his present context, Machiavelli was instead centred primarily on the internal dimensions of statecraft and had his gaze locked firmly on his present. As such, the principles which form the basis of Machiavelli's theory are qualified by their relevance to his context. *The Prince*, for example, is concerned with a 'new definition' of what it means for a prince to display *virtuoso* behaviour. In particular, that *virtu* "denotes those qualities which enable a prince to overcome the vagaries of fortune and rise to honour, glory and fame."[183] As we have already seen with the distinction between the city-state and the sovereign state, principles if *virtu* are not necessarily relevant to the practise of politics in the international arena. As noted by Walker, the term *virtu* has its own "historically specific resonance".[184] Skinner's account of the context in which Machiavelli wrote provides that a term such as *virtu* "gains its 'meaning' from its place within an extensive network of beliefs…which must be fully traced if the place of any one element within the structure is to be properly understood."[185] Similarly, in the *Discourses*, which are, according to Skinner, "concerned with the

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[181] Wayne Rebhorn, "Machiavelli's *Prince* in the Epic Tradition" in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John Najemy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 80.
[182] Jackson and Moore, "Machiavelli's Walls", 461.
[183] Quentin Skinner, "Political Philosophy" in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles Schmitt et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 434.
[184] Walker, *Inside/Outside*, 35.
[185] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume I*, 49.

preservation of security and the attainment of glory and greatness."[186] Glory and greatness do not form part of the classical realist position on the ambitions of the sovereign state, which instead places its survival and the attainment of power at its forefront. Even with respect to the 'preservation of security', the way that Machiavelli understands the security of the republic is distinct from that of more contemporary accounts of state security, given the distinctive character of the city-state.

The way that Machiavelli has come to be relied on by classical realism is in a way similar to that of Hobbes. Specifically, that the general principles advances on *The Prince* and *Discourses* are analogised with having relevance to the characterisation of contemporary international relations. While theorists such as Winiarski qualify the classification of Machiavelli as a classical realist by placing him at the "gateway of the modern world"[187] as opposed to being *of* the modern world, the basis of his classification, given his context-dependency, is doubtful. While Skinner notes that Winiarski's characterisation may be an accurate reflection of the historical standing of Machiavelli,[188] for Morgenthau to describe Machiavelli's account of politics as accurate, he must consider the circumstances of Machiavelli's occurrence, given the way that those circumstances have the scope to distinctly qualify much of Machiavelli's political theory. Any characterisation of Machiavelli as having the form of timeless relevance assumed by classical realism runs contrary to the direction of his gaze and the illocutionary dimension of his texts.

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[186] Skinner, *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 436.
[187] Warren Winiarski, "Niccolo Machiavelli" in *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1963), 247.
[188] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume I*, 73.

Hobbes

As we have already seen, the justification of Hobbes' inclusion into the canon of classical realism is a result of the conversion of a set of scattered remarks into a supposedly coherent doctrine of international relations. This inclusion is, further to the Mythology of Doctrines, without heed to its context or illocutionary dimensions. In particular, despite the way that Carr, Wight and Morgenthau rely on Hobbes in underpinning a continuous tradition of *realpolitik*, that characterisation is without regard to the ideological context of Hobbes's political thought.[189] This context is, as with Thucydides and Machiavelli, defined with respect to both ideology and historical circumstance.

Hobbes' ideological context was, in part, defined by an understanding of civil science assumed from the Renaissance. The way that Hobbes is watermarked by his ideological context is that the illocutionary dimensions of his seminal texts are reflected in his departure from the pre-held views regarding civil science. In particular, the basis on which techniques of rhetoric were developed based on Cicero and Quintilian.[190] Cicero's civil science was, for example, fundamentally grounded in the realisation of a certain conception of 'the good' and that, further to the understanding of the citizen as possessing both wisdom and reason in locating a particular truth, a citizen must be able to possess the "eloquence to make his hearers accept it."[191] As discussed by Skinner, the

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[189] Quentin Skinner, "The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Political Thought" *The Historical Journal* 9:3 (1966): 286.

[190] Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume III: Hobbes and Civil Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 67.

[191] Ibid., 69.

illocutionary dimensions of the Hobbesian body of work is an attempt to depart from that understanding of civil science.

Such a departure is outlined in the *Elements of Law*, *De Cive* and *Leviathan*. In *De Cive,* Hobbes outlined his position against the prevailing understanding of rhetoric and civil science, that wisdom is gained "by contemplating things as they are in themselves."[192] As a result, Hobbes places no particular value in the need to eloquently argue one's philosophical position – that "powerful eloquence which is separated from a true knowledge of things."[193] This particular rejection of the role of rhetoric in civil science is, in turn, reflected in his grounding of his political theory in reason alone, without needing to verbalise a given position. In the Review and Conclusion of *Leviathan*, for example, the reader is quite explicitly, informed that the whole of his doctrine is concerned with grounding "the civil right of sovereigns, and both the duty and liberty of subjects, upon the known natural inclinations of mankind, and upon the articles of the law of nature".[194] Similarly, in the Preface of *De Cive*, Hobbes sought to demonstrate that the necessary form of the state is "a deduction from the known nature of human nature".[195] Each of these particular statements form the basis of the illocutionary dimensions of Hobbes' civil science, not as an attempt to understand the character of the external dimensions of the state, but to formulate a concept of civil science that rejects the prior rhetorical understanding of philosophy, including Cicero.

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[192] Hobbes, *De Cive*, 192.
[193] Ibid., 193.
[194] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 473.
[195] Skinner, "The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Political Thought", 306.

This ideological context is, in turn, framed by its historical context. In particular, the role of the English Civil War is such that Hobbes' body of work is seen as, in part, "the products of a well-matured mind reflecting upon an alarming situation in which 'a wonderful distemper' had seized his native land".[196] Hobbes concern with the circumstances of the Civil War are reflected explicitly in his *Behemoth* and, implicitly, from his justification of absolute political authority. Indeed, as noted by Skinner, Hobbes locates the origins of the English constitutional arrangements to the conquest of England by the Normans, such that King William had been "able to make such arrangements as he pleased."[197] Again in the *Dialogue*, Hobbes notes that the laws of England were "assented to by submission made to the Conqueror here in England."[198] While Skinner provides that the justification of sovereign authority by conquest was not necessarily exclusive to Hobbes,[199] the way in which the right of conquest is outlines across Hobbes' body of work, and his concern with the right of the monarch to govern, the relationship between Hobbes' theory of political obligation and the historical circumstance in which that theory arose is clear.

Just as the relative space afforded to international relations does not warrant the characterisation of Hobbes' thought as forming a doctrine of IRT, neither does the context of his occurrence, nor the illocutionary dimensions of his texts warrant his inclusion in the classical realist canon. As we have already seen,

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[196] John Sanderson, *But the People's Creatures: The Philosophical Basis of the English Civil War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 86.
[197] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume III*, 243; Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth or the Long Parliament* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1969), 119.
[198] Hobbes, *Dialogue*, 69.
[199] Skinner, *Visions of Politics – Volume III*, 254.

those statements which are concerned with the law of nations are, in the context of Hobbes body of work an aside, relative to his statements on civil science. Both the ideological and historical context in which Hobbes wrote further emphasise the extent to which classical realism, in abstracting relevance 'from the context of their occurrence', has failed to have regard to the context which, in turn, informs the illocutionary dimensions of those texts.

Conclusion

Each of the above inquiries into the respective ideological and historical contexts of each of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes are merely a fragment of the entirety of their respective historical circumstance. That said, even a cursory glance at both the illocutionary dimension of their texts, in addition to the context of their occurrence, highlights the extent to which concerns relevant to international relations are an aside to their primary theory. Where, for example, explicit statements are made by a particular theorist of political theory that are relevant to those questions of concern to classical realism, such as Hobbes equating the law of nature and law of nations, those statements are qualified and conditioned by the illocutionary dimensions of the relevant statement, and the context in which that statement occurred.

In turn, the respective Mythologies, and an account of the illocutionary dimensions of the texts of political theory relied on by classical realism, has the cumulative effect of highlighting the way in which classical realism has come to rely on classics of political theory in ways that do not necessarily reflect the context of their occurrence and the illocutionary dimensions of meaning.

Despite the difficulties inherent in subjective textual analysis, the extent to which seminal texts of classical realism fall prey to the respective Mythologies indicates that those interpretive fallacies are beyond that of mere subjective interpretation. That is not to say that classical realism exhibits any malice or 'sinister motives', instead that the act of relying upon a given text of political theory is done so with the assumption of perennial relevance and of timeless applicability. As we have seen however, those assumptions are unstable, given the extent to which political theory is qualified by the history.

Chapter Three: The Criteria of Inclusion

"But, Mr Voltaire, declared lover of truth, tell me in good faith, have you found

it? You combat and destroy all errors; but what do you place in their

stead?"[200]

An inquiry into the method of any discipline is a double-edged sword. On one edge, there may be certain aspects of a discipline we believe are worthy of criticism or critique, and yet with that critique, the other edge is outlining a positive or alternative approach which avoids the perceived deficiencies in the original method. As suggested previously, being corrected on empirical claims is a scholarly reality that we should expect. Similarly, with conceptual analysis and textual interpretation, the inherent and subjective uncertainty of those endeavours is such that "textual interpreters too should often highlight reasonable doubts about important evidence."[201] It is, in this way, that scholarly criticism and critique is a necessary part of conceptual analysis. However, without seeking to explore alternatives to those theories that we criticise, we are, in the context of Blau's detective analogy, committing shoddy detective work; we should not be pursuing (and challenging) one hypothesis, but instead should be *comparing* hypotheses.[202] Using the detective analogy, hypotheses are the lines of enquiry that may lead to the arrest of a suspect. The hypotheses that we are presently concerned with are the varying approaches to method that take into account the necessary relevance of historical context.

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[200] Marie Anne Du Deffand, *Lettres à Voltaire*, trans. Nuno Monteiro and Kevin Ruby (Paris: Rivage Poche, 1989), 80.
[201] Blau, "The History of Political Thought as Detective-Work", 1183.
[202] Ibid., 1181.

This thesis will first outline the method proposed by Skinner, Blau, Sil and Katzenstein, and Armitage respectively, and whether they can effectively resolve those interpretative fallacies outlined in the previous chapter. Despite the merits of each of these approaches, this thesis will then proceed to outline a positive theory of interpretation in light of the extent to which classical realism falls prey to the respective Mythologies. This theory will be, essentially, a reassessment of the epistemology of classical realism.

Comparing Hypothesis

Skinner and the Contextual Tradition

Following the exploration of Skinner's historicism in the previous chapter, the methodology outlined by Skinner is an extension of that approach. In particular, in order to mitigate the scope of the Mythologies, any act of textual interpretation or conceptual analysis must necessarily be informed by the context of a texts occurrence and any illocutionary dimensions. While Jeffrey frames Skinner's response as the view that the construction of traditions itself is an illegitimate scholarly exercise,[203] Skinner concedes in *The View from Cambridge* that the construction of traditions, centred around a set of texts deemed worthy of attention, is a necessary part of studying the history of ideas.[204] Instead, Skinner's concern is ensuring that the construction of traditions has a historical basis. Returning to the taxonomy of traditions set out previously, Skinner's position of a way forward is captured by what Dunne

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[203] Jeffrey, "Tradition as Invention", 60.
[204] Skinner, "Political Philosophy: The View from Cambridge", 2-3.

terms a 'contextual tradition',[205] that the premise of contextual traditions is to "rebuild…traditions within the parameters of historical specificity."[206] The premise of Skinner's approach to method is, as such, concerned with being able to think philosophically as well as historically. An application of this approach to the canon of classical realism would resemble both specific acts of textual interpretation and the construction of the tradition itself, and would be done so in a way that reflects the balance of thinking philosophically and historically.

The merits of this particular approach are, as we have seen, is in the way it sheds light on the way texts in political theory are watermarked by their historical and ideological context. That said, as noted by Blau, the difficulty inherent in Skinner's approach is that it does not necessarily equate to a practical means of conceptual analysis. Blau, for example, summarises Skinner's position as advising interpreters to seek contextual evidence, which he claims is not enough.[207] However, Blau, while nothing that *Visions*, for example, is a practical reflection of Skinner's approach, points out that Skinner's assertion that we 'may need' historical research in order to determine context is ambiguous.[208]

Similarly, the entirety of Volume III of *Visions* alone appears to indicate the impracticality of this approach, that (although a practical account of locating a Hobbes in his historical and ideological context) what constitutes the context of a given theory may be so expansive that it outweighs the initially intended

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[205] Dunne T, "Mythology or Methodology?", 310.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Blau, "History of Political Thought as Detective Work", 1179.
[208] Ibid., 1189.

objective of the inquiry. While not necessarily of the realist tradition,

Kingsbury and Roberts reflect on the "mammoth task of applying such detailed

contextual methods to the very long and very broad sweep of a 'Grotian

tradition'"[209] The danger therefore, is that the balance between thinking

philosophically and thinking historically becomes uneven to such an extent that

history itself becomes the object of inquiry.

With respect to our present purposes, the impracticality of Skinner's approach

is such that it cannot resolve the interpretative fallacies explored in the

preceding chapter. Specifically, while this thesis has sought to capture a

general picture of the context of the occurrence of Thucydides, Machiavelli and

Hobbes respectively, that picture only forms a small part of the entirety of their

context. For any theorist of International Relations to engage with the complete

context in setting out their account would disrupt the balance of thinking

philosophically and thinking historically to a too great extent.

Blau and Thinking Like a Detective

Given the impracticalities of Skinner's approach, Blau instead outlines a means

of conceptual analysis centred on the practical steps a historian may take in

undertaking a textual interpretation. Although identifying specific instances of

mitigating the subjective uncertainty inherent in textual interpretation, Blau

recommends a form of disclosure of any reasonable doubts as to the strength of

a given piece of evidence.[210] Hollis and Smith's characterisation of the status

of the philosophy of science as not yet settled is an indication of what Blau

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[209] Kingsbury and Roberts, *Hugo Grotius and International Relations*, 53.
[210] Blau, "History of Political Thought as Detective Work", 1183.

recommends, in that they make an explicit statement as to the strength of their evidence. That is not to say that any act of textual interpretation should account for any and all potential holes in one's argument, rather that we require a "readiness to be honest with oneself and one's readers about the strength and weaknesses of one's evidence".[211] If respect of classical realism, for example, Bull's analogy of Hobbes' state of nature and international anarchy, despite the fallacies of his analogy explored previously, is nonetheless predicated on a qualification that the evidence on which he makes the analogy is not all that authoritative.[212] In seeking to further account for the inherent uncertainty of subjective textual analysis, Blau further advocates what he terms the 'triangulation of evidence', which is concerned with the combination of four types of relevant evidence: textual, contextual, philosophical and motivational.[213] To ignore any of these particular types of evidence is to fail to account for the entirety of what constitutes a given theorists' contributions on a theme. There is indeed a great deal of merit in the practicalities of this approach and the way in which it provides a practical extension of Skinner's historicism.

That said, despite the extent to which Blau's approach addresses the impracticalities of Skinner's methodology, it is limited to specific acts of textual analysis and is not necessarily concerned with broader questions of the construction of traditions in IRT. Given that the way in which realism has come to rely on political theory is a product of its philosophical foundation

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[211] Ibid.
[212] See Bull, "Hobbes and the International Anarchy", 717-718.
[213] Blau, "History of Political Thought as Detective Work", 1190.

and, in turn, has consequences for the construction of the classical realist tradition, any approach must consider to those concerns. That is not to doubt the merits of this approach, noting a practical emphasis on textual interpretation has been applied to this thesis; our concern extends beyond that of specific acts of textual analysis. In order to address these questions specifically, any approach to classical realism must include its philosophical foundations.

Sil and Katzenstein's Analytic Eclecticism

While Skinner and Blau are concerned with specific methods of textual analysis, Sil and Katzenstein instead outline an approach which captures the construction of traditions. In particular, they propose an approach termed *analytic eclecticism*. Analytic eclecticism involves "selectively integrat[ing] analytic elements…of theories or narratives that have been developed within separate paradigms but that address related aspects of substantive problems that have both scholarly and practical significance."[214] In other words, rather than being bound by the limits of a given paradigm, this approach centres on the reality faced by a given political actor, and then draws on elements from competing paradigms to arrive at a particular outcome. This outcome does not necessarily suggest there is one 'correct' answer,[215] rather that the location of a suitable response for a political actor should not necessarily be limited by theories being essentially paradigm-bound. While analytic eclecticism is framed by Sil and Katzenstein as being a means by which particular policy

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[214] Sil and Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms*, 10.
[215] Ibid., 16.

positions can be arrived at, that is, as having primarily a practical dimension, their approach is abstracted to question the dominance that paradigms have held for the past century.[216] The practicality of their approach is reflected in, for example, attempts to make realism more relevant to the practise of foreign policy, which requires the relaxation of the conceptual boundaries of neorealism to account for alternative variables, including non-state actors.[217] In this way, again returning to Blau's detective analogy, this approach, in the words of Sherlock Holmes, avoids the fallacy of "twist[ing] facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts."[218] The realms of world politics explored by Sil and Katzenstein, including nuclear weapons, international political economy, and global and regional governance can be considered in a more complete way if the conceptual boundaries of the varying traditions are lessened to include more diverse theoretical perspectives.

However, analytic eclecticism is not necessarily concerned with the mechanics of textual interpretation. This approach instead addresses what Sil and Katzenstein characterise as the "growing gap between theory and policy in the field of international relations."[219] In other words, the purpose of analytic eclecticism is not to engage with the internal dimensions of traditions themselves, rather to critique the way in which traditions can inhibit practical responses to world politics. As would be immediately apparent however, this

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[216] Rudra Sil, "The Questionable Status of Boundaries: The Need for Integration" in *Beyond Boundaries? Disciplines, Paradigms, And Theoretical Integration in International Studies*, ed. Rudra Sil and Eileen Doherty (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 1.
[217] Sil and Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms*, 53.
[218] Downey Jr, Robert in Silver, J et al (producer), & Ritchie, G (director). (2009). *Sherlock Holmes* [motion picture]. United States: Warner Bros. Pictures Roadshow Entertainment.
[219] Sil and Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms*, 1.

approach is outside the scope of what is relevant in addressing the concerns of the previous chapter. While the approach that this thesis advocates engages with the way traditions are constituted and the consequences of the process of classification of texts into the canon of classical realism, our concern is with the internal dimensions of that tradition, rather than their relationship with the practical elements of world politics.

Armitage and Expulsion from the Canon of IRT

While Skinner, Blau, Sil and Katzenstein outline a more expansive approach to method in political and IRT, Armitage's response to his revision of the place of Hobbes in the canon of IRT is more succinct. Specifically, as a consequence of the discrediting of the 'Hobbesian' theory of international relations, the "salutary effect of this revision may be to expel Hobbes from the canon of IRT and to admit him instead to the history of international thought."[220] The distinction between belonging to the canon of IRT and the history of international thought is that rather than being categorised as a 'classical realist' per se, this would be simply describing Hobbes as having turned his mind to the international at some point. Essentially, rather than a question of interpretation, the solution alluded to by Armitage is concerned with the process of classification of ideas into the traditions of IRT. That is not to say that Armitage's solution is entirely contrary to a more general interpretative approach such as Skinner's, rather his emphasis is in the process of classification. In other words, while contextual and historical approaches are a

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[220] Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought*, 74.

means to an end for Armitage, the approaches specific to textual interpretation, such as Skinner and Blau, are more an end in themselves.

An Epistemological Reassessment

Any approach to textual interpretation and conceptual analysis with respect to classical realism must engage with its philosophical foundation. As we have seen, given the necessary way that theories of IRT are predicted by a particular philosophical foundation, an alternative means of interpretation is framed by that foundation. To suggest that classical realism simply embrace the more normative approach of idealism for example, is absurd given the foundation it has in the philosophy of science. Instead, the specific approach advocated here is not necessarily a rejection of the role and reason of the philosophical foundations of classical realism, but rather a reassessment of its epistemology.[221]

The epistemology of classical realism is such that, as we have seen, it is characterised by the belief that those themes and theorists of political theory which underpin its empirical observations of international relations apply irrespective of context. In this way, realism is concerned with the primacy of fact, "without regard to concepts[s] unrelated to reality."[222] The way that Morgenthau characterises the nature of international politics, for example, is that "the perennial forces that have shaped the past as they have the future."[223]

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[221] For a broader picture as to the debate regarding philosophical foundations, see Monteiro and Ruby, "IR and the False Promise of Philosophical Foundations" 15-48; and Fred Chernoff, "Defending Foundations for International Relations Theory." *International Theory* 1:3 (2009): 466-477.
[222] Ibid., 3.
[223] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 9.

Again, with respect to interest, that "idea of interest is indeed of the essence of politics and is unaffected by circumstances of time and place."[224] Each of the instances whereby Carr, Morgenthau and Bull rely on political theory emphasise their belief that those principles are perennial in their applicability.

Yet despite these claims as to a belief in the perennial forces which shape the essence of politics, those seminal theorists of classical realism place a similar emphasis on the contextual and relative nature of thought. Just as Morgenthau notes interest as being unaffected by time and place, he notes its scope to shape political action "depends upon the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated."[225] With respect to Bull, his initial characterisation of 'order' notes that order in Revolutionary France is distinct to that of the contemporary Western world, and that the concept of a 'system of states' is itself dependant on its definition in a given historical moment.[226] In outlining the role and reason of modern realism, Carr describes its "outstanding achievement" as being able to reveal "the relative and pragmatic character of thought itself."[227] Despite Carr predicating his understanding of realism as being associated with the role of history as developmental, each of his examples of political reality are of a distinct temporal moment.

In this way, the epistemology of classical realism is caught between a belief in the perennial applicability of political concepts on one hand, and the contextual and relative nature of thought on the other. To say, as Morgenthau does, that

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[224] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 8.
[225] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations,* 8-9.
[226] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1977), 4; 12.
[227] Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis 1919-1939*, 67-68.

interest is dependent on its political and cultural context, but also to rely on

conceptions of interest borne out of Ancient Greece is an indication of an

inconsistency in the way that classical realism seeks to characterise political

reality. The approach advanced by this thesis is, essentially, for classical

realism to embrace the contextual and relative nature of thought to a greater

extent, to recognise that the reality of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes is

vastly distinct from Morgenthau's own reality. In a similar way, the

circumstances which form the perceived political reality of Carr and Bull that

inform their theories of international politics are those that are captured in a

specific temporal moment.

The ideological and historical circumstances that constitute the political reality

of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes is such that it cannot reliably inform

any theory of the reality of Carr, Bull and Morgenthau. Despite realism seeking

to rely on the historical fact as it occurred, or human nature as it is, the way by

which it has turned to political theory does not capture the immediacy of the

historical fact. As we have seen in the latter parts of the previous chapter, both

Thucydides and Machiavelli predate the modern concept of the sovereign state.

Furthermore, what constitutes interest for Thucydides, for example, is

watermarked by its ideological and historical context. Similarly, Carr's account

of realism as being characterised, in part, by concerns relevant to 'the sanctity

of treaties' and the mechanics of international law assumes that each of those

themes are independent of time and place. Yet despite both treaties and

international law being important instruments through pre-classical antiquity

and into the period 1500-1920,[228] the mechanics of international law are such that "[i]nternational organi[s]ation, whenever or in whatever conditions it is established, is born in a given political climate."[229] Similarly, while the canon of classical realism relies on Machiavelli, in part, due to his supposed removal of the consideration of ethics from politics, Skinner's exploration of the conditions of Machiavelli's reality reveals that this is, essentially, a misinterpretation of how Machiavelli perceived politics. Instead, "[t]he essential contrast is rather between two different moralities – two rival and incompatible accounts of what ought to be done."[230] The distinctions in political climate between Carr, Morgenthau and Bull, and Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes raise doubts as to whether the 'perennial forces' to which Morgenthau refers can be characterised as such.

In emphasising the contextual and relative nature of thought, the epistemology of classical realism would be affirmed as being concerned with empirical observation and historical fact. Instead of relying on a given classic of political theory, an 'observation' of the existence and character of international anarchy would be sufficient, without reference to any philosophical foundation. Having a foundation which incorporates observation as a means of characterising phenomena would justify that characterisation, independent of any reference to

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[228] Randall Lesaffer, "Peace Treaties and the Formation of International Law" in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law,* ed. Bardo Fassbender and Anne Peters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 71.

[229] Charles De Visscher, *Theory and Reality in Public International Law*, trans. P E Corbett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 53.

[230] Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought – Volume I: The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 135.

political theory. Carr, for example, alludes to this, that that his approach sees events in international relations as they are, instead of how they might be.[231]

In practical terms, this reassessment of the philosophical foundations of classical realism would, in the context of Bull's analogy of the Hobbesian state of nature with international anarchy for example, resemble the loss of any relevance or applicability of that analogy. In this way, it would be just as authoritative for a theorist of classical realism to state that "the international arena is defined by anarchy" as it would be for them to say that "the international arena is defined by anarchy, in a way similar to Hobbes' state of nature". Similarly, where the epistemology of classical realism at present gives rise to a reliance on Thucydides or Machiavelli, an emphasis on the relative nature of political reality would render any such reliance unnecessary. Therefore, a reassessment of the philosophical foundations of classical realism would be further reflected in a return to those texts of political theory to determine whether the political reality of those texts is indeed analogous.

Such a reassessment would have the additional consequences for the conceptual boundaries of the classical realist tradition. As alluded to by Armitage, were classical realism to find that it no longer required classics of political theory to justify its theoretical content, then it may be the case that what can be classified as being part of classical realism is subject to change. Just as Wohlforth defines 'classical realism' as being those texts published prior to Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* in 1979,[232] the absence of any

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[231] Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding in International Relations*, 21.
[232] Wohlforth, *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, 136.

relevance of political theory in characterising the international would render any text prior to Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939* (for example) as being of the history of international thought, as opposed to the classical realist tradition. It is, in this way, that where Sil and Katzenstein lessen the arbitrary boundaries of paradigms, this would instead have the effect of redefining the conceptual boundaries of classical realism. Such a shift in the structure of the classical realist tradition would have consequences for any further act of classification, should the tradition be revisited in the way that Philp and Williams suggest. Gunnell in particular notes that "the criteria of inclusion and the distribution of emphasis tend to depend on a prior conception of the structure and meaning of the tradition as a whole."[233] If the classical realist tradition is restructured in a way that pays heed to textual approaches such as that of Skinner, it would indeed be the case that Hobbes' *Leviathan* for example, would not suite those criteria of inclusion, set against a more contextual structure of that tradition.

The approach advanced by this thesis is, essentially, the emphasis on the relative and contextual character of political reality, as opposed to the timeless nature of power and interest. This is not to say that classical realism cannot continue to base its characterisations of international relations on those themes, rather that its recognition must be qualified by a sense of their history. In this way, an understanding of the contextual character of political reality captures both the necessary relevance of both specific instances of textual interpretation, but also the broader construction of traditions.

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[233] John G Gunnell, *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), 69

Conclusion

Classical realism must, therefore, exist in the way that Nietzsche suggests, that is, with both remembrance and forgetfulness. To exist unhistorically is, as we have seen, fraught with danger, given the extent to which themes and theorists pertaining to political theory and IRT are predominantly historical. That said, the balance of thinking historically and thinking philosophically would be compromised if classical realism had too great a 'historical sense.'

The connection between textual interpretation and the construction of traditions alone cannot account for Wight's external explanation as to the paucity of international theory prior to 1914. The texts which Wight believes to be 'scattered and unsystematic' can instead be classified on the basis of applying 'war' as a common and causal narrative to texts relevant to IRT. Turning to Wight's internal reasons, while the supremacy of political theory relative to IRT is an indication of *why* IRT relies on political theory, it does not explain *how*. In this way, despite the status of classical realism as an explanatory theory of IR, we can identify the way that it relies on political theory as a result of the 'soft normative' value of certain philosophical themes and theorists relevant to understanding international relations. In this way, themes such as anarchy, and theorists such as Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes become normative.

Having established the basis for the relationship as such, the question then becomes the way that classical realism employs those themes and theorists in which it places value. As this thesis has established, classical realism is

unhistorical in that it views those themes and theorist as having lasting relevance and application. The Cambridge approach, specifically, the Mythology of Doctrines and the Mythology of Coherence reveals that the extent to which international relations forms part of the concerns of political theory, is such that it does not justify the characterisation of Hobbes (for example) as having set out a doctrine on international relations. Similarly, an inquiry into the context of the occurrence and illocutionary dimensions of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes, highlights that they are qualified by their context in a way that they cannot apply in the way that classical realism seeks. That is not to say that each of these theorists do not consider international relations at all, rather their accounts are, essentially, watermarked by their context.

In seeking to explain these interpretive fallacies, the approaches advanced by Skinner, Blau, Sil and Katzenstein and Armitage do not have a complete application. Rather, each of their relative merits can be retrofitted to a point where the approach set out in this thesis is for classical realism to maintain its status as an explanatory theory of IR, but also to acknowledge that what constitutes 'political reality' is indeed subject to contextual caveats. This will, in turn, have consequences for which texts are deemed worthy to include in the canon of classical realism in IRT. As a result, classical realism can live, just as Nietzsche suggests.

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