NEW DIRECTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS? AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION
REALISM AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: TOWARDS A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CRITIQUE

Richard Higgott

International Relations as an Academic Discipline is at a major crossroads ... unlike in the 1950s and 1960s when Realism reigned supreme, there is no longer any clear sense of what the discipline is about, what its core concepts are, what its methodology should be, what central issues and questions it should be addressing (Hoffmann, 1987:231).

These sentiments, expressed in a recent edition of Millennium: A Journal of International Studies devoted to an analysis of the state of the discipline, abound in the contemporary study of international relations in Europe, North America and, not to be outdone, here in Australia. Indeed, the nature of the debate in Australia is every bit as sophisticated as in other places and the purpose of the four essays in this volume is to provide an insight into the nature of the critique of the international relations discipline that is evolving here. Particularly, they are intended to stand as a challenge to the very strong realist orthodoxy that has dominated the study of international relations in Australia since the early 1960s.

Collectively, the papers reflect the need for a process of soul searching within the Australian discipline. Individually they take issue with a variety of central epistemological and theoretical themes germane to international relations generally as well as the Australian discipline particularly. With the exception of Jim George’s philosophical critique of several of the ‘founding fathers’ (with apologies to Coral Bell) of the Australian discipline, the chapters do not deal directly with Australian themes and issues. Rather they raise a series of questions not addressed
to-date by the members of the international relations community in Australia.

Soul searching does, of course, take place fairly frequently, and properly so, within the social sciences. It has, for a variety of reasons, taken place less frequently in international relations and, until now, never in the Australian discipline. The last attempt to analyse the discipline within Australia was in 1981 (see Bell (ed.) 1982). The papers presented at that conference held in Canberra were an interesting contrast with those presented in this volume. With the exception of the respective discussions of international theory by Joseph Camilleri and Hugh Collins, none of the papers were either critical of the mainstream orthodoxy or concerned to raise questions about the status of the key concepts at the disposal of the student of international relations.

Certainly none of the papers at the 1981 conference searched around the epistemological and philosophical roots of the discipline in a manner similar to the essays by George and Campbell and none tested the cohesion of the central concepts of a discipline in a manner similar to Fitzpatrick’s analysis of the ‘system’ of states or Higgott’s discussion of the very notion of the ‘state’ traditionally employed by international relations scholars. Indeed most of the papers at the 1981 conference were written in what their authors would consider to be a language familiar to the practitioner or ‘working’ scholar of international relations. The papers in this volume, presented in draft form for the first time at the Conference of the Australasian Political Science Association in Auckland in August 1987, are very different - but no less important for that. They will find little appeal in policy circles - more is the pity one might add - given their high degree of theoretical self-consciousness. They are written from the perspective of students sensitive to the problematic nature of evidence in a manner incomprehensible to many scholars of the earlier generation convinced in their view of ‘the way the world is’.

The philosophical and theoretical nature of the papers has been seen as ‘intellectual arrogance’ in some quarters; whilst, in effect, the reverse is the case. Arrogance lies not with those sensitive to the complexity of the conceptual tools at the disposal of the scholar of international relations but with those who treat many of our central concepts; the state, the international system, the balance of power, sovereignty and so on as unproblematic and those who would wish to let the ‘facts speak for themselves’. It is, we would argue in this volume, the longstanding
tendency of earlier generations of scholars of international relations to treat concepts as unproblematic and data as self-evident that must bear much of the responsibility for the contested nature of theorising in the discipline in the present period.

The essays in this volume are critical in orientation of the prevailing orthodoxies of international relations. The justification for this is, we hope cogently argued in the texts. But they are our first words, not our last, on the subjects under scrutiny. They are, in short, a plea to establish or open a debate; not only within the international relations community specifically in Australia, as in Fitzpatrick's, George's and Higgott's essays, but also within the wider socio-philosophical community as in Campbell's paper. The assertion in all papers - explicit in George's and Higgott's, implicit in Fitzpatrick's and Campbell's - is that the Australian international relations community has not addressed itself to many of the central theoretical issues of the day and that, indeed, it is high time it did. With the exception of the work of, for example, Andrew Linklater (1986), Australian scholars to-date have been notably unself-conscious of the broader philosophical questions confronting the discipline - as Jim George demonstrates in detailed fashion in his discussion of major Australian scholars such as Bruce Miller, Coral Bell and the late Hedley Bull. Nowhere would our charge appear to be better illustrated than in the recent painstaking chronicle of the Australian discipline by Kubalkova and Cruikshank (1987). Whilst critical of the discipline in tone, the tenet of their critique is still one step short of the philosophical level pursued by Campbell and George and the analytical level pursued by Fitzpatrick and Higgott.

Indeed, the very strength of the papers in this collection, we feel, is that they bring to the study of international relations in Australia a knowledge of and sensitivity to the wider epistemological and ontological debates that have been in train within the other social sciences for over a decade. Their aim is to cast doubt on the methodological smugness that has often dominated the discipline of international relations, especially in Australia since the 1960s. In this sense the essays will, we hope, prove provocative and encourage a positive response from our colleagues. As George suggests in his chapter, this would be in keeping with the spirit of Hedley Bull's critical approach to theorising.

We are not, of course, suggesting that there is somewhere a common theoretical design appropriate to all in international relations. The
demarcation of the discipline into strongly identified subfields such as strategic studies, foreign policy analysis, international political economy and so on will necessitate a variety of different skills and perspectives. Rather, what we try to do in these papers is extract, and subject to scrutiny, the theoretical underpinnings and assumptions of the dominant realist tradition.

We are, similarly, not insensitive to the fact that many whose work is described as realist might abjure the term, noting that there are major differences between their own work and that of others similarly described as ‘realists’. We are for example cognisant of the supposed distinctions between ‘realists’ and ‘rationalists’ (Indyk, 1985) between scientific and traditional methodologies (Knorr and Rosenau (eds), 1969) and between English and American schools (Smith (ed.), 1985), not to mention that most perennial of the dichotomies - between ‘realists’ and ‘idealists’. For the purpose of this collection such purported distinctions or objections to labelling present no insurmountable obstacles. Indeed, one of the very tasks of the papers, especially those by Campbell, George and Fitzpatrick is to highlight the broad philosophical underpinnings that make these distinctions, in many cases, less significant.

We are further bolstered in an identification of the ‘realist’ tradition as a legitimate subject of scrutiny, against the objections of those who resist such labelling, by wider precedent. Generalisation is the hallmark of theorising. It happens in all areas of inquiry across the sciences, humanities and social sciences. Modes of inquiry are, properly, identified by their broad constitutive elements. How often, for example, do we see those who would deny the central theoretical status (not simply the presence) of ‘balance of power’ or ‘state-as-actor’ concepts in realism insist on building an argument on the status of, for example, marxism around a core concept such as ‘class struggle’? If the point seems banal it is made to counter the already voiced objections of those who would suggest the ‘realist’ enterprise cannot be ‘isolated’ for the purpose of methodological analysis of the kind carried out in the essays by Campbell and George particularly.

Whilst the essays in this collection were individually authored and may be read in any order and in self contained manner they do, nevertheless, represent a logical progression from the broader philosophical themes of David Campbell’s paper; to John Fitzpatrick’s analysis of what he calls the ‘Problematic of Society’ in post World War II Anglo-American
international relations; to Jim George's application of the similar philosophical critique found in Campbell's essay to Australian scholars of international relations and finally to Higgott's more specific critique of the notion of the 'state' as it has been used in the realist tradition.

David Campbell's essay discusses how the evolution of post-empiricism in many quarters of the social sciences has necessitated a rethink of the fact/value, subject/object dichotomy that has dominated the social sciences in their positivist mode. From there, Campbell proceeds to suggest how international relations, lagging behind the other social sciences, needs to consider the implications of post-empiricism for its own work. Campbell's paper is not, it needs to be added, an attempt to throw over the realist tradition, lock, stock and barrel. As he notes, new theoretical refinement does not lead, axiomatically, to the redundancy of earlier discoveries. Rather, Campbell argues, realism is less a theory that explains than it is part of something wider that is itself in need of explanation.

In addition, Campbell discusses a general theme central to all four essays in the volume: namely the manner in which international relations has been largely isolated from intellectual development in other areas of the social sciences. Where it once had a comfortable, discrete methodological posture this can no longer be practically sustained, let alone intellectually sustained. Campbell's essay joins a growing body of literature that is now pointing the way to some kind of critical theory of international relations (see inter alia the works of Cox, Ashley, Linklater and Hoffmann discussed in this collection).

Jim George's distinctive contribution is that he extends the debate a stage further. Where Campbell establishes a critique of positivism in the social sciences and, by implication and extension in international relations, George moves on two extra paces. Firstly, he outlines for us the complexity of what he calls the positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge and specifically its competing variants within international relations. Secondly, he provides the first discussion and critique of the position of this theory of knowledge at the heart of the Australian discipline. The essay is a contribution not only to international relations but also to social and political theory, particularly in the way in which George analyses the use and abuse of the political theory of David Hume within the positivist intellectual tradition, the similar 'uncritical reading' of Popper by scholars of international relations and the manner in which the work of Max
Weber has been more important for the study of international relations than has commonly been thought to be the case.

The importance of the papers of both Campbell and George is the manner in which they chide scholars of international relations into considering how thinking about ‘reality’ in the social and political world is of itself a theoretical exercise. Realism, they argue, cannot have an existence in international relations independent of its would-be theorisers and practitioners.

Fitzpatrick and Higgott in their essays focus specifically on the central theoretical component of the realist perspective in international relations - namely the state-as-actor assumption. Both look at the debates that have taken place within the discipline over the status of this core concept in the last two decades. Fitzpatrick focusses on recent innovations now commonly known as ‘structural realism’ and sets out the reasons why the distinctions that separate it from the ‘international society’ perspective are not as substantial as many structural realists would claim. Both perspectives, Fitzpatrick demonstrates, focus on a unitary national state and a unitary national society. Both can be subsumed under a general problematic of society the central elements of which must be considered stronger than any differences that might distinguish between, for example, British and American approaches (see Fitzpatrick, 1987).

As an alternative, Fitzpatrick poses what he calls a problematic of coexistence - a blending of marxist notions of uneven development with realist notions of geo-politics - which he floats as a trial balloon to take us beyond the recent literature. Fitzpatrick hopes it will offer a way of analysing historically and geographically specific ‘social orders’. Not only, Fitzpatrick claims, would his kind of analysis show how the characteristics of domestic political behaviour (commonly ascribed) are to be found in international politics, but also (less commonly ascribed) that the characteristics of international politics are to be found in the domestic arena. Systemic links between international and domestic power structures are not, for Fitzpatrick, easily distinguishable.

It may, he argues in a provocative statement, be more useful for analytical purposes (as distinct from politico/ideological ones) to do away with the concept of an international ‘system’ or ‘society’ of states. In so doing, he is not denying the importance of either the ‘global interstate order’ or the ‘capitalist market order’. Rather he is suggesting the
analytic fragility of the concepts. Whether his alternative notion of a 'broad transnational arena in which the distinguishing factor is not states but transnational, national and subnational elites and occasionally masses', struggling for control of the state seen not as a unitary actor but as a 'strategic terrain' will become any more analytically useful remains to be seen. But Fitzpatrick poses interesting questions which hopefully he will address as his research progresses and to which others will feel moved to respond.

Fitzpatrick's paper differs from all the others and Higgott's in particular to the extent that he wishes to abolish state-centric analysis and start afresh. The more modest intention of Higgott's essay on the other hand is to broaden and deepen state-centric analysis. The irony of international relations is that, unlike other social sciences during the behavioural revolution which jettisoned the state only to have to 'bring it back in' to their analysis, the state has always been the core concept. Yet of all the disciplines none has taken the state to be such an uncomplicated and uncontested given. In many ways the state in international relations - especially of the realist persuasion - is not undertheorised so much as untheorised. Higgott attempts to provide a framework for commencing to compensate for this lacunae in international relations. He outlines what has been done recently, especially in the application of the work of Giddens and several other social theorists and what could be done if international relations were to pay closer attention to the work of certain students of comparative politics and political development.

As in the other chapters in this volume, Higgott illustrates the problems which have emanated from the self-imposed insularity of much international relations from its wider intellectual community. Higgott's route to a more complicated theory (and thus more analytically sophisticated theory) of the state in international relations is achieved by an assault on the realist perspective's own explicitly accepted dichotomies. Whereas Campbell and George deal with the tacit dichotomies of international relations - fact/value, subject/object, is/ought - Higgott concentrates on those dichotomies between the domestic and the international arenas as distinct foci of political behaviour and international economics and international politics as distinct issue areas for scholars.

Both distinctions, it is suggested in Higgott's paper, need to be removed. In his paper - as indeed in the other papers in the volume - the role of the state as the principal actor in international relations is not
under direct challenge. (The authors have, incidentally, become hardened to critiques of their work that misleadingly and mischievously suggest they are trying to do away with the state as a major focus for analysis or the equally misleading suggestion that somehow states are less important than they were.) Rather the intention of Higgott’s paper is to *complicate* the state-centric paradigm. His paper attempts to do this in two ways, both of which are becoming more readily acceptable in some quarters of the international relations community but which have yet to attract much support within the Australian discipline.

Firstly, he presents a deliberate caricature of the realist position with its emphasis on the search for national security in the international system of states and suggests the insufficiency of such a perspective. An added dimension is needed. To understand international relations nowadays an analysis of the search for national economic well-being in the international political economy is equally important. Whilst this may be recognised in some of the recent literature of international political economy emanating from North America and Europe it has not, Higgott argues, found its way onto the agenda of the discipline in Australia—concerned almost exclusively, as George suggests in his paper, with power politics and security studies. Once the economic dimension is given its proper status in the equation then the simple and simplistic notion of the state that exists in the traditional state-centric approach is exposed. Secondly, of course, this emphasis on the economic dimensions of international relations also undermines the notion that the international and domestic arenas are discrete entities that can be addressed with different methodological baggages. Higgott suggests that it is not necessary to argue the existence of a ‘single policy environment’ to recognise the inadequacy of an approach that sees the state as a barrier rather than a conduit between the policymaking arenas - hence the provocative title of his essay.

Higgott and Fitzpatrick do not see alternatives to the realist perspective, that take up their line of critique, as without problems in their own right. Both essays are, for example, critical of World Systems Theory. Just as it is wrong, as realists do in many instances, to see the state system as the sum of its parts - states; so too is it fallacious to see the state and its agents (ruling classes of whatever variant - national or comprador bourgeois) as the only elements necessary for the functioning of the world capitalist system. Fitzpatrick’s analysis starts at the level of
international structures whereas Higgott's starts at the level of units, but both urge the need to give them an egalitarian status rather than privilege one at the expense of the other - as has been the tendency in the traditions of world systems theory on the one hand and realism on the other.

A complex, or systemic, theory of international politics cannot be developed from a starting point where the state is a given or where the structures are given. As one author recently noted '... we must have foundations in theories of both ... principal units of analysis (state agents and system structures)' (Wendt, 1987:365). The logical progression from such a position is that attempts at theory building by leading realist scholars that do not have a theory of the state cannot logically fabricate a theory of international relations. Wendt makes this point about Kenneth Waltz's denial of the need for a theory of the state for a theory of international relations (1987:365). This is very similar to the point made by both Campbell and Higgott in their discussions of the inadequacies of realist theorising on the state.

Central to all four essays in this collection, despite their different specific concerns, is the need for international relations as a discipline to be more theoretically conscious and sensitive to intellectual innovation in other areas of the social sciences. The papers are thus part of an increasingly rich tradition of literature that combines work across international and disciplinary boundaries. This is especially so in Campbell and George's chapters with their strong influences from European philosophy, especially from critical theory and hermeneutics and in Fitzpatrick and Higgott's comfortable recourse to intellectual literatures such as development theory, for so long beyond the purview of the majority of scholars of international relations.

Whilst all papers are, as I indicated at the beginning of this Introduction, our first rather than our last words on the subject, they are nevertheless we feel indicative of a route which international relations in general is beginning to follow and which international relations in Australia will need to pick up quickly. If the work of Campbell and George - and to a lesser extent that of Fitzpatrick and Higgott - is pitched at a philosophical/theoretical level with which many scholars of international relations in Australia will feel uncomfortable, that is a reflection on the discipline as much, if not more so, than it is on the essays assembled here. The important thing is not that our colleagues disagree
with the arguments put forward. Many do and will - that is how it should be. The important thing is that would-be critics pick up the cudgels and respond. The beginning of a new debate over theory and method is as important to the discipline of international relations in Australia as it is to the discipline in the United States and, for example, the UK. If these essays succeed in making the Australian discipline only slightly more theoretically selfconscious than in the past they will have served a useful function.

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Bibliography


Introduction

All social scientists are philosophers of knowledge. Whether or not we are aware of it, every aspect of our activity involves theories of knowledge (epistemologies) that structure our attitudes and, by implication, our research (Doyal and Harris, 1986:1). Recent changes in social theory have brought issues associated with this insight to the fore. The discipline of International Relations, like all the social sciences, needs to be aware of and act upon these developments. The purpose of this paper is to outline these recent changes in social theory and probe some of the questions they raise for International Relations.1

Critical theory and the question of theory and practice

The last century has seen a restructuring of social and political thought, producing a general intellectual move towards critical theory (Bernstein, 1976). The term ‘critical theory’ in this sense refers to any perspective that seeks to provide a critique of the (often) unstated assumptions in a theoretical tradition and its link to practice.2 At the heart of these developments, therefore, is the question of the relationship between theory and practice.

Increasingly, the major Western theoretical traditions have been found deficient (Dunn, 1979). The nuclear arms race, global environmental degradation, and the increasing power of international capital flows (among a host of other issues) have challenged the conceptual frameworks and explanatory power of liberalism, socialism, and nationalism. This is not to suggest that these traditions are redundant in
the contemporary era but, rather, that they need to be reconceptualised into new understandings of theory and practice (Walker, 1987b:132).

The cultural values of contemporary Western societies were formed in contrast to the ignorance and barbarism of a ‘pre-modern’ era, with the transition from barbarism to modernity based upon the enlightening forces of science and technology. The many successes of science and technology in the period since the 16th century provided a dominant perspective from which to judge all intellectual enterprise. Associated with the general intellectual influence of positivism, this perspective involves keeping the domain of inquiry separate from social influences, while the purpose of knowledge lay in its ability to increase our control over forces and events. Theory was thus perceived as separate from practice.

International Relations, like all the social sciences, was shaped by this encounter with the progress of science and technology. If science increased human control over the natural world, then why not develop a science of society that would allow control over the social world? For International Relations, the dominant tradition of realism has been the manifestation of this faith in science. As Gilpin has stated, ‘realism holds that through calculations of power and national interest statesmen can create order out of anarchy ...’ (1981:226).

The relationship between science and international relations being articulated here is an example of the way in which the positivist conception of science has shaped the course of international relations thinking. The connection has been further addressed by Rob Walker:

Anyone who attacks the realist tradition in international relations theory is conventionally tarred with the labels of ‘utopian’ and ‘idealist.’ This has been an enormously powerful rhetorical ploy, akin to the way positivists have charged their critics with having normative or even metaphysical tendencies. Positivists have thereby fostered a myth of the white coat, the ostentatious demarcation between the scientist and the object of science. Realists have managed to create a myth of the white flag, the demarcation between those willing to face up to necessity and the enemy and those who would capitulate.3

There is more than just an analogy here. Just as the positivist conception of science maintains the dualised view that theory and
practice are distinct (that there is no link between the scientist and the object of science), the realists in international relations - operating in terms of scientific rationality - have maintained that the world of states exists independently of social practices. In this context, problems (e.g. the nuclear arms race) are capable of management - but not solution. Gilpin notes: ‘Realism ... seeks to understand how states have always behaved and presumably will always behave’ (1981:226. Emphasis added). If state behaviour was impervious to anything other than the ‘logic’ of the system, reform would be an impossibility.

While there is supposedly a distinction between theory and practice in scientific thought, this dualised understanding ultimately serves to install a particular form of practice. In the case of International Relations, this understanding can be associated with a realist perspective which equates, for example, the nuclear arms race with the ‘rational’ logic of the states system based on power politics principles. Alternative forms of practice can in this way be dismissed with the claim that one has to face up to the necessity of a power politics reality. The overall effect of course is once again the perpetuation of a particular form of practice. Clearly then, alternative forms of practice will not be possible until the theory/practice relationship of the positivist conception of science has been examined.

Recent changes in social theory have, however, demonstrated that the picture of science and rationality conventionally associated with the natural sciences is a false one. There has been an internal dialectic within the discipline of the philosophy of science which has demonstrated that the conventional (positivist) understanding of scientific procedure does not actually represent the conduct of scientific enquiry. Concomitant with this has been a number of broader philosophical developments which, when combined with a new understanding of science, serve to demonstrate that the influence of positivism upon the way in which we view all intellectual enterprises has resulted in a distorted perspective.

Nonetheless, positivism, as a general intellectual style deriving its authority from the conventional understanding of the natural sciences, continues to dominate research in the social sciences, including International Relations. If debates within social theory and the philosophy of science have demonstrated correctly that the positivist conception is flawed, the theoretical foundation of all the social sciences - including International Relations - will be undermined. Most importantly,
this suggests that alternative forms of practice will be possible. Proposals for change will no longer be able to be tagged as 'idealistic', but will have to be debated in terms of a new understanding of rationality. For International Relations, the end of the 'myth of the white coat' will mean the demise of the 'myth of the white flag'.

This chapter seeks to engage this broad debate by arguing a case for a more sophisticated approach to International Relations theory. It does so in six stages. First, by examining two influential texts of the realist orthodoxy in International Relations to indicate that the theory/practice relationship discussed above is evident in their approach to theory. Second, by outlining some general themes associated with positivism and the positivist conception of science. Third, by considering the new image of science - postempiricism. Fourth, by touching upon the philosophical sources of postempiricism in order to demonstrate that these developments are not limited to one tradition, but are emerging in a range of previously discrete traditions. The chapter will conclude by considering the impact of postempiricism upon the social sciences; the questions this raises for International Relations; and commenting on some of the issues that might be prominent in a critical, postempiricist analysis of International Relations.

1. **Theory and Practice in Realism**

Establishing the nature and content of dominant research traditions is invariably a difficult exercise. There are likely to be complaints that the designation of a group of scholars under some heading or another fails to do justice to the variations between them. Although a concern not entirely without validity, two things need to be recognised about this argument. First, there are likely to be variations among any group of scholars once you are dealing with more than one person. The task is to isolate the shared fundamental assumptions. Second, the view that one has to focus on the individual at the expense of the group is a belief grounded in empiricist epistemology, where the 'I' is the foundational category of all thought. As will be seen, that is a view open to considerable criticism.

Such thoughts aside, there is a remarkable unanimity concerning the theoretical development of the discipline of International Relations. Most commentaries on the discipline (e.g. Vasquez, 1983; Garnett, 1984; Banks, 1984; 1985), consider that there have been three major theoretical
debates in International Relations: the idealist/realist debates from around 1918 to the 1950s; the behaviouralist/traditionalist debates of the 1950s and 1960s; and the post-behavioural debates since the 1970s that have seen realist, pluralist, and structuralist perspectives pitted against one another (Banks, 1985:9-20). What is the relationship between these various perspectives?

The common strand running through these theoretical debates is the persistence and vitality of the realist perspective. Whenever new developments emerge, they are regarded as efforts to overthrow the realist perspective. Upon closer examination it has more often than not been the case that new developments have left realism's fundamental assumptions intact. For example, behaviouralism was no more than an attack on the way realists handled scientific methodology (Vasquez, 1983:21). Equally, the rise of international political economy in the 1970s, at least in its liberal and mercantilist forms, can be understood as a modified realism (Banks, 1985:16-17). The durability of realism in shaping International Relations discourse can be seen in the way realist assumptions are present in the arguments of those who oppose the nuclear arms race, such as the nuclear freeze movement (Kalembka, 1986). This suggests that the 'great debates' of International Relations have not been theoretical debates at all (see Walker, 1980; 1987).

A useful way to understand realism is in terms of the Kuhnian notion of paradigm. A paradigm, as Vasquez notes, refers to 'the fundamental assumptions scholars make about the world they are studying' (1983:5-6). Vasquez describes the three fundamental assumptions that constitute realism as follows: (1) Nation-states or their decision makers are the most important actors for understanding international relations; (2) there is a sharp distinction between domestic politics and international politics; and (3) International Relations is the study of power and peace (1983:18). There is broad agreement with this description. Keohane (1983:507) outlines his version of the three fundamental assumptions, concurring with Vasquez on (1) and (3), but replacing (2) with the assumption that state behaviour can be explained rationally. Whatever the precise formulation of the assumptions, the picture of international relations that emerges from the realist perspective is widely recognised. As Banks notes, its terminology (including national interest, reason of state, deterrence, power politics, legitimate self-defence, diplomatic necessity) 'has become the staple diet of most international relationists'.

What, then, is the relationship between theory and practice embodied in the realist perspective? It has been suggested above that it is the same relationship that is found in the positivist conception of science. An examination of two major texts in the realist tradition will help substantiate that argument. Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* (1978) is, according to Vasquez (1983:17), the exemplar of the realist tradition. It is a view that is widely supported (see Hoffmann, 1960; Dougherty Pfaltzgraff, 1981; Olson and Onuf, 1985). In Rosenau et al's (1976:278) report on textbooks in the US discipline, *Politics Among Nations* appeared on more course syllabi than any other work. Although a book of different character, being a summary of the various perspectives in the discipline rather than an original work, Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff's *Contending Theories of International Relations* (1981) provides a useful guide to the way that theories are approached in the discipline. Michael Banks has written that it is the best available introductory work that concentrates exclusively on theories (1985:11). Clearly, this examination of two texts is not sufficient to provide a definitive conclusion on the theory/practice relationship in realism, but given the stature of the two works it should provide a satisfactory indication.

(a) *Theory and practice in Morgenthau*

Morgenthau's text opens with a statement that echoes the positivist conception of science. A theory must be judged by its purpose: 'to bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomena which without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible' (Morgenthau, 1978:3). A theory does more than just examine the facts: to give meaning to the factual raw material 'we must approach political reality with a kind of rational outline, a map that suggests to us the possible meanings of foreign policy' (ibid:5).

To gain control over forces and events is the corollary of this orderliness that is a theory's primary purpose. For Morgenthau, politics and society is governed by 'objective laws that have their roots in human nature' (1978). A theory aims to uncover these objective laws so that it is possible to distinguish between truth and opinion,
between what is true objectively and rationally, supported by evidence and illuminated by reason, and what is only a subjective judgement, divorced from the facts as they are and informed by prejudice and wishful thinking (ibid:4).

The domain of ‘reality’ and the domain of ‘theory’ are obviously distinct for Morgenthau, with the latter bringing order to the former to allow for control. Theory and practice are distinct; theory provides the guidelines for practice, guidelines that will severely limit anything that is not consistent with ‘the facts as they actually are’ (ibid:3).

There is more to Morgenthau that this one-sided notion of technical control. In Ashley’s (1981) Habermasian terminology, the above perspective is associated with the strand of realism based on a ‘technical cognitive interest’. But realism also reflects a ‘practical cognitive interest’ that seeks to confirm a tradition through language and communication. Morgenthau represents this dimension when he talks of the scholar having to retrace the steps of a statesman or diplomat in the performance of his work (Morgenthau, 1978:5). This interest is more hermeneutical than positivist. What we will discover however (see section 5a), is how this interpretative stance is of itself influenced by positivism.

(b) Theory and practice in Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff

Like Morgenthau, Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff open their text with a statement that echoes the positivist conception of science: ‘Understanding...the political processes of the international system - in such a way as to control them for rational ends - profoundly challenges humanity’s intellect’ (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 1981:1). They do not specify that the political processes are objective laws, but their conception of theory regards it as an intellectual tool for ordering ‘reality’:

At the simplest level, a theory - any theory - is a general explanation of certain selected phenomena set forth in a manner satisfactory to someone acquainted with the characteristics of the reality being studied (ibid:20).

That this understanding begs a range of questions does not escape Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff. They recognise that it is riddled with

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difficulties out of the problem of conceiving objective and subjective knowledge. However, their handling of these complexities is less than satisfactory. They declare:

The authors of this text will refrain from attempting to settle the profound questions of epistemology that have remained unsettled for centuries. We reiterate: Theory is a way of organising our knowledge so that we can ask questions worth answering, guide our research toward valid answers, and integrate our knowledge with that of related fields. We can now proceed to talk about theory as this term is usually employed in physical science and in the social sciences (ibid).

They recognise their concept of theory raises substantial problems, but they do not address ‘the profound questions of epistemology’ that they have identified. The consequence is that they proceed to use a notion of theory that effectively ‘resolves’ the epistemological issues in favour of a positivist conception without actually specifying its limitations.

(c) Conclusion

This brief consideration of two influential realist texts strongly suggests that they proceed on the basis of a particular understanding of the theory/practice relationship. This is not a feature restricted to the American branch of the discipline, however. John Garnett, an English scholar who overtly rejects the notion that International Relations theory can be ‘scientific’, provides a summation of the theory question that demonstrates how pervasive is a positivist understanding of theory. In his Commonsense and the Theory of International Relations (1984), Garnett argues for an understanding of theory that pitches itself between the philosophers’ view that it is everywhere and the natural scientists’ view that it is nowhere. This commonsense view that is ‘neither too general nor too exclusive’ maintains that theory may be understood as the ‘body of general propositions that may be advanced about political relations between states, or more generally about world politics’ (Garnett, 1984:4).

Garnett has endorsed Hedley Bull’s (1972) understanding of International Relations theory. Although both men oppose scientific methodology, they have nonetheless supported a concept of theory that is
fundamentally positivist. To argue that theory is a body of propositions about relations between states is to accept the theory/practice divide that is manifest in the two texts examined above: theory is outside of the world ('reality') it observes, consisting instead of an outline of the facts as observed. Relations between states are understood as given and therefore not theorised. When theory does attempt to get inside its world, it does so by reference to the internal images that people hold which affect their interpretation of 'reality', a perspective that relies on theorists such as Dilthey (Garnett, 1984:15-16). This limited 'hermeneutic overlay' is confirmation of the influence of the positivist conception of science (see section 5a).

Why, then, is it the case that International Relations remains locked into an understanding of theory that has been the subject of substantial critiques in philosophy, social theory, and other disciplines? The answer lies in the constitution of the discipline itself. As Anthony Giddens has argued, the notion that there is a distinctive field of international relations separated from what goes on inside nation-states is 'symptomatic of the limitations of social thought' (Giddens, 1985:30).

Both Hans Morgenthau in the American discipline and Martin Wight in the British discipline expressed reservations as to whether international relations could ever be theorised about (Wight, 1966; Morgenthau, 1970). The assumed separation of international relations from the domestic political life of the states was the reason for such a reservation. Both Wight and Bull argued that the tradition of political theory is the province of the nation-state. International relations, as the study of relations between states, was therefore not to be as concerned with political theory (Wight, 1966:18; Bull, 1977). The possibility of international relations being subordinated to political theory was linked to the establishment of a world state, an unlikely occurrence (Wight, 1966:22).

Such a perspective is, however, clearly symptomatic of the limitation of social thought outlined by Giddens. It is, in other words, limited by a positivist conception of theory. As the statement made at the beginning of this paper declared, all activity of social scientists, International Relations scholars included, presupposes the operation of a theory of knowledge. The statement that International Relations is about 'relations between states' is a highly theoretical proposition. The task of this paper from here on is to outline the recent changes in social theory that make us realise that any starting point for International Relations scholarship
contains a number of assumptions about the relationship between theory and practice.

This leads us to a level of analysis rarely encountered, indeed often studiously ignored, in the discipline of International Relations. Our cultural understanding of science, and the associated influence of positivism upon the discipline, means that the realist orthodoxy has attained the status of ‘commonsense’ and escaped examination of its assumptions and presuppositions (Elshtain, 1986:259). Any consideration of recent changes in social theory would mean this could no longer be the case. It has to be insisted that the process of theorising and its impact upon research have to be regarded as proper - if not fundamental - objects of consideration themselves for International Relations scholars (Ashley, 1983:484). The first task has to be an examination of the positivist conception of science.

2. Positivism: Some General Themes

To embark upon a discussion of positivism is to enter a minefield of contention about the meaning of the term. It has come to be a term of derision rather than the designation of a philosophical movement (McCarthy, 1984:137). Yet, while few Anglo-American thinkers have regarded themselves as positivist, ‘the positivist temper has had a profound influence on them’ (Bernstein, 1976:5). I use the term positivism here to designate a general intellectual style that still dominates contemporary academic inquiry as well as the social and political order. Others acknowledge that positivism, despite almost general condemnation, remains probably the most influential stream of thought in contemporary society. McCarthy has noted that the legacy of positivism ‘pervades contemporary thought’ (1984:137-8); Alexander has described the ‘positivist persuasion’ (‘more an amorphous self-consciousness than an intellectual commitment’) as ‘a persuasion that permeates contemporary social science’ (1982:5); while Frost has referred to the ‘positivist bias’ which international relations scholars have in common with many of the other social sciences (1986:11).

To understand this general intellectual style it is necessary to understand the core that generates it: the empiricist theory of knowledge. This theory of knowledge gave rise to the positivist conception of science during the great transformations of the scientific revolution in the 16th
and 17th centuries. Taken as a general philosophy of inquiry established during the Enlightenment, this conception of knowledge has become characteristic of industrialised society to this day (Maxwell, 1987:10).

At the heart of empiricism is the view that sensory experience provides the only legitimate source of knowledge. Experience refers to direct sensory access to a reality comprising material things. As with all epistemologies, the empiricist conception of knowledge understands knowledge as deriving from a particular relationship between subject and object. In the empiricist case, that relationship is one in which there is ‘a subject and something that is given to or confronts that subject, phenomena, objects, the world, etc’ (Hindess, 1977:16). The distinguishing feature of the empiricist relationship between subject and object is that the process takes place between a given subject and a given object (Hindess, 1973a:510-11).

Classical empiricism was constructed on the basis that knowledge came from direct experience of an independently existing world, and that knowledge could be understood as being generated inductively from observation of the material world. In more modern forms of empiricism, Popper’s falsification strategy for example, inductivism was replaced by the understanding of knowledge being generated deductively, with observations becoming subject to empirical testing (see Chalmers, 1976).

The general notion of science that flows from empiricism (sometimes referred to as the ‘received view’) is one where the statements of science are summaries of repeated observations of the world. Because only those statements that are derived from observation constitute real knowledge, all questions of how we come to know reality are eliminated from science (Suppe, 1977). Issues of epistemology and philosophy are therefore logically dismissed as irrelevant.

According to empiricism, this understanding of science is the only one that can be considered as generating real knowledge. There is a unity of method for all inquiry because science is the only strategy for generating real knowledge, including knowledge about social and political reality. Understanding the social world is identical to understanding the natural world: it is a matter of generating knowledge through experience, either by direct or indirect (via correspondence rules) observation.

The intellectual developments of the Renaissance period, of which the scientific revolution was the centrepiece, were a response to the dominance of theology. Armed with the distinction between empirical and
value judgements that was at the heart of scientific methodology, this period was one of liberation, whereby global views of the social order that served to justify particular interests (i.e. the Church) could be combatted in the name of reason (McCarthy, 1984:5).

More than any other single development, it was the predictive and explanatory success of Newtonian physics that demonstrated that science could produce new and valuable knowledge. Aided by Descartes' dualistic theory of mind and matter that established the objective and subjective realms of reality, the Enlightenment philosophers of the 18th century believed that what Newton had done for the control of nature, they could do for the control of society (ibid:12-13). In this way the positivist conception of science was generalised to all inquiry, generating what can be termed the Enlightenment conception of knowledge.

The Enlightenment conception of knowledge came to predominate so that by the mid-twentieth century it dominated almost all intellectual enterprises. The technological progress of the 19th and 20th centuries in the industrialised world seemed to confirm entirely the validity of the empiricist theory of knowledge, in the form of the positivist conception of science (Maxwell,1987:13-14). As Bronowski and Mazlish (1960:108) state, 'Science has made the world over in the twentieth century, root and branch - intellectually and physically.'

The paradox of the Enlightenment conception of knowledge is that it was eventually transformed into a dogma of even greater proportions than the ones it originally replaced. Rorty notes that positivism preserved a god with its notion of science (1982:xliii). By the end of the 19th century, its dominance meant that ‘the theory of knowledge became the philosophy of science; reason became scientific reason; and the interest of reason was either denied or equated with the technical interest in prediction and control of objectified processes’ (McCarthy, 1984:84). It is this cultural understanding of science (as ‘scientism’) that ‘has set the context for the intellectual and cultural problems in the modern world’ (Bernstein, 1983:46).

The progression of science from an enlightening force to the dogma of scientism is the result of two factors. First, with society becoming increasingly scientific, all facets of social life became centred around technical control over nature and administrative control over humans. This altered the relationship between technical and practical knowledge. Previously, in the classical tradition of politics, issues in the social and
political order were practical issues, questions of the just and good life. With the rise of scientism, the sphere of the practical was absorbed by the sphere of the technical, so that political issues became questions of order and efficiency.

This created the second facet of positivism's path to dogmatism. With this (technical) relationship between theory and practice, positivism could not justify its own interests. If all values were subjective, then positivism's particular relationship to practical life (its commitment to science and technology and opposition to metaphysical dogma, etc) is not rationally justifiable. On the other hand, if an interest in enlightenment is rational, then reason harbours a practical interest and is unable of being exhausted by the terms of science and technology (McCarthy, 1984:6). There is, therefore, a direct line of progression from Enlightenment ideals to the modern forms of positivist and empiricist thought. As Bernstein declares, 'What were once great liberating ideas have turned into suffocating strait jackets' (1976:xxiii).

The rise of scientism means that any critique of social life must begin with a critique of positivist/empiricist epistemology. This has to be coupled with the recognition that in the intellectual exercise of working through critiques of positivism and empiricism there is a practical-moral concern. Unless one is satisfied with the current state of humanity - with its poverty, oppression and militarisation - there is 'some urgency to the task of political theory'. We have to

elucidate and to examine the most prominent paradigm of reality, its characteristic institutions, the social and political forces which stimulate and support modes of rationality, and to explore alternatives to the 'givenness' of everyday life (Flax, 1981:1021).

The task, however, is made more difficult by the fact that political theory 'has itself been weakened by technical rationality' (ibid). Theories have social and political consequences regardless of the theorists' intent. The realist orthodoxy of International Relations harbours a technical interest that restricts conceptions of practice. What we have to do is make that intent obvious, and the process of theorising conscious. If how we come to know the world has an impact on the world, we need to under-
stand the process by which we come to know. This involves an analysis directed initially at the level of epistemology.

(a) The positivist conception of science

The first step is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the positivist conception of science, and the debates surrounding its status in recent years. The major elements of the positivist conception of science are as follows:

1. In natural science experience is taken to be objective, testable, and independent of theoretical explanation.

2. In natural science theories are artificial constructions or models, yielding explanation in the sense of a logic of hypothetico-deduction: if external nature were of such a kind, then data and experience would be as we find them.

3. In natural science the lawlike relations asserted of experience are external, both to the objects connected and to the investigator, since they are merely correlational.

4. The language of natural science is exact, formalisable, and literal; therefore meanings are unequivocal, and a problem of meaning arises only in the application of universal categories to particulars.

5. Meanings in natural science are separate from facts (Hesse, 1980:170).

The positivist account of science is founded upon three assumptions which, coming from the basic features of empiricism, are inherent in the outline above. First, naive realism: the view that there is an external world, the existence and meaning of which is independent of anything the observer does. Second, the assumption of a universal scientific language: the belief that this external world can be described in a language that does not presuppose anything, thereby allowing the observer to remain detached and dispassionate. Third, the correspondence theory of truth: that the observer can capture the facts of the world in statements that are
true if they correspond to the facts and false if they do not (ibid:vii). As we shall see, all these assumptions have been ‘subjected to damaging criticism’ (ibid).

(b) The challenge to positivist science

The last twenty-five years have seen contributions in social theory and philosophy that have shown the inadequacy of a positivist/empiricist approach, and demonstrated the existence of a critical debate focusing on ‘the meaning, nature and scope of rationality’ (Bernstein, 1983:20). The works of Thomas Kuhn, Stephen Toulmin, Paul Feyerabend and Mary Hesse, among others, show a new (postempiricist) image of science has been presented (Phillips, 1986:4). As Bernstein notes

When we stand back and view the cumulative results of the postempiricist philosophy and history of science, we realize that there has been a major transformation in our understanding of science, when compared to older rationalist, empiricist, and logical empiricist images of science (1983:59).

The critique of positivism and its relationship to social science, having been around for over a century, is not new. So what makes the work of these authors so special and so effective? The answer is that the focus of their work is directed at the conception of rationality that is at the heart of the natural sciences, which in turn has dictated the course of the social sciences.

(c) The ultimate failure of earlier challenges to positivism

Broadly speaking, most anti-positivist critiques have argued that the model of the natural sciences is inapplicable to the social sciences given the different subject matter of the social world. These critiques included Verstehen theories, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, ordinary language analysis, symbolic interactionism, and all approaches understood to constitute concern with the ‘sociology of knowledge’ (Hekman, 1983:98). Although there are undoubted differences between these approaches, they all share a fundamental objection to positivism: that the objective data of the positivist conception of knowledge simply does not exist for the
human sciences, because the subject matter of the human sciences is characterised by the dominance of meaningful action.\textsuperscript{12}

In contradistinction to the positivist conception of science outlined in section 4, the Verstehen theorists' (an umbrella term to cover the aforementioned approaches) understanding of the human sciences can be outlined as follows:

1. In human science data are not detachable from theory, for what counts as data are determined in the light of some theoretical interpretation, and the facts themselves have to be reconstructed in the light of interpretation.

2. In human science theories are mimetic reconstructions of the facts themselves, and the criterion of a good theory is understanding of meanings and intentions rather than deductive explanation.

3. In human science the relations asserted are internal, both because the objects studied are essentially constituted by their interrelations with one another, and also because the relations are mental, in the sense of being created by human categories of understanding recognised (or imposed?) by the investigator.

4. The language of human science is irreducibly equivocal and continually adapts itself to particulars.

5. Meanings in human science are what constitute facts, for data consist of documents, inscriptions, intentional behaviour, social rules, human artefacts, and the like, and these are inseparable from the meanings for agents (Hesse, 1980:170).

Verstehen theorists have contributed a great deal to our understanding of the social world; knowledge that would not have been possible had they not identified the problems with the positivist conception of science for the human sciences. There has been, however, a continuous and unresolved debate between positivism and Verstehen critiques. The
perpetuation of this debate suggests that the *Verstehen* theorists may not have broken with positivism as completely as they intended. Positivism is such a successful paradigm it dominates the thought even of its opponents (Bhaskar, 1979:25; Schrag, 1980:96). This dominance is manifested in the image of science held by both positivists and their critics. As Bhaskar notes, positivists and the anti-positivists tend to unite ‘in their acceptance of an essentially positivist account of natural science’ (Bhaskar, 1979:2).

The unquestioning acceptance of the positivist account of natural science means that positivism and *Verstehen* theorists ‘share a fundamental epistemological assumption: the opposition of subject and object’ (Hekman, 1986:99). The positivist approach has been based on the privileging of the object side of this dualism, with the view that knowledge can only be knowledge when it is objective (i.e. when all human and historical factors are purged from it). In seeming contrast, *Verstehen* theorists have privileged the subject side. Recognising that objective knowledge in the positivist sense does not exist for the human sciences, *Verstehen* theorists have emphasised the subjectivity of knowledge (Hekman, 1986:168).

This emphasis has established a hierarchy between the natural and social sciences, with the natural sciences understood as the exemplar of rationality, objectivity and truth. Positivists and *Verstehen* theorists are, therefore, ‘two sides of the same coin ... The subjectivism fostered by [Verstehen] is ... the counterpart of the objectivism of positivism’ (ibid: 168-9).

Notwithstanding their insights, the earlier anti-positivist critiques failed to overcome positivism as they intended. In their acceptance of the positivist conception of science as the exemplar of knowledge they were ultimately positivists themselves. This failure has not been fully appreciated. The positivist/Verstehen debate has set the terms for methodological discussions in the social sciences; operating, in effect, ‘as a logical straitjacket which prevents the posing of important questions necessary to the development of this field’ (Benton, 1977:46).

The focus of attention has to be on how this fundamental epistemological opposition has been established as the foundation of knowledge. As noted above, a new literature has developed in the philosophy of science concomitant with broad philosophical developments.
The Postempiricist Conception of Science

Characterised as 'postempiricism', the writers in this new philosophy of science, and their contemporaries in social theory, differ from Verstehen critiques in that they are concerned with the core of the contention between positivists and anti-positivists: the Enlightenment conception of knowledge. For the Enlightenment 'the search for truth meant the search for foundations, that is, an indubitable element of human existence that can "ground" human knowledge' (Hekman, 1986:8). Postempiricism is thus concerned with the rejection of foundational thought.

In accepting the positivist conception of science, both positivists and anti-positivists have shared the Enlightenment form of rationality with its particular conceptions of 'truth' and 'objectivity'. However, by focussing on the natural sciences and the way they proceed, a postempiricist philosophy of science has demonstrated that the orthodox positivist model is not a satisfactory account of the actual conduct of science. As Thomas Kuhn has noted:

No process yet disclosed by the historical study of scientific development at all resembles the methodological stereotype of falsification by direct comparison with nature (1970:77).

The very conception of knowledge that we have come to associate with the natural sciences has therefore been undermined. The new critiques of the positivist conception of science entail the rejection of the fundamental premise of the empiricist conception of knowledge - the subject/object dichotomy from which comes the belief that there is a world of phenomena independent of observers that confronts observers. The postempiricist account depends upon a new understanding of the subject/object relationship as a dialectical relationship rather than a fundamental opposition. According to Hesse this gives rise to a conception of science involving the following principles:

1. In natural science data is (sic) not detachable from theory, for what count as data are determined in the light of some theoretical interpretation, and the facts themselves have to be reconstructed in the light of interpretation.
2. In natural science theories are not models externally compared to nature in a hypothetico-deductive schema, they are the way the facts themselves are seen.

3. In natural science the lawlike relations asserted of experience are internal, because what count as facts are constituted by what the theory says about their interrelations with one another.

4. The language of natural science is irreducibly metaphorical and inexact, and formalisable only at the cost of distortion of the historical dynamics of scientific development and of the imaginative constructions in terms of which nature is interpreted by science.

5. Meanings in natural sciences are determined by theory; they are understood by theoretical coherence rather than by correspondence with facts (Hesse, 1980:172-3).

What has happened, as a consideration of this outline in comparison to that of the Verstehen theorists makes obvious, is that all the points that were made about the logic of inquiry in the human sciences in contrast to the natural sciences, have now been made about the natural sciences themselves (ibid:171-2).

The single most important consequence of the undermining of the separation of subjects and objects by this conception for general intellectual procedure is that ‘the whole framework of thinking that poses questions with reference to...dichotomies is being called into question’ (Bernstein, 1983:23). This means that any claim to knowledge that relies on dichotomies by, for example, juxtaposing facts against values, objective knowledge versus subjective prejudice, or empirical observation in contrast to normative concerns, ‘is emasculated and epistemologically unwarranted’ (Bernstein, 1976:230. Emphasis added).

The consequences of this for the social sciences and the discipline of international relations are profound. We will discuss the major consequences in a later section. The next task is to consider, albeit briefly, the philosophical developments concomitant with, and contributing to, the rise of postempiricism.
There is an important reason why the philosophical sources of postempiricism need to be considered. The sterile debate between positivists and *Verstehen* theorists has continued for so long because the perspective of the protagonists was too narrow. They failed to see that they shared the epistemological heart of the positivist conception of science. The significance of postempiricism comes from the fact that it is not just another distinct tradition, but rather an understanding of rationality that probes the basis of all intellectual procedure. It represents the merging of developments in a wide range of otherwise discrete philosophical traditions. Although its immediate focus here is the philosophy of science, its strength is derived from its interdisciplinary sources.

4. The Philosophical Sources of Postempiricism

The new critiques of positivism come from three sources. First, there are the changes in analytic philosophy which have undermined the notion of a universal scientific language and through it the correspondence theory of truth. Second, there are the *Verstehen* critiques identified above. In the same stream, though breaking out of the logical dependence on positivism's conception of science, are the hermeneutic critiques. These serve to discredit all three of positivism's assumptions. Third, there is the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory, subject recently to increased interest in Anglo-American circles. In a paper of this size it is possible to do no more than state the central points associated with each source and provide some references. I have discussed these developments in more detail elsewhere (see Campbell, 1987).

(a) Analytic philosophy

Analytic philosophy is a way of thinking that originally complemented the 20th century variance of positivism, logical positivism. It revolutionised Anglo-American philosophy in the early part of this century because it focussed on language (see Apel, 1967). Through the appropriation of Wittgenstein's philosophy, which regarded language as the means of describing the world, the logical positivists were able to give substance to their claim of a universal scientific language and a correspondence theory of truth. Language was understood as
corresponding directly with reality, a correspondence that could be derived from observation and which provided the basis for judging truth claims (see Phillips, 1977; Giddens, 1979).

There has been, however, a 'linguistic turn' in analytic philosophy that has given rise to a new view of the role of language. Emerging from changes in Wittgenstein's view, recent pragmatic philosophy, and Continental traditions of thought, the import of the linguistic turn is to overwhelmingly reject the notion that one can get 'behind' language to what 'grounds' it (see Rorty, 1982:xx). Language is, instead, implicated in all social practice and therefore incapable of providing an 'objective' description (see von Wright, 1971; Outhwaite, 1975; Giddens, 1979). With this conclusion, the changes in analytic philosophy converged with developments in the hermeneutic tradition.

(b) Hermeneutics

Largely a Continental tradition of thought originally concerned with the understanding of biblical and classical texts, it developed in the 18th and 19th centuries through writers such as Dilthey as part of an effort to recover the 'subjective' basis of knowledge: a recognition of the contribution of the author's internal point of view to various cultural products (see Jay, 1982; Mueller-Vollmer, 1985).

As discussed in section 2c, the Verstehen theorists were part of the early hermeneutic tradition which was ultimately positivist. It was not until a shift in hermeneutic understanding in the 20th century, initiated by Heidegger and developed in the 'philosophical hermeneutics' of Hans-Georg Gadamer, that hermeneutics offered a comprehensive critique of positivism. The principal feature of this development was that it rejected the notion that understanding was grounded in the author, regarding understanding instead as a fundamental and defining characteristic of humans. In this way, all understanding was historically conditioned thereby making it impossible for interpreters to seek an Archimedean point outside of this situation (see Gadamer, 1979; Bernstein, 1983).

Gadamer's claim that hermeneutics is no longer the art of interpretation, but rather a fundamental element of what it is to be human, is submerged by the 'givenness' of everyday life, the seemingly natural character of social institutions and practices. However, knowledge is not given to us as though we were passive receptors. We come to know
institutions and practices by a complex process of understanding and interpretation without which we would be unable to understand and communicate; in other words, we would not be human.

Because of the importance to the overall argument of these developments in hermeneutics, it is worthwhile illustrating the universal character of understanding and interpretation with an example from the realm of international relations: how do we know what a summit meeting between two heads of state is? If knowledge was given to us through the process of observation alone, then we might observe the following: an aircraft arriving on the tarmac; a waving person emerging; and that person being met by someone similar. We might observe the two people getting into a limousine and driving away. Over a period of time we might observe two groups of about a dozen people sitting facing each other at a long table, or the two individuals meeting in a smaller room.

Were we to rely on individual observation to generate knowledge of an event then we would have a description of isolated activities. We would not know what it all meant unless we had some knowledge of the social practices that were involved (Frost, 1986:20-1). The meaning of the above example appears obvious to observers of international politics. The events described could be nothing other than the beginning of an international summit. It would be a mistake, however, to equate the obvious with the given. That understanding is obvious because it is a well established social practice, but it is certainly not given. What Gadamer's hermeneutics does is force us to recognise that the obvious is still an instance of understanding and interpretation, no matter how familiar it is. It forces us to 'explore the invisible': we must recognise that the problem of understanding comes into play at the level of observation and description (McCarthy, 1984:148). As Gadamer states, 'We are always hearing - listening to something and extracting from other things. We are interpreting in seeing, hearing, receiving ... So it is obvious that there is a real primacy of interpretation' (1984:59).

(c) Critical theory

The third source of the new critique of positivism is the tradition known as Critical Theory. Originally associated with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, it has been substantially developed by Jurgen Habermas. Critical Theory has always had the critique of
positivism as one of its central aims, largely because of the link it sees between positivism, technical rationality, and the form of contemporary industrialised societies (see Held, 1980; Guess, 1981; Dubiel, 1985). Summarising the breadth of the Critical Theory project is extremely difficult. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on but one aspect, Habermas’s notion of cognitive interests, to signal Critical Theory’s contribution to a comprehensive critique of positivism.

For Habermas, the role of science as the paradigm of all knowledge meant the demise of the communicative/practical dimension in the understanding of social life, the reduction of *praxis* to *techne*. This was not a problem of science *per se* but, rather, the universalisation of science’s technical reason to the status of all reason. The task, therefore, was to develop a comprehensive theory of rationality in order to locate technical reason in its proper and limited place (McCarthy, 1984:22).

The problem is compounded when one realises that philosophy does not escape the impact of scientism. The guiding principle of Habermas’s critique of positivism is ‘that we disavow reflection is positivism’ (Habermas, 1972 quoted in McCarthy, 1984:40). Although Kant’s transcendental perspective regarded science as but one category of knowledge, the dominance of positivism by the latter half of the 19th century meant that this extra dimension to the theory of knowledge, the importance of epistemology over methodology, was removed (McCarthy, 1984:41). It is this concern with the dissolution of epistemology since Kant that leads Habermas to formulate his theory of cognitive interests (ibid:56).

The notion of cognitive interest seeks to radically reformulate epistemology by disclosing the source of knowledge in human life. In general terms, cognitive interests are anthropologically based: the human species has specific interests that have to be pursued if it is to survive, interests that are bound to a specific form of social order. Habermas identifies three cognitive, or knowledge-constitutive, interests: (1) a technical interest in controlling nature; (2) a practical interest in furthering communication; and (3) a critical interest in reflection and emancipation (Habermas, 1972. See McCarthy, 1984:55-8).

In focussing upon the interests that constitute knowledge, there is no doubt that Habermas rejects the positivist attempt to discover a neutral and permanent framework with which to ground knowledge. As he writes in his latest work, ‘All attempts at discovering ultimate
foundations ... have broken down’ (Habermas, 1984:1-2. See Roderick, 1986:8-13).

Habermas does argue, however, that we (i.e. human society) reckon with the existence of a reality that is in some sense independent of us. It is a reality that means we can act instrumentally upon it and achieve a consensus about statements concerning it. This does not mean it is a given reality. It is at one and the same time a reality constituted by humans and disclosed to humans. It is constituted because the properties ascribed to this reality result from our technical interest and instrumental action. It is disclosed because the social practices that flow from our technical interest depend upon the notion that reality is independent and external (McCarthy, 1984:116-17). The constraint of this reality is therefore a constraint dependent upon the technical cognitive interest, and not a constraint that is naturally given.

(d) Conclusion

The three philosophical sources of postempiricism, briefly discussed here, have all contributed to the diminution of the three major assumptions of a positivist conception of science. The new appreciation of language, the recognition of the universal status of the process of interpretation, and the identification of knowledge-constitutive interests, mean that the notions of naive realism, a universal scientific language, and the correspondence theory of truth, are untenable. This is in accord with the developments within the philosophy of science. The concern of the next section is to illustrate the consequences of this situation for the social sciences.

5. Postempiricism and the Social Sciences

Having been framed in accordance with the conception of knowledge associated with the positivist account of the natural sciences, the theoretical foundations of the social sciences - including international relations - would appear to be discredited. To consider the implications of this we first need to appreciate the specific influence the positivist conception of science has had on the social sciences.
(a) Positivism’s influence on the social sciences

The most fundamental consequence has been what we might call the bifurcation of understanding. Coming from empiricist epistemology, the positivist conception of science has enshrined the notion that subjects and objects are logically independent. Reality is an object that exists independently of any subject observing it, and this independent reality is the foundation of all knowledge. The subject comes to know reality through the process of observation of this independent object, whether or not the knowledge generated by observation is achieved inductively or deductively.

This bifurcation has spawned a plethora of dichotomies and dualisms that underlie most intellectual enterprises. These dualisms include the distinctions between theory and practice, empirical and normative theory, theory and fact, individual and society, and so on (Bernstein, 1976:173; Thompson, 1984:148. See also Apel, 1977).

The most significant of these dualisms is the fact/value dichotomy: ‘the thesis that empirical knowledge is logically discrepant from the pursuit of moral aims or the implementation of ethical standards’ (Giddens, 1977:29). Because in positivism and empiricism knowledge comes from experience, and only that which comes from experience can be called knowledge, value judgements and normative statements are not considered as knowledge. Knowledge derived from experience is understood as ‘fact’, while other statements that do not originate with observation are considered to be ‘value’. The fact/value dichotomy of positivism prescribes the role of the theorist: ‘while the theorist may be passionately interested in the fate and quality of social and political life, he must bracket this practical interest in his pursuit of theory’ (Bernstein, 1976:173).

Having developed in response to the (direct and indirect) influence of positivism, the social sciences now have to be recast in the light of postempiricism. Although the social sciences continue to operate for the most part along positivist lines because of the failure to accept that a comprehensive alternative can emerge out of the above critiques, the time has come for sustained attention to be given to this task. It is no longer possible to proceed with an enterprise that is based upon flawed and discredited assumptions. There would appear to be no option - except recourse to metaphysics on the one hand or dogma on the other - but to
incorporate the insights of postempiricism into the conduct of research in the social sciences.

(b) The implications of postempiricism

The fundamental emphasis of postempiricism is anti-foundationalism. The notion that there was an independent world of phenomena that confronted observers was the basic premise of empiricism and the positivist conception of science. It was thought to provide the foundation for human knowledge, a source independent of the prejudices of an observer.

To advocate an anti-foundationalist position is not the same as advocating that there are no foundations; i.e., that there is definitely no reality independent of human agents. In the international relations context, there are very clearly structural transformations beyond the control of individual citizens, and often beyond the direct control of governments. However, the foundationalist emphasis of positivist/empiricist thought has tended to treat those transformations as products of an external reality from which our knowledge is derived. The point of the anti-foundationalist position is that there may well be an external reality, but because it is not naturally given, it cannot be the foundation of our knowledge.

In the same way that Habermas argued that we conceive of an independent reality because of the logic of the technical cognitive interest, the anti-foundationalist position argues that things are treated as 'real' because, in terms of a certain logic, we have to understand them as 'real'. This is not, however, akin to the position (associated with symbolic interactionism) that if we define situations as real they are therefore real in their consequences. It is a much more sophisticated argument. It stresses that the very ability to be understood and to make sense of one's situation depends upon granting 'facticity' to certain social practices (Giddens, 1984:331).

Consider the following example. Giddens (1984:330) outlines a transcript recording the interaction in a court room of a judge, a district attorney, and a public defender. They are discussing in legal terms the sentencing of a drink-driver. In so doing, they are (discursively) invoking institutional features of the legal system, and assuming that knowledge of these features is held by those to whom they are talking. The extent of
this mutual knowledge goes well beyond an understanding of proper procedures to a considerable body of tacit knowledge (practical consciousness) that is not articulated: e.g., what a ‘legal system’ is, what their respective roles are, and so on. Giddens outlines the implications:

In order to ‘bring off’ the interaction, the participants make use of their knowledge of the institutional order in which they are involved in such a way as to render their interchange ‘meaningful’. However, by invoking the institutional order in this way - and there is no other way for participants in interaction to render what they do intelligible and coherent to one another - they thereby contribute to reproducing it. Moreover, it is essential to see that in reproducing it they also produce its ‘facticity’ as a source of structural constraint (upon themselves and upon others). They treat the system of justice as a ‘real’ order of relationships within which their own interaction is situated and which it expresses. And it is a ‘real’ (i.e. structurally stable) order of relationships precisely because they, and others like them in connected and similar contexts, accept it as such - not necessarily in their discursive consciousness but in the practical consciousness in what they do (Giddens, 1984:331).

The anti-foundationalist position’s fundamental point is that social constraint is not like the physical causation of the natural world. This reorients the starting point for social research. The focus of our attention, particularly in a social and political inquiry like international relations, has to be on the intelligibility of the reality that surrounds us. We have to concern ourselves with the process by which we come to know, and the way in which social practices constrain forms of knowledge. This has practical consequences for our attitude towards transformations that seem to be beyond our control. Instead of seeing the structures of international relations as ‘cold, remote, and abstract’, we see that ‘they are historical products of very concrete human activities.’ As Walker (1987b:63) concludes: ‘Challenges to these structures depend on a clear recognition of this insight’.

The nexus between the internal dialectic of the philosophy of science and the philosophical critiques outlined above is to be found in the role of language. Postempiricism’s anti-foundationalism is expressed in
incorporating the new appreciation of the role of language into research. It must be stressed, however, that this is not an idealist position. Idealism usually refers to the philosophical position associated with Berkeley: that knowledge is purely a mind-dependent process, restricted to the cognitive activity of the mind.

Postempiricism accepts that there are subjects and objects in the world. Knowledge is not, however, a one-way process from object to subject (empiricism/objectivism), nor from subject to object (idealism/subjectivism). Postempiricism is concerned with the relationship between the categories of understanding one brings to bear upon an explanation, and the nature of that explanation. This is not idealist because the categories of the mind are themselves part of a larger social construction. As Kratochwil and Ruggie have concluded of the developments that have led to this position:

Interpretative epistemologies that stress the intimate relationship between validation and the uncovering of intersubjective meanings are simply too well developed today to be easily dismissed by charges of subjectivism - or, more likely in the arena of international relations theory, of idealism (1986:765).

Postempiricism is thus concerned with ‘an examination of the relationship between human thought and human existence’ (Hekman, 1986:9). This approach is not anti-empirical. A critique of empiricism such as this one is not arguing that we can do away with empirical correlation of one’s argument. The reason why we can argue that the social sciences have been predominantly empiricist is because methodological issues (aside from being seen as divorced from wider philosophical concerns) are understood in terms of a competition between methodologies: i.e. which methodology is right? The real issue is, however, what is the relationship between various methodologies?

Empiricism made out that the empirical (positivist) moment was the be-all and end-all of theorising. The theory of knowledge was reduced to the philosophy of science, and reason was limited to scientific or technical rationality. Yet, as was discussed in section 2, positivism was not able to account for its own position, hiding as it did a commitment to technical
rationality behind the claim to value neutrality. It was thus transformed from an enlightening force to a restrictive dogma.

(c) The ‘three moments’ of postempiricism

Postempiricism argues that there are three moments intrinsic to all theorising: empirical correlation, interpretation, and critique. Empirical correlation or ‘methodological objectivism’, the initial confrontation of the object by the inquiring subject, is a necessary moment in all research (Bourdieu, 1977:72). For empiricism that was the end of the theoretical process (rationalised by disguising a commitment to certain interests). Yet this initial moment is just the beginning of a multifaceted process. As Bourdieu has argued, this initial moment ‘demands its own supersession’ (ibid).

It does so because what positivism/empiricism took to be the ‘brute’ or ‘given’ data that provided the foundation of research is itself ‘the product of complex processes of interpretation which have historical origins’ (Bernstein, 1976:230). To take it as given is to deny the process that brought about its constitution and conceive of the data emerging from a hypostatised totality outside of individual and group history (Bourdieu, 1977:72).

That the theoretical process involves three moments is recognised by a number of scholars. Habermas’s notion of cognitive interests and the forms of knowledge they generate has already been discussed (see section 4c). It is a conception not dissimilar to Bourdieu’s. He recognises three modes of knowledge that together constitute ‘moments in a dialectical advance towards adequate knowledge’ (Bourdieu, 1977:3). The first (‘phenomenological’) is knowledge of the primary experience of the social world which does not reflect upon itself and excludes questions of its own generation. The second (‘objectivist’) involves the structuring of objective relations which structure practice, and presupposes a break with primary knowledge by considering its generation. Finally, and most importantly because adequate knowledge is not possible without it, there is the ‘dialectical’ moment which grasps the limits of objectivist knowledge (ibid).

For both Bourdieu and Habermas the problem is not the existence of technical reason per se, but the universalisation of it. The postempiricist response is not, therefore, a break with technical reason (nor the advocacy
of an anti-empirical stance) but the attempt to locate it within a comprehensive theory of rationality (McCarthy, 1984:22). As Bourdieu notes, objectivist knowledge must be put ‘back on its feet by posing the question of the (theoretical and also social) conditions which make such knowledge possible’ (1977:4). A postempiricist perspective involves, therefore, a reintegration of the theoretical process, the overall picture of which is well summarised by Bernstein:

The search for empirical correlations, the task of interpreting social and political reality, and the critique of this ‘reality’, are not three distinct types of inquiry. They are three internal moments of theorising about social and political life (1976:174).

When engaged in theoretical critique there is the danger of the perspective advocated being perceived as the antidote to a fatally flawed predecessor, with the impression generated that one is right and the other is wrong. Such discontinuities are not possible. All critique carries some parts of the theoretical baggage of the subject it has been criticising. This discussion of the three moments of theorising is merely an attempt to overcome the view that what is proposed here is the ‘right’ way, while positivism is ‘wrong’. Positivism, insofar as it is proposed as a comprehensive theory of knowledge, is inadequate, not least because it cannot account for itself. This inadequacy does not, and cannot, lead to the total abandonment of positivism. As Richard Ashley has stated:

The issue is not the purging of positivism - the positivist moment is an inescapable moment of all inquiry - but the realisation of a more adequate ‘two-dimensional’ or dialectical perspective by bringing the positivist moment into unceasing critical tension with the practical moment such that each side ever problematises the other (1984:249n).

How then can we specify these considerations for postempiricist research in the social sciences? The task is not one of developing a rigorous research package that can be applied in any situation. It is a matter, rather, of sensitising research to the philosophical concerns outlined here (see Giddens, 1984:ch.6). The limitations of space mean we
cannot examine this in detail, but the orientation of research sensitive to these concerns can be outlined.

(d) Outline of the postempiricist research strategy

The broad task of an analyst operating within postempiricist parameters is to ‘explore the way in which background assumptions preform and structure both thought and existence’ (Hekman, 1986:9). This means that postempiricist researchers have to be principally concerned with the social constitution of meaning, the linguistic construction of reality and the historicity of knowledge (ibid:161. Emphasis added). This gives the social sciences an explicit research programme: ‘examining the relationship between human thought and existence by analysing explicit belief systems and their relationship to particular social conditions’ (ibid:10).

In examining the relationship between human thought and existence we are conducting analysis at the level of epistemology because it means that ‘the process by which we come to know the world must be made conscious’ (Flax, 1981:1009). However, the contention that a postempiricist analysis has to be directed at the level of epistemology is a contentious one. Many of those who have contributed to the recent debates in philosophy consider the notion of epistemology to be inextricably connected to the foundationalist stream from which we have to break clear.

(e) The problem of epistemology

One of the clearest exponents of this argument is Richard Rorty (1979). Rorty maintains epistemology is interwoven with the Enlightenment conception of knowledge because Descartes led a revolution in philosophy that resulted in the focus moving inward to the mind and its cognitive activity. Claims to truth, legitimacy and sound knowledge became the province of cognition (see Gellner, 1974). The consequence was that epistemology came to be associated with the task of setting ‘universal standards of rationality and objectivity for all actual and possible claims to knowledge’ (Kim, 1980:590).

Overcoming epistemology and breaking with foundationalism is often phrased in terms of the primacy of ontology. The relationship between epistemology (knowing) and ontology (being) has been one of the most
controversial debates in modern philosophy. If the primacy of ontology means that things exist outside of our knowledge of them and condition our knowledge, then, in terms of the debates presented here, it is obviously an untenable proposition. However, if the primacy of ontology is a code for going beyond the specific, historically conditioned notion of Enlightenment epistemology (as with Gadamer’s hermeneutics), then it is entirely consistent with the argument made here. How then is it possible to speak of an epistemological analysis in postempiricist terms?

The answer is both a continuation of, and a radical break with, the conventional view of epistemology (Taylor, 1987:479). It is a continuation because the term ‘epistemology’ allows us to highlight the importance of theoretical assumptions in the construction of knowledge. It is a radical break because those who fashioned the conventional understanding of epistemology ‘did and do not conceive their enterprise as either social or historical’ (Kress, 1981:1026). Epistemological analysis in postempiricist terms has to conceive of epistemology outside of its Enlightenment straitjacket, as being the task of examining the process by which we come to know, the social and historical context of that process, and its political implications.

(f) Rationality and postempiricism

The new ‘sociology of knowledge’ research programme (as opposed to the old, subjectivist programme) entailed in postempiricism has to operate in terms of a more comprehensive understanding of rationality. The positivist conception of science entails a mode of rationality that is unlike the actual conduct of science, which is more hermeneutical than positivist. In other words, ‘rationality’ is not being altered in a postempiricist account, but rather our understanding of what is meant by rationality is being corrected as the actual character of rationality in scientific enquiry is being recovered. It is not that postempiricism offers an ‘unscientific’, ‘irrational’ or ‘arbitrary’ account, but that the ‘unscientific’ appearance of postempiricism has been the character of science all along.17

The rationality of scientific enquiry involves argumentation, persuasion and conversion, rather than the models of deductive proof or inductive generalisation. The sharing of criteria by scientists within the community requires intersubjective communication, which means that
criteria are interpreted and applied to particular cases about which decisions are being made. It is not the case, as positivism would argue, that to be able to proceed rationally requires the prior establishment or identification of standards to which the parties in conflict can appeal. No conception of knowledge has ever operated on those grounds, yet the ability of humans to argue and debate has not been impaired.18 We have to realise that ‘giving up’ recourse to ultimate foundations will not debilitate us, because we have never had those foundations in the first place.19

With the recognition that the conventional use of ‘rationality’ refers to the limited conception of scientific or technical rationality, a more comprehensive notion of rationality will emphasise (given the studies of scientific practice) its practical character: the ‘role of choice, deliberation, conflicting variable opinions, and ... [a] judgmental quality’ (Bernstein, 1983:74). The practical rationality of enquiry means that all reasons and arguments are contestable or fallible. In the process of argumentation we do appeal to standards and criteria. This appeal, however, is very different from the positivist conception. Because it is not possible to proceed in argumentation by calling everything into question simultaneously we have to assume that something is fixed. This is no more than an analytical move, however. Unlike the positivist conception, this assumption is for the process of argumentation only and does not mean that there have to be ultimate foundations or standards to make argumentation rational. Most importantly, the assumptions themselves are open to argumentation and critical examination, in contradistinction to the metaphysical nature of the assumptions in positivism (ibid:72-3).

It is possible that the conception of truth that follows from the practical character of rationality might have pragmatist features, insofar as it is unlikely to specify something general and useful that can be said about truth in all circumstances. Equally, it might involve the understanding of truth, associated with Gadamer and Heidegger, as an event of disclosure. But aside from its particular nature, even considering the question of truth generates a great deal of concern from those who have explicitly or implicitly accepted the subject/object dichotomy of positivism. It produces what Bernstein (1983:16-17) calls the ‘Cartesian Anxiety’.

The Cartesian Anxiety is usually expressed in terms of ‘relativism’, the idea that if there is no permanent foundation then all that there can
be is ‘irrational’ or ‘arbitrary’. It stems from the philosophy of Descartes, which maintained ‘the conviction that the philosopher’s quest is to search for an Archimedean point upon which we can ground our knowledge’ (ibid:16). The theoretical case for adopting the postempiricist account of science is overwhelming, yet the Cartesian Anxiety raises the spectre that if we abandon empiricist notions - even though we recognise they are fundamentally flawed - we will be left with no way of distinguishing ‘true’ from ‘false’, or making any judgements at all. If there is no Archimedean point, this objection runs, how can we know our world?

It is a question that could have been directed to Copernicus but, as his cosmology demonstrated, much if not all of science has been achieved without an Archimedean point. However, the power of the Cartesian either/or remains for many and shapes their understanding of intellectual enterprises. Even in the hands of a self-reflexive thinker it exhibits enormous influence. Consider Kuhn’s (1970:126) statement: ‘In the absence of a developed alternative, I find it impossible to relinquish entirely the [empiricist] view point. Yet it no longer functions effectively ...’ In the international relations context, Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986:768) have declared, after recognising the limitations of empiricism and the value of interpretative epistemologies, that: ‘Let it be understood that we are not advocating a coup whereby the reign of positivist explanation is replaced by explanatory anarchy.’

We have to recognise that the Cartesian Anxiety is not just the product of a philosopher’s interest in epistemology but an issue with a practical-moral dimension for the conduct of everyday life. The search for objectivity stems from the suspicion that we cannot make rational judgements unless we go beyond ourselves: that if we are to proceed in society then there must be some non-subjective means of doing so. The Cartesian Anxiety is, in other words, the manifestation of the wider ‘quest for some fixed point, some stable rock upon which we can secure our lives against the vicissitudes that constantly threaten us’ (Bernstein, 1983:18).

Hiding within is potentially a broader practical issue. The resistance to the anti-foundational logic of the new positivist critiques can be understood as the fear that the Western, liberal-democratic tradition might not survive the removal of the privileging of objectivity. Given that Western industrialised society has been made over by positivism/empiricism, there could be the fear that once scientism is put in its place, the practices of Western society could be threatened. As Rorty (1985:11) argues: ‘The
ritual invocation of the "need to avoid relativism" is most comprehensible as an expression of the need to preserve certain habits of contemporary European life ..."

It has to be recognised that the solution to the Cartesian Anxiety cannot be found within the epistemological source from which it comes. So long as we accept that there is a potential Archimedean point we are bound to search for what is simply not there. The quest is thus not only hopeless from the outset, it increases the anxiety. Only by exorcising ourselves from the unfounded but seductive appeal that social and political life has to be organised by recourse to either one option or another, can we move towards a situation where we are theoretically equipped to deal with the enormous practical issues that confront us in everyday life.

(g) **Conclusion**

This paper has covered a great deal of often complex intellectual territory. Its aim has been to establish the basis for, and the urgency of, a consideration of ‘the theory question’ in International Relations. The discussion has illustrated how positivism, in deriving its authority from the positivist conception of science, has shaped the very nature of the social sciences. An examination of the debates within the philosophy of science, combined with a consideration of the philosophical sources that have contributed to them, illustrated both the theoretical incoherence and empirical invalidity of the positivist conception of science. Any recourse to this conventional view of science as the foundation of knowledge is therefore recourse to an illusion that serves particular interests. In sections 5(b) to 5(f) the specific consequences of the postempiricist understanding of science and rationality for intellectual enterprises have been outlined. In the absence of foundations, it has been argued that social scientists should have the social construction of meaning, the linguistic construction of reality, and the historicity of knowledge as primary concerns. The final section of this paper seeks to draw out briefly, but in more specific terms, the implications of the above discussion for the discipline of International Relations.
6. Questions for International Relations

The central argument of this paper is that the dominance of positivism in International Relations has created a situation where the discipline has been divorced from developments in philosophy and social theory (as instanced in the philosophy of science). Those interdisciplinary developments have thoroughly undermined the notion of an independently existing 'real' world that serves as the source and foundation of all knowledge. Insofar as International Relations follows the positivist/empiricist understanding of knowledge, its theoretical pretensions must be deemed inadequate. But the more important question must be why International Relations has remained in intellectual isolation.

One answer is suggested when we recognise that positivism is not only a matrix of theoretical assumptions in its own right, but also determines attitudes towards theory in general. The discipline of international relations has been so effectively dominated by positivism that it has adopted an anti-philosophical and anti-theoretical bias, manifested in Martin Wight's famous statement that international relations showed a certain recalcitrance to theorising. Such a position is, of course, 'an impossibility which is self-refuting' (Leaver, 1978:16). When we break free of its hold and gain a broader perspective, we realise that no one - lest of all those who loudly proclaim their atheoretical stance - can be divorced from assumptions. As Keohane has declared:

The choice ... is not between being influenced by theory or examining each case 'on its merits': it is rather between being aware of the theoretical basis for one's interpretation and action, and being unaware of it (1986:4).

Richard Ashley has put the issue in eloquent terms:

Even before the first self-consciously theoretical word passes anyone's lips, a theoretical picture worth a thousand words is already etched in the minds of positivist [indeed all] speakers and hearers (1984:253).
Despite this, the earlier discussion of influential realist texts identified a reluctance on the part of International Relations scholars to address fundamental epistemological questions. This seems to be a pervasive view. In a survey of texts prominent in the teaching of the discipline in the United States, Rosenau et al. (1976:294) discovered that in presenting their overwhelmingly realist view, 'the texts offer virtually no hint that what they present is other than objective reality'. Alker and Biersteker (1984:121) concluded that the US discipline was guilty of a 'parochial behaviouralism' in its work.

The first consequence of this discussion is that we have to recognise the urgency and necessity for a greater theoretical self-consciousness in the discipline. As Alker and Biersteker have declared:

Real knowledge accumulation in our contemporary environment requires an international savoir faire that incorporates a deeper kind of political and epistemological self-consciousness (1984:138).

Greater self-consciousness is not, however, an excuse for an antirealist tirade. The tradition of political realism has contributed much to our understanding of international politics. When new theoretical developments emerge in the natural sciences, earlier empirical discoveries are not without value. They are reconceptualised in terms of the new theoretical thinking (see Hesse, 1980). The same needs to be the case for International Relations. The major question is how to achieve this in a way sensitive to the developments outlined in this paper.

Towards a critical theory of international relations

These concerns culminate in the necessity for a critical theory of international relations. This is not to suggest, however, that we are likely to develop a theory that is applicable to international relations, and international relations alone. What the above discussion of postempiricism highlighted was that it is not a perspective brought to the social sciences from outside but, rather, the result of an on-going internal dialectic across the social sciences. The major reason for the intellectual isolation of International Relations has been in the (often explicit) view that it is a discrete field. What the new theoretical developments suggest
is that the notion of a single theory for a discrete field is outmoded. Vasquez notes that this is the view across the social sciences, suggesting that ‘international relations inquiry should become more interdisciplinary than it has been and that it should incorporate more generally political science theory and research’ (1983:223). What, then, might be the focus of a critical theory of international relations?

Robert Cox has provided a starting point for highlighting the focus of critical theory. Cox argues (1984:260-1) that all theories are located in political time and space, thereby always being for someone and for some purpose. Sophisticated theory, however, is never just the expression of that time/space location, but seeks to reflect upon and transcend its own perspective. In a formulation that echoes Habermas’s notion of knowledge-constitutive interests, Cox notes that theory can serve two purposes: either to solve problems in the short-term, or to become reflective upon the process of theorising itself and consider alternative perspectives from which alternative political options might arise.

The first purpose is fulfilled by ‘problem-solving theory’, which takes the world as it finds it, accepting the prevailing power relationships and social institutions as legitimate and therefore not part of the problem. Problem-solving theory aims to make these relationships and institutions work more effectively (ibid:261). It is not difficult to see that this perspective calls up the positivist notion of theory, with its emphasis on the technical cognitive interest and scientific rationality. It might be said to be representative of the first moment of theorising (empirical correlation), while ignoring the critique of the relationships and institutions within which it is located.

The second purpose of theory gives rise to ‘critical theory’. It is critical in so far as it stands back from the prevailing relationships and institutions of the world and asks how they originated. In this way, critical theory is ‘directed towards an appraisal of the very framework for action ... which problem-solving theory accepts as its parameters’ (ibid:262). In this way, critical theory encompasses all three moments of the theoretical process.

Although grounded in thorough intellectual critiques such as this one, critical theory represents an overtly political project. As mentioned above, unless one is satisfied with the current state of humanity, there is an urgency to political theorising. We have to explore the ‘givenness’ of everyday life to understand why so many fundamental issues (e.g. the
nuclear arms race, global poverty, and environmental degradation) are considered amenable to management but not solution.

This is not to suggest, however, that problem-solving theory is apolitical. Far from it. The ‘givenness’ of everyday life is actually supported by problem-solving theory, which hides a conservative project behind the claims of value-neutrality and practicality. Just as the positivist conception of science hides a practical interest in its advocacy of technical rationality, problem-solving theory is conservative in its seemingly unproblematic acceptance of the prevailing social and political order (Cox, 1984:263). In this context, the dominant ‘power politics’ view of international relations is something to be explained rather than something that does explain. As Vasquez (1983:123n) notes, the Cold War and the rise of the United States to superpower status made realism ‘a natural ideology’ for American scholarship.

What then of a critical research project for International Relations? Where might one start in dealing with, say, the nuclear arms race? As mentioned above, this does not entail throwing out all the elements of realism, although as a theoretical whole it is clearly problem-solving theory. Keohane (1983:504) is correct to isolate realism’s focus upon power, interests and rationality as its most useful contribution. The question, however, is not so much their identification but rather their conceptualisation.

A serious debate about the conceptual categories of realism (e.g. power, rationality, interests, the state) could be the starting point.20 One of the principal objects of this renewed effort in international relations should be the concept of the state. It is one of the supreme ironies that the discipline has been dominated by a theoretical tradition that has proclaimed the centrality of the state to international politics, yet has promoted the sublimation of politics by not examining the state ‘as an historically complex form of life’ (Walker, 1987:84. See Ashley, 1983; 1984).21 In terms of the nuclear arms race, for example, this focus is vital given that the national security imperative is a consequence of the theory of the state (see Walker, 1987a).

All scholars should acknowledge the reality of the state system, but that acknowledgement should be the starting point for analysis rather than the unproblematic conclusion. What has to be questioned is the form, dynamics and constitution of the state system, and its impact on social life (see Elshtain, 1986). When this is done we can begin to follow
the postempiricist injunction and recognise that reality is not independent of our understanding and, therefore, the problems we confront are not beyond political action.

The most important aspect of a critical theory is that it incorporates an emancipatory element. Critical theory must have a vision of some alternative order and offer an outline of practice that suggests that such an order is attainable. While thereby containing an element of utopianism, it is not purely utopian. Critical theory, as a comprehensive theory of rationality, will be constrained by its understanding of historical process (Cox, 1984:263. See also Linklater, 1986:310). Critical theory does not, therefore, minimise obstacles in the way of international reform. What it does is help redress the balance and expose the way realism has focussed almost incessantly upon constraints to change. As Linklater has declared:

Little elaboration is needed ... of the fact that theory committed to the reduction or eradication of constraints upon human autonomy remains poorly developed within the field of international relations (1986:308).

The single most important task of a critical theory of international relations is to make clear that the obstacles to reform are constituted in the social world and are thus not immutable to change. As the American philosopher Richard Rorty has stated, 'when we see this community as ours rather than nature's, shaped rather than found' we enlarge the realm for political action (quoted in Bernstein, 1983:225).

Conclusion

Increased theoretical sophistication in International Relations has been thwarted in the past by the intellectual isolation of the discipline. That cannot be sustained in the face of interdisciplinary developments outlined here, or allowed to continue given the practical-moral issues that confront the discipline. It might have been easy in the heady days of positivist science to comfort oneself with the notion that attention had to be focussed on the obstacles to reform in the name of realism. Rather than the non-normative enterprise it was made out to be, the secondary status assigned to ethical concerns by this understanding of the theoretical
process installed a system shaped by and designed to serve particular interests. However, the paradigmatic nature of objectivity and scientific rationality entailed by positivist science is no more. The scientist no longer wears the white coat. Neither can the critic or reformer in international relations be forced to carry the white flag. Confronting the practical problems that are the concern of International Relations demands a critical perspective freed of the dichotomised and dualised traditions of Western thought.

Notes

1 Many people have been kind enough to proffer comments on previous drafts and in discussions on the issues raised here. I would particularly like to thank Richard Campbell, Andrew Mack, Jim George, Andrew Linklater, Jim Richardson and Rob Walker; without, of course, necessarily implicating them in the argument I put forward.

2 In its capitalised form, Critical Theory refers to the particular tradition associated with the Frankfurt School. For a discussion see Campbell (1987).

3 I am grateful to Rob Walker for permission to use this quote. For an example of the myth of the white flag see Margaret Thatcher's statement that the British Labour Party's anti-nuclear policy means that it has '... talked of occupation, a defence policy of the white flag' (quoted in Sydney Morning Herald, 30 May 1987:18).


5 The term ‘realism’ has a number of different meanings in different contexts. It is used here to indicate the predominantly American tradition of international relations scholarship. This draws heavily (often in contradictory fashion) upon the broader philosophical tradition of realist thought. See Walker (1987).

6 For other new developments, such as regime analysis and the theory of hegemonic stability, that can be considered elaborations of the realist perspective see O'Meara (1984), Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986) and Smith (1987).

7 Vasquez distinguishes between the realist paradigm and the ‘power politics conceptual framework’. The latter is at the core of the realist paradigm and includes more conceptual baggage, particularly the notion that state behaviour can be explained rationally. Vasquez prefers the realist paradigm as a description of the discipline’s orthodoxy because it means that the introduction of the social psychological perspectives do not involve a break with the paradigm, whereas their recognition of the irrationality of much policy making is a break with the power politics framework. See Vasquez (1983:30,39).

8 For a discussion of Habermas’s theory of cognitive interests see Campbell (1987).

9 Morgenthau’s conception of theory/practice entails the assumption of rationality, explored in Campbell (1986). For a related consideration of Morgenthau see the later discussion by Jim George in this collection.

10 This is not to deny the numerous variations that are evident in the positivist/empiricist tradition. Maxwell (1987:13), for example, isolates eleven different versions of empiricism (including the familiar distinctions of positivism/empiricism and its ‘logical’ offshoots) and notes that not even that breakdown does justice to this rich tradition. Kolakowski (1972) is the best introduction to the complexities of positivism/empiricism. In speaking of a general intellectual style I am attempting to isolate the fundamental and
shared assumptions that define the common ground of this tradition without compromising the variations.

11 For the purposes of this paper the work of Popper and the scientific realists are considered as part of a broadly defined positivist tradition. Although they incorporate much of the critiques of positivism within their positions (particularly true for the scientific realists), and despite intentions to the contrary, I would argue they are ultimately influenced by or dependent upon empiricist epistemology. For discussions of Popper see von Wright (1971), Frisby (1972), Gellner (1974), Lakatos and Zahar (1975), Hooker (1975), Bhaskar (1979), Dallmayr (1981), Alker (1982), Bleicher (1982) and Hamnett et al. (1984). For the scientific realists see Jardine (1978), Hesse (1980), Halfpenny (1982), Keat and Urry (1982) and Hekman (1986).

12 For recent discussions of ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism see the essays by Heritage and Loas respectively in Giddens and Turner (1987).

13 A powerful critique of positivism can be found in Hindess (1977), who addresses the logical inconsistencies of positivist epistemology. Hindess's work brings to the fore the insights of one of positivism's founders, David Hume. The outcome of Hume's efforts to establish positivism/empiricism as the foundation of human knowledge were 'glaringly incompatible with his intentions' (Kolakowski, 1972:52). See George in this volume.

14 Frost uses this example to describe how Verstehen theories highlight the importance of 'the internal point of view'. However, as discussed above, Verstehen privileged the subjectivity of meaning. The example nonetheless serves as an indication of the universal nature of hermeneutics because meaning is dependent upon socially constructed symbols. As McCarthy (1984:147) states: 'the "meanings" to which social action is oriented are primarily intersubjective meanings constitutive of the social matrix in which individuals find themselves and act: inherited values and world views, institutionalized roles and social norms, and so forth'.

15 This, in broad terms, is the argument put by the scientific realists. See Bhaskar (1975; 1979).
It is worth remembering that the epistemology/ontology dualism is itself a Cartesian legacy, the terms of the dualism being products of the 18th century. See Flax (1981:1013).


Consider the scientific development that shaped much of the modern world, the Copernican Revolution. Copernicus developed a cosmology that demonstrated that the sun, not the earth, was at the centre of our universe. Contrary to the (positivist) view that Copernicus's theory replaced the 'empty speculations' of the Aristotelian with laws which he derived from observed facts, it was the Aristotelian who 'could quote numerous observational results in their favour' (Feyerabend, 1968:13n). It was Copernican theory which, not possessing independent observational support, was inconsistent with recorded observations and entrenched theories. As Feyerabend declares: 'this' is how modern physics started; not as an observational enterprise but as an unsupported speculation that was inconsistent with highly confirmed laws' (ibid). See also Kuhn (1957), Feyerabend (1964) and Lakatos and Zahar (1975). Lakatos and Zahar state (1975:360) that this case 'is a typical example of how a history of science undermines a philosophy of science ...'.

The continuing positivist urge to find foundations despite their elusiveness is well summarised by Bernstein

Old positivist myths and aspirations die hard, and it is instructive to see how the old positivist dream of discovering a fixed metascientific calculus for rating different theories crops up in new and strange places. This neopositivist strain is to be found not only in Laudan's idea of a calculus for rating 'problems' but in Popper's (unsuccessful) attempts to specify a procedure for rating the comparative verisimilitude of different theories and in Lakatos' attempt to find an 'objective criterion' for distinguishing progressive from degenerative research programmes ... We do not have a neutral framework or calculus in making such judgements. Scientists (and philosophers of science) do make such claims ... but their judgements are rationally contestable (which does not mean that they are arbitrary). To paraphrase Wittgenstein, we are on the brink of
misunderstanding, if we think that making and warranting such judgements requires or presupposes that there is (or must be) an unambiguous decision procedure for doing so. It is the suggestion that there is (or can be) such a permanent calculus that I take to be the neo-positivist vestige in those who protest most vociferously against positivism (1983:254n. First emphasis added).

20 For a discussion of the rationality assumption of realism in post-empiricist terms see Campbell (1986).

21 It is remarkable that a leading scholar can maintain that: ‘Any theory of international politics requires also a theory of domestic politics ...’, while stating at the same time: ‘I have not tried, but surely some neorealists is capable of producing a theory of the state’ (Waltz, 1986:331,339).

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THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE
POSITIVIST/EMPIRICIST THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN DISCIPLINE

Jim George

Introduction

In 1962, J.D.B. Miller was appointed Professor of International Relations at the Australian National University. His retirement at the end of 1987 brings to an end the first generation of full time professional study of international relations in this country. In this twenty-five year period, international relations has come of age as an academic discipline in Australia (Miller, 1983:138-42). Courses in international relations now form part of the curriculum of almost all Australian universities (Kubalkova & Cruickshank, 1987:125-7). The disciplinary heartland at the ANU, in Canberra, now boasts a Strategic and Defence Studies Centre and, since 1985, a Peace Research Centre. Between 1963 and 1983 forty-seven PhDs were completed on international relations issues at the ANU, and Australian international relations scholars now hold down high ranking academic and public service positions throughout the country and overseas (ibid:114).

In institutional terms then, and notwithstanding recent argument to the contrary (ibid), the general picture could be construed as one of robust good health. But what of the intellectual state of the discipline? Has it, for example, come of age theoretically? Has the institutional maturity of the past quarter century been matched by an equally mature and sophisticated approach to analysis, as Miller (1983:141) suggests? Or, is the study of international relations in Australia guilty of the narrow ‘intellectual provincialism’ that, in Robert Walker’s view (1978:11 and 1980), has fettered the development of a more adequate understanding of contemporary world politics in the discipline as a whole?

This paper will suggest that this is regrettably the case. It will maintain, more specifically, that Australian international relations
scholarship is 'provincial' in the sense that it remains effectively alienated from a broad interdisciplinary debate on the 'theory question' which in recent years has had a significant impact upon the Anglo-American intellectual community. A major characteristic of this debate has been its concern to restore to the forefront of social science scholarship a number of theoretical questions, themes and issues dismissed as largely irrelevant by a community of scholars steeped in the analytical traditions of what Anthony Giddens has called the 'orthodox consensus', that legacy of late 18th and 19th century thought revitalised in the 20th century by logical [positivism] and systems theory (1982:224).

Particular attention has been paid, in this interdisciplinary debate, to issues of epistemology, and the general theoretical process by which knowledge of social and political reality is constructed and explicated in Anglo-American social science circles. This chapter will seek to demonstrate how a neglect of such issues by international relations specialists, in Australia and elsewhere, has resulted in a discipline replete with theoretical unselfconsciousness, logical inconsistency, and a generally inadequate approach to the question of 'reality' in international affairs. It will concentrate most specifically on theoretical problems associated with the dominant realist approach to international relations.

The term 'realist' will refer here to an understanding of international relations set upon three broad theoretical assumptions outlined by Robert Keohane (1983:508). They are:

1. that states are the most important actors in world politics;
2. that the behaviour of states can be calculated in 'rational' terms;
3. that states always seek power and define their interests as the pursuit of power.

These realist assumptions, it will be argued, are expressed (albeit in different ways and to different degrees) by both the British derived
'traditionalist-realist' perspective and its more overtly 'scientific' counterpart favoured primarily by North American scholars. In its initial phase the discussion centres on aspects of the 'theory question' either ignored or treated in perfunctory fashion by the international relations discipline over the years. Central to this phase of the discussion will be the issue of positivist/empiricist thought and its often unacknowledged influence upon Anglo-American scholarship. The second phase of the discussion concentrates more specifically on the implications of studying international relations from a theoretical perspective underlain and directed by positivist/empiricist epistemological principles. It seeks in the first instance, to expose the influences of a positivist/empiricist epistemology at the very core of realist scholarship, as expressed through the 'great texts' of E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau. In a more contemporary vein it then indicates, via the work of Richard Ashley, the problems of a positivist/empiricist-theoretical approach for the (predominantly) American 'neorealists'. In the final phase of the discussion, direct attention is paid to the Australian context and to the unacknowledged, yet decisive, influence of positivist/empiricist theoretical perspectives upon the realism of some of this country's leading international relations scholars.

1. The Theory Question: some general issues

Given the complexity associated with questions of how 'real' knowledge of the world is gleaned and transformed into an analytical whole, it is possible in the present circumstances only to touch upon themes which, in the fields of sociology, literary theory, philosophy and the history and philosophy of science, have received much more substantial treatment. In this context, it is necessary at this point, to say something in general about the way that concepts of epistemology, philosophy and theory are to be used here, and more specifically, about the process which connects epistemologies, theories and philosophies to the claims for realism that have punctuated the study of society and politics in the West in the modern period.

The approach to be adopted might be considered somewhat unconventional for an international relations audience. Following Peter Winch's lead, however (1958:18-23), it will maintain that the issue of epistemology must be at the heart of any study of social and political
reality, including that specifically concerned with the international arena. An epistemology, in this sense, is not to be understood as synonymous with 'scientific method', nor with some one-dimensional 'psychological' enterprise. Rather, as Jane Flax (1981) and Ellen Meskins-Wood (1972:1-30) have indicated, an epistemology is better appreciated as an historical and social process of understanding in which subjects observe and simultaneously give 'meaning' to the objects of reality.

In Flax's terms, an epistemology can never be an abstract body of thought, but is always '... connected integrally both to the practice of politics and to political theory'. Perceived this way, an epistemology '... contains assumptions about the nature of the subject (and hence about human nature) and about the relationship between the subject and the thing known'. It is a process therefore, '... constructed by and through human activity', which must be at the heart of any serious realism concerned to understand and explain social relations between subjects and the way in which social objects are constructed (1981:1007). In this sense, an epistemology is a theory of knowledge constructed in social and historical circumstances which is characterised by a series of propositions concerning the real nature and relationships between the subjects and objects of the world.

The significance of this notion of epistemology is that it represents the genesis of a creative theoretical process which begins with epistemological propositions about the real nature of subjects and objects and which continues to inform and direct all subsequent theory and philosophy concerning the way the world really 'is'. Understood this way, a 'philosophy' is an intrinsic element of the (broadly defined) theoretical process. More precisely, as Barry Hindess (1977) has argued, philosophies are constructed upon particular epistemologies which inform them, through a series of 'knowledge rules', of what can be considered 'real' or valid knowledge about the world and what can not. A philosophy expresses these epistemological rules in the broadest fashion. Methodologies, derived from this process, serve in turn to '... lay down the procedures to be used either in the generation or the testing of [theoretical/philosophical] propositions' by those wishing to [more rigorously] substantiate the validity of such propositions (ibid:3).

This process might be understood more clearly in the form of an example which later will be shown to be of immediate relevance to any critical inquiry into the contemporary state of the art in the international
relations discipline. The example in question is that which brings to the fore the relationship between the philosophy and methodology of positivism and an empiricist theory of knowledge. As Leszek Kolakowski (1972) and others (Bernstein 1976; Halfpenny 1982; Stockman 1983, and Hindess 1977) have confirmed, positivism can be seen to represent the broadest philosophical expression of a set of empiricist 'knowledge rules' concerning the 'real' nature of subjects and objects in the world and the relationship between them. More explicitly, positivism, in all its variants, propounds an empiricist theory of knowledge centred upon subjects and objects as atomised, independent, 'oppositional' categories of existence. It recognises, accordingly, the existence of a sphere of reality (object) independent of the theorising subject. It acknowledges, moreover, the capacity for (objective) 'observation' of reality as manifested either directly, via the external impulses of sense data, or indirectly, via one variant or another, of a 'correspondence rule' format.

The point is that it is the empiricist theory of knowledge at the epistemological heart of positivism which underpins and determines all subsequent positivist attitudes to the role and nature of theory, philosophy and methodology in the quest to explain the real nature of human society and politics. Put another way, and broadening the issue for a moment, the theoretical process which begins with a set of (socially constructed) epistemological propositions about the subjects and objects of existence is one which, in philosophical and methodological terms, goes on to define precisely what we can 'know' about the world: which limits and orients the questions that can be 'usefully' asked about it; and which ultimately constructs an image of reality based upon an original understanding of the identity and capacity of its human and material elements.

As scholars of the critical interdisciplinary debate have stressed, this is an important issue in any serious inquiry into the contemporary state of social science scholarship dominated as it is by the dualised and dichotomised framework of analysis associated with positivist/empiricist thought (Giddens, 1974, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1982; Bernstein, 1976, 1983; Hekman, 1983, 1986; Stockman, 1983 and Keat and Urry, 1982). Acknowledging distinctions between subject and object, fact and value, and observation and theory, etc., the Anglo-American intellectual community in particular has effectively 'splintered' the theoretical process. It has relegated theory to a secondary, retrospective position in
the analytical order of things. Theory, in this sense, has become almost a supplementary theme in the pursuit of real knowledge about the world; an enterprise perceived as taking place literally 'after the (observed) fact'. At its crudest, this has led to the widespread, if preposterous, proposition that analysis of the social and political world is not 'theorising' at all, but merely the product of empirical observation. This, as we shall see, is unfortunately an illusion perpetrated by international relations specialists in Australia and elsewhere.

2. The Theory Question and the Australian Study of International Relations

The relevance of this discussion to the Australian study of international relations can be more directly indicated in the form of a double edged assertion concerning the theoretical state of the art in the contemporary period: the dominant traditionalist-realist approach to study in this country is underpinned and directed by a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge. Moreover, and as a consequence of its (unacknowledged) commitment to a positivist/empiricist epistemology, the realist led Australian discipline is restricted to a narrow and inadequate frame of analytical reference which cannot be rationally or logically defended, even in its own terms.

This might appear a somewhat implausible suggestion particularly as it relates to an Australian realist approach steeped in the historical and philosophical tradition associated with the 'British' school of international relations. Personified in Hedley Bull, this is an approach to study that John Weltman once proposed (1979:11) seemed to go beyond positivism if not to reject it altogether. As this work will seek to indicate, however, the realism of Hedley Bull, J.D.B. Miller, T.B. Millar and Coral Bell, does not go beyond positivism even if it does appear to reject it altogether. Rather, it will be maintained, the realism of the leading figures in the Australian discipline is connected at the metatheoretical level by a set of positivist/empiricist knowledge rules which shape and direct its attitude to study and to the real nature of the international relations 'object'.

This is not to deny, of course, some quite significant differences of style, insight, and emphasis within the works of Australia's leading scholars. Rather, it suggests that 'Robinson Crusoe' individualism is no
basis on which to carry out a serious investigation into Australian realist scholarship. As Kuhn (1962) for example made clear, the relationship between the individual scholar and a ‘research community’ is somewhat more complex than is allowed for by the notion that each scholar is ultimately an atomised ‘I’. Indeed, the very proposition of the existence of atomised independent subjects is itself derived from a socially constructed theory of knowledge (i.e. empiricism).

Similarly, the reference to a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge at the base of Australian realist scholarship does not deny the stylistic or research-oriented distinctions between the Anglophile brand of realism and that which predominates in North America. What it suggests is that the distinctions between the two major strains of realist thought are of an essentially rhetorical nature. They do not, in other words, represent the epistemological, methodological, theoretical or paradigmatic ‘ruptures’ that a constant stream of analysts have signified for the relationship in the years since the great debates of the 1960s (Harrison, 1964:4; Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 1971:1-25; Lijphart, 1974:47-74; Banks, 1985:216-18; Collins, 1982:2-26).

For all its critical intent, however, the argument to follow should not be perceived as an anti-realist polemic. Its aim is not condemnation. Nor does it seek to score cheap critical points against a realist mode of inquiry that, at its best, has much to commend it. Rather, it seeks to explain that only following the kind of theoretical self-examination engaged in elsewhere in the social sciences in recent years, can realist international relations scholarship in Australia hope to rekindle the potential, largely dormant within it, for a more adequate realist analysis. And while it will ultimately be directed at literature produced by leading figures in the discipline such as Bull, Miller, Millar and Bell, this critique is not aimed at individual scholars, *per se*.

Instead, the major aim of this chapter is to expose the nature and implications of the theoretical process by which the realist tradition in international relations has been expressed or represented in the literary output of its leading mainstream scholars. The distinction is subtle but important. Accordingly, and in concert with Richard Ashley’s recent critique of neorealism it is primarily concerned with Australian realist thought.
... as a collective movement or project emerging in a shared context, having shared principles of practice, and observing certain background understandings and norms that participants mutually accept as unproblematic and that limit and orient the questions raised, the answers warranted, and the conduct of discourse ... this regardless of the fact that the participants may not be conscious of (may merely take for granted the truth of) the norms and understandings integrating them as one movement (1984:228).

With these ends in mind, this chapter seeks to take the debate, in this country, beyond its present, rather stilted confines and relocate it as part of a wider interdisciplinary context concerned with broad theoretical issues. Emphasis is placed upon the need for the great majority of Australian scholars in the field to reassess the manner in which they have gone about their analytical task. The dominant realist sector of the discipline, it will be argued, must address, in a more sophisticated and eclectic manner, questions relating to pre-analytical and metatheoretical issues concerning the process by which they construct the knowledge of the world they seek to explain.

3. Hedley Bull and a Critical Theory of International Relations

Without any sense of irony, this argument will be couched in terms consistent with principles of scholarship enunciated by Hedley Bull in those moments of intellectual self-reflection all too rarely encountered during his illustrious career. In a famous contribution to the debate over the theoretical state of the discipline, it was Bull (1972:23) who insisted that all international relations analysis was predicated upon ‘theoretical assumption’. Consequently, he argued, a primary responsibility facing scholars was to acknowledge and investigate such assumptions rather than ignore or leave them unchallenged. It was Bull, moreover, who proposed that the process of theoretical inquiry undertaken by a mature discipline must, at its minimum, be directed towards ‘criticism’. At its maximum, he maintained, it was a process fundamentally concerned with
...theoretical construction, with establishing that certain arguments [are] valid while others are invalid, and so proceeding to erect a firm structure of knowledge (1972:32).

This perspective, with its emphasis on rigorous metatheoretical inquiry, is one entirely consistent with the general themes and ambitions of this chapter. The continuity is further enhanced when another, 'critical' element of Bull's thinking is taken into account. In this regard, his commentary on Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars* (1979) is instructive. Here, confronting one of the most contentious themes on the disciplinary agenda - the nature and role of 'morality' in international relations - Bull developed further a theme implicit in his discussion of theoretical matters. It suggested that disputes concerning reality in social and political affairs cannot be resolved against some arbitrary external realm of validation (e.g., independent scientific knowledge) but that validation could only arise from vigorous critical investigation of competing theories of reality.

Against this perspective, Walzer's attempt to confront one of the oldest and most complex themes in Western thought was proclaimed inadequate by Bull; not because of any lack of general erudition on the part of the author, but ultimately, because Walzer

... does not provide us with the foundations of his own position, and thus does not have anything to say as to why we should listen to him rather than to someone whose outlook is fundamentally different (1979:598).

This was an interesting insight on Bull's part, delivered as it was nearly a decade before the current surge of interest in critical theory in the international relations discipline. It suggested, quite clearly, that the only viable criteria of analytical validity open to the student of international relations was one centred on a self-critical process in which the 'theoretical foundations' of competing realisms were exposed and defended *in their own terms*.

Walzer's perspective on war and morality was flawed, and invalidated, according to Bull, because Walzer did not expose to critical review the underlying theoretical foundations of his argument or engage himself in a debate which established the internal coherence of the case
he sought to defend. As a result, claimed Bull, Walzer's '... self denying ordinance' concerning the theoretical process undermined his arguments on 'just' and 'unjust' wars, to the extent that it was little more than 'liberal' dogma '... a message ... actually addressed only to the limited circle of those who shared his outlook' (1979:599).

There can be little argument with the critical principles espoused here by Hedley Bull. Consequently, and in concert with the fundamental concerns of the exemplar realist scholar of the Australian discipline, this chapter attempts to examine the 'theoretical foundations' of Bull's own work and that of his major realist colleagues. In so doing it will seek to ask why, if at all, we should listen to them rather than to those 'whose outlook is fundamentally different'. This questioning process can begin by introducing some of the historical and intellectual issues surrounding the development and contemporary status of positivist/empiricist theory, in order that its significance be more readily understood in the present context.

4. Positivism and the Empiricist Theory of Knowledge

The debate over positivism is commonly associated with attempts by Western scholars, since the 19th century in particular, to construct a science of human society set upon the methodological premises of the natural sciences. The nature of positivist thought, accordingly, is most often identified with a series of definable 'social science' criteria. As a number of commentators have stressed, however, positivist ideas do not simply correspond with any single tradition of thought emanating from the Comtian search for a 'social physics'. Nor are the influences of positivism restricted to the literary efforts of those scholars who have accepted the description in their works (Kolakowski, 1972:181-240; Giddens, 1974:1-23; Stockman, 1983:1-36; Hesse, 1980; and Bernstein, 1976).

Instead, it has become increasingly clear that the positivist approach to knowledge and society is most accurately understood as the site of a series of contested epistemological claims and complex theoretical propositions which have underlain Western thinking since the Renaissance and Reformation eras. In this regard, three themes rarely associated with international relations debate can be usefully, if rather superficially, pursued. The first brings to the analytical foreground '...
the real father of positivism’, David Hume (Kolakowski, 1972:43) and the
cortribution his sceptical empiricist theory of knowledge had on the
development of positivism and the post-Enlightenment search for a
scientifically secure foundation for the study of modern society. The
second and third themes take account of the claims of Popper’s critical
rationalism and Weber’s verstehen approach to have overcome the
inductivism/solipsism problem associated with mainstream positivist/
empiricist thought. These are themes that have only recently been
acknowledged as intrinsic to the theory question in international
relations. This chapter seeks to establish their significance further and
indeed broaden it as part of this inquiry into Australian realist theorising.

5. David Hume and the Nature of Positivist/Empiricist Theory

The contribution of Hume to the development of positivist thought has
been illustrated by Leszek Kolakowski in his book Positivist Philosophy
(1972). In this work, Kolakowski suggested that positivism is best
understood as an outgrowth and contemporary philosophical expression of
a sceptical Enlightenment theory of knowledge centred on phenomenalist
epistemological principles (1972:11-17). The phenomenalist principle
states, in short, that only phenomena which can be directly experienced
by the observing subject are capable of generating knowledge of the ‘real’
nature of the world. In so doing, it acts to repudiate the notion associated
with classical metaphysics and the old theology of the Feudal era that
observed phenomena are merely manifestations or ‘appearances’ of some
hidden reality that cannot be ‘known’ in the scientific sense. It thus
acknowledges no underlying deep structures; no ‘essences’ or ‘ideal states’
beyond the worldly phenomena that can be experienced and empirically
recorded (ibid 13-17; Calkins, 1970:ch 6).

The phenomenalist rule has a second element which, complementing
the first, informs the positivist scholar of what can be regarded as
legitimate knowledge of reality and what cannot. This, Kolakowski
explained (1972:13-17), was the principle of nominalism which proposed
that general statements about the world that do not have their reference
in independent, observable, atomised objects, should not be afforded real
knowledge status. Objects that are not referable to the senses cannot, by
nominalist logic, be ‘assumed’ to exist outside of the senses. The
nominalist principle, consequently, undermines any claim for real knowledge centred on theorised scientific models, ideal types, or abstract mathematical systems. Rather, from the perspective of a phenomenalist/nominalist based theory of knowledge, the real world, the world we can ‘know’ must be centred on ‘... individual, observable facts’ (ibid:15 and Bronowski and Mazlish, 1960:203-5).

Most significantly, from this perspective, the theoretical process is effectively ‘splintered’. ‘Theorising’, however complex in nature, can only be a cognitive retrospective enterprise. It must take place, literally, after the (experienced) fact. Theoretical knowledge can, in this circumstance, be acknowledged only as part of a cognitive attempt to organise, categorise and give meaning to reality. It can never be acknowledged as representing real knowledge in itself. From this epistemological viewpoint, it is ‘unreal’ to speak of theoretically derived universal laws of history or society. Nor, as Hume explained, is it possible on this basis to speak meaningfully of ‘truth’, ‘goodness’, ‘harmony’, ‘morality’, or ‘justice’ in the world which can somehow be manifested in empirical terms (1978:456-76, 487-90, 457-61). Such categories, if they exist at all, must be empirically observable and verifiable.

In one sense of course, Hume’s empiricist theory of knowledge was that of the quintessential Enlightenment philosopher intent on constructing a secular, scientifically based philosophical foundation for modern society (Kolakowski, 1972; Aune, 1970:40-64; Schact, 1984:175-220; Gupte, 1983:57-64; Scruton, 1981:120-35). In the present context however, it is the extreme scepticism of Hume’s position concerning the inherent limitations of a positivist/empiricist approach which is of significance. Indeed, it is Hume’s uncompromising critical faculty - which sets him apart from his contemporaries and from the great majority of those who have followed him in the positivist quest - which makes him such an important figure for this present discussion. This sceptical inclination led him to a series of conclusions about empiricist based thinking which, though ignored or finessed by his positivist heirs, have continuing relevance for the present study.

To explain precisely how this is so would necessitate the kind of closely argued debate on Hume’s relationship to early British empiricism which is not possible in the present circumstances. It would involve an explanation of the way he sought to resolve a major theoretical tension in British empiricist thought and, in so doing, synthesised it into positivism
The tension in question is that associated with the rather crude inductivist logic of Bacon, Hobbes and (to a lesser extent) Locke on the one hand, and the extreme subjectivism of Berkeley on the other (Cornforth, 1946:21-49; Scruton, 1984:21-50; Cowley, 1968:1-48; Schact, 1984:100-220; Gupte, 1983:31-74). Two themes drawn from this complex debate might indicate the dilemma faced by Hume.

The first relates to Locke's position on the question of epistemology, which sought overall to reinforce and enhance the empiricist premises of Bacon and Hobbes that real knowledge of the world was derived from experienced sense data and not from some experiential or innate source. Hence Locke’s ‘tabula rasa’ proposition. But in Locke's work increased attention was paid to the 'retrospective' process by which immediately sensed knowledge of the external object was transformed into meaningful 'fact' by the thinking human subject (Cornforth, 1946:27-30; Cowley, 1968:1-11; Schact, 1984:179-84; Gupte, 1983:31-48; Fitzgerald, 1980:117-40).

Locke’s conclusion on this issue was that while the ideas of human knowledge might be originally derived from an immediate sense experience of independently existing objects - the objects of cognition by which we come to 'know', understand, give meaning to and make judgements about reality, are not external to the mind at all. Consequently, human knowledge of reality could never be meaningfully prescribed outside of the ideas we have of it. The limits of human knowledge were confined to the immediate objects of cognition - the subjective perceptions, thoughts and contemplations of what is real. We can, according to this logic, never actually 'know' the nature of any externally existing reality as Hobbes and Bacon had suggested. All we can know are the objects subjectively constructed within our own mind. Utilising the Kantian language of a century later, Locke concluded that we can only know 'things in themselves' in the sense that our ideas are assumed to be mediated 'copies' of the real thing (Cornforth 1946:29; Schact, 1984:142-79).

Berkeley can be seen to have argued in favour of one half of the Lockian perspective (i.e. that the objects of our knowledge are cognitively constructed) while attempting to undermine the other half (that ideas are originally imposed upon us by a world of external things). Consequently, while accepting that knowledge of reality was to be gained through cognitive experience of the world's objects, Berkeley reduced the
empiricist enterprise to an exclusive ‘mind dependent’ process. He attacked the illogicality of those who would ‘... distinguish the existence of sensible objects from their being perceived, so as to conceive of them existing unperceived’ (Cornforth, 1946:43). With Berkeley modern empiricist thought was shifted further away from its crude inductivist roots towards an extreme subjectivism which was later to have an impact upon both British and Continental scholarship.

6. Hume and the Paradox of Positivist/Empiricist Theory

In seeking to synthesise the internal tension within British empiricism, Hume took his lead primarily from Berkeley whilst paying heed to Locke’s more insightful comments on the issue of cognition. He sought to explain the epistemological process by proferring a cognitively based dualism which went beyond the original Lockeian formula and drew distinction between ‘impressions’ and ‘ideas’. The former, Hume maintained, corresponded to the immediate sense experience of the world, the latter to the retrospective ‘meaning’ or imagination associated with such experience (i.e. the distinction between the ‘experience’ of pain, sound, colour, smell and later images or memory of it) (Hume, 1978:1-13, 192-218; Kolakowski, 1972:42-60; Scruton, 1984:121-4; Aune, 1970:40-74; Cowley, 1968:1-17; Schact, 1984:185-203).

For Hume knowledge about the world as it ‘is’ could only be gained from the realm of immediate sense experience or ‘impressions’. All other cognitive activity, however complex or imaginative (including that associated with geometry, algebra and arithmetic), was perceived as belonging to the (retrospective/theoretical) realm of ‘ideas’. It could not be considered as corresponding to reality because it relied upon abstract categories which did not correspond with ‘... what is anywhere existent in the universe’ (Scruton, 1984:123).

This distinction, drawn by Hume, cannot be underestimated in any discussion of the nature and development of positivism. From the synthesised logic which Hume brought to bear upon the empiricist issue, it becomes possible, even while acknowledging the problems of inductivism, to conceive of a realm of ‘fact’ distinct from that of ‘theory’; an ‘is’ from an ‘ought’; and a process of knowledge construction in which an objectively existing sphere of reality imposes its sense impressions upon a ‘passive’ subject. It is possible in this context also, to distinguish

Utilised by thinkers less astute than Hume, this dualised framework has characterised the positivist search for a secure 'foundation' for social and political analysis to the present day. But it has been a dualised frame of reference utilised largely without regard to its paradoxical consequences. The paradox in question centred on Hume's recognition that if reality could only be understood by phenomenalist/nominalist means - by immediate sense impressions - then the search for an empirically based, intersubjectively applicable scientific philosophy was undermined by its own logic. Hume's argument was that empiricist theories of knowledge, taken to their logical conclusion, were capable only of generating images of reality '... limited to individual accounts of immediate observation' (Kolakowski, 1972:51). Any realism founded on the logic of empiricist observation techniques could produce only an unproductive body of knowledge limited to individual consciousness in the present. It was, to understate the case, hardly a secure foundation on which to construct a new scientific philosophy for the modern era.

Hume, the original, the most consistent and logically rigorous of positivist thinkers, thus concluded that the whole attempt to construct a modern realist philosophy upon an empiricist theory of knowledge was incapable of providing the means to its avowed scientific ends. It was, as he illustrated, not capable of explaining the reality of the world (either physical or social) because its methodology, centred on a process of empirical observation and testing, was flawed beyond repair. In its inductivist mode it assumed, wrongly, that sense data could be intersubjectively aggregated. In its more 'subjectivist' expression it was similarly flawed, for even if it recognised the cognitive source of all 'objective' knowledge it ended up as nothing but solipsism.

The significance of this conclusion requires little further elucidation; it implies that claims for realism based upon positivist/empiricist theoretical premises are logically untenable, even in their own terms. The founder of the positivist/empiricist approach to realism exposed it as a paradoxical enterprise, which produced precisely the kind of knowledge (abstract, subjective and non-verifiable) which its own phenomenalist/nominalist rules of knowledge must reject as metaphysical and 'unreal'. Hume, in the Enlightenment era, reached a conclusion about the paradox
of positivist/empiricist thought which, two centuries later, critically inclined scholars across the Anglo-American social sciences are still striving to explain to the great majority of their colleagues. The primary reason for this of course is that the devastating indictment of positivist/empiricist theory by Hume has not substantially hindered its progress within Western intellectual circles. Indeed much of the history of Western theory since the Enlightenment has been characterised by the continuing pursuit of a science of human society based on the very theory of knowledge condemned as inadequate by Hume.

7. Post-Hume: the osmosis of the paradox

At the risk of caricaturing a highly complex issue, it is possible to discern two major post-Humeian positivist/empiricist strains as providing the basic intellectual direction for the pursuit of a scientific philosophy in the period since the Enlightenment. The first, drawn broadly from Hume's pragmatist inclination, accepted the inherent problems of an inductivist approach to knowledge. It centred its search for a modern scientific foundation for knowledge in the realm of historically constituted social behaviour and accumulated cultural experience (in the 'retrospective' realm of memory, habit and conventional wisdom). Moreover, it perceived the scientific enterprise in a more limited, less 'progressivist' fashion than that which is commonly associated with Enlightenment based thinking.

The second strain, which emphasised the liberating potential of a positivist science of society, exhibited a less sensitive attempt to finesse the inductivist and solipsist problems. It has continued to maintain that it is possible to say something about the way the world 'is', by reference to a sphere of 'fact' which exists independently of any particular (social) theory or interpretation. The mainstream of post-Enlightenment positivist thinking has been centred on this second strain, though even in the crudest realms of positivist scientism there has usually been a passing reference to the issues raised by Hume. In Comte's work, for example, there is a rather shaky juxtaposition of both pragmatic and inductivist themes (Kolakowski, 1972:70-2; Giddens, 1977:31-44; Keat and Urry, 1975:71-87). It was, nevertheless, upon this highly suspect theoretical edifice (an empiricism stripped of its sceptical aspect) that the positivist approach of Comte influenced the Anglo-American intellectual community with the proposition that real scientific knowledge of social
and political reality could be attained by direct observation of an independently existing world of 'facts'.

The result by the end of the 19th century was, as Fred Suppe has confirmed, an increasingly unproblematic pursuit of scientific reality...

...firmly based on empirical inquiry, rather than upon philosophical speculation. [In which] there [is] no doubt that a real, objective world exist[s] independent of individual perceivers (1977:8).

Following Comte the positivist/empiricist approach to knowledge and society was reduced to a one-dimensional enterprise (from the gathering of 'facts' to the construction of 'laws') which acknowledged no a priori or interpreted mediation in the process by which the thinking subject becomes aware of the world. Indeed with the old philosophy pronounced dead, the positivist approach sought finally to detach the modern scientific enterprise from 'metaphysics', and particularly from the barren 'subjectivist' arena it associated with epistemological discourse. It did so, paradoxically, by recourse to a crude empiricist theory of knowledge which Hume, a century earlier had shown to be metaphysical, and subjectivist in the extreme.

By the turn of the century however, some of positivism's cruder elements were coming under critical scrutiny in German and British philosophical circles. In this circumstance a more sophisticated variant of positivist scholarship began to emerge. Under the influence of the logical atomism of Russell and Moore in Britain (as relayed through the early Wittgenstein of the Tractatus) and a number of German scholars employing a particular kind of neo-Kantianism (e.g. Ernst Mach), this new form of 'logical positivism' was exemplified in the work of the Vienna Circle (Kolakowski, 1972:203-40; Stockman, 1983:19-27; Giddens, 1977:36-55; Hindess, 1977:124-35). The perspectives and goals of this new logical positivism were perhaps best articulated by Herbert Feigl, who stressed that the Vienna Circle scholars sought a scientific philosophy of human society '... in the spirit of Hume and Comte, but equipped with more fully developed tools'. More pertinentlty, the logical positivists used their new toolkit to further 'splinter' the theoretical process and establish
lost of the traditional ontological and epistemological dilemmas of philosophy as belonging to metaphysics and hence outside the scope of rational discussion (Giddens, 1977:44).

It was with the dispersal of its leading exponents, in the wake of Fascism, that the logical positivist approach, in both its conservative and more ‘liberal’ form, became more directly a feature of the Anglo-American intellectual landscape. As many commentators affirmed, it quickly became the dominant (if often unacknowledged) theoretical influence across the social sciences. Its impact upon the study of sociology, economics, history and political science has consequently been well recorded. Very little has been written about its influence on international relations. Yet, variations on the positivist/empiricist theme have dominated the study of international relations to an even greater extent, perhaps, than in those disciplines with a more acute ‘critical’ tradition.

It is in this regard that something needs to be said, very briefly, about the role played by Karl Popper in the ongoing pursuit of a scientific theory of human society and politics. As Richard Ashley’s work has illustrated (1981; 1984), Popper’s status in relation to a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge is directly relevant to any debate on the contemporary nature of realist theory in international relations. This is because of the widespread, if unacknowledged, commitment to Popperian-based ‘critical rationalist’ themes (particularly the ‘falsificationist’ premise) among (mainly) North American ‘neo-realist’ scholars. In traditionalist-realist circles there has been, at the rhetorical level at least, an antipathy toward any form of ‘scientific’ theory. Nevertheless, as we shall see, in relation to the Australian discipline the lack of any sophisticated debate on theoretical issues has permitted an unproblematic utilisation of positivist/empiricist themes of the kind directly associated with Popper’s work.

8. Popper and the Positivist/Empiricist Theory of Knowledge

For all its complexity, the question at the heart of the Popper debate could not have been simpler. It centred on whether or not Popper was a positivist. Popper, equating positivism with the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle, strongly denied that he was (1968:ch.5; 1969:1-20; Adorno
His opponents across the years and the disciplines, have insisted that his critical rationalism, for all its sophistication, was always part of a positivist tradition (Suppe, 1977:chs.1&2; Adorno et al, 1976; Habermas, 1972; Stockman, 1983; Gellner, 1974:170-6; Hindess, 1977:ch.7; Chalmers, 1976:138-41). Given the confines of this present paper this is not a debate which can be confronted in other than the briefest of terms.

Popper, of course, was unequivocal about his anti-positivist stance, proclaiming that

Throughout my life I have combated positivist epistemology ... I have fought against the apeing of the natural sciences by the social sciences, and I have fought for the doctrine that positivist epistemology is inadequate; even in its analysis of the natural sciences. (Adorno et al, 1976:298).

This has not been a claim easily undermined. Popper’s critical rationalist approach echoed the scepticism of Hume concerning the inductivist problem. Taking his own scepticism one step further, Popper acknowledged the Kantian proposition concerning the ‘active’ participation of the theorising subject in the construction of social and political ‘fact’. But for all this, Popper still propounded a ‘scientific’ method for the study of human society, proclaiming that there was a sense in which theory was ‘objective’ and therefore capable of a (limited) process of scientific testing and validation based on falsificationist principles (Popper, 1968; 1969).

Popper’s critics have never accepted that he overcame the paradox associated with positivist/empiricist thought. The attack on Popper by both generations of the ‘Frankfurt school’ is well enough known in this regard, (Adorno et al, 1976; Habermas, 1972) but criticism of Popper’s position continues to flow from sources who, in other respects, would have little in common with Habermas et al or with each other. Ernest Gellner, for example, like Habermas, has concluded (1974:174-7) that Popper smuggled back into his critical rationalism the very positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge that, on the surface, he acknowledged as inadequate. The assumption underlying Popper’s falsificationist principle is, according to Gellner, phenomenalist in nature. Gellner, accordingly, has maintained that Popper’s testing procedure is centred on an ‘... empiricist
metaphysic - the picture of the world as constructed by sense data'. Explaining the paradox further, Gellner pronounced the 'sense data' image of reality at the heart of Popper's approach compelling

... not because the world is so constructed or because there is any such 'pure' data; [but] because this picture conveys so well the crucial [scientific] requirement - that of insoluble data which are independent of the theory that is being judged (1974:175).

As a consequence, Gellner concluded, Popper continued to perceive of reality in the world in classical positivist/empiricist terms as a dualised '... conflict between hard fact and logical contradiction'. He was therefore '... wrong in repudiating or disassociating himself from positivism' (ibid:174-5).

Alan Chalmers meanwhile, has highlighted the inadequacy of Popper's notion of an objective 'third world' of theory. As Chalmers has shown, while Popper's 'third world' proposition (and his whole falsification argument) depended entirely upon a 'splintered' theoretical process, he simultaneously had to acknowledge that '... human minds [second world] become crucial in forming the link between the first world of physical objects and the third world of theories' (1976:139-40). The problem for Popper in this regard is that there is deep contradiction involved in accepting on the one hand the 'theory impregnated' nature of all fact, and a commitment on the other to a 'correspondence theory' of truth.

Similarly, Barry Hindess's sophisticated critique of Popper undermines the proposition that the validity of a theoretical hypothesis can be established by 'testing' it against its predictions, while exposing its incapacity to do what Bull insisted a theory of realism must do: i.e. explain its 'foundations'. Positivist/empiricist theory cannot do this, Hindess has argued, because it cannot explain how the capacity for experience - the most fundamental of assets for the observing subject - can possibly be derived from the process of experience. By any logical criteria, the capacity to experience must precede the act of experience. It cannot be derived from it. If, therefore, the criteria for real knowledge is limited to that experienced by the subject from an independent realm of fact - as is the case for a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge - then a positivist/empiricist approach cannot ever acknowledge, let alone explain,
the ‘foundation’ upon which it constructs its claim to understand reality in the world (Hindess, 1977:16-17, 184-7). Hindess’s conclusion on the nature of Popper’s critical rationalism and on the mainstream positivist/empiricist issue is entirely consistent with that of David Hume. It is that a positivist philosophy, underpinned by an empiricist epistemology, is a singularly inadequate basis on which to understand and explain the reality of human existence in this or any age. The task of the following section of this chapter is to illustrate how this conclusion is relevant to the study of international relations.

9. The Hermeneutic Issue

There is, however, another dimension that requires attention if this task is to be accomplished. It centres on the question of whether the acknowledged inadequacies of positivist/empiricist approaches have in fact been overcome, to as great an extent as is possible, by the mediating influence upon Anglo-American scholarship of concepts, methods and theoretical attitudes drawn from Continental (primarily German) scholarship. It revolves more precisely around the nature and influence of a German-based hermeneutic tradition which, via the influence of scholars such as Dilthey, Mannheim and Weber, became part of the Anglo-American intellectual fabric in the early part of this century (Mueller-Vollmer, 1985; Outhwaite, 1975, 1985; Giddens, 1982; Bernstein, 1976, 1983; Boucher, 1985; and Hekman, 1986). The general consensus of critical scholars across the disciplines is that the verstehen approach of Dilthey and Weber, in particular, did not represent a ‘solution’ to the problems of inductivism and solipsism. Instead, it is claimed, verstehen theory reinforced the positivist/empiricist-based ‘orthodox consensus’ representing as it did the (subjectivist) ‘other side’ of the positivist coin (Hekman, 1986:165-70; Outhwaite, 1975:56-81).

Little of substance can be contributed to this general debate here. If there is an issue as absurdly complex as that concerning the development and nature of positivist/empiricist theory, it is that associated with the identity of its hermeneutic ‘alternative’. Suffice it to say that the hermeneutic tradition has a long and distinguished pedigree in Western intellectual circles, and that, contrary to the views of critics such as Nagel, Hempel, Abel and Popper, et al, it is not synonymous with the one-sided psychologism of Dilthey (Mueller-Vollmer, 1985; Boucher,
1985: ch. 1; Farr, 1979: 285-310). Indeed, the current 'philosophical' or 'critical' hermeneutic perspectives of scholars such as Rorty, Gadamer and Ricoeur, are indebted less to the 'subjectivist' pursuit of authoreal consciousness or the 'objectivist' retrieval of 'real' textual meaning, and more to the broad dialectic of mind and culture associated with Von Humboldt (Mueller-Vollmer, 1985; Bernstein, 1983). In the present circumstances, however, one element of the hermeneutic debate requires some attention. It relates to the impact of Max Weber upon contemporary Anglo-American theory and, in particular, his influence, via Morgenthau, on the realist image of reality in international affairs.

10. **Weber, Verstehen and Power Politics**

Max Weber's contribution to the development of Western social science has been comprehensively acknowledged over the years (Whimster and Lash, 1987; Beetham, 1974; Giddens, 1972, 1977; Hekman, 1983a; Gerth and Mills, 1970). His significance for the study of international relations is only now becoming evident as a new breed of scholars examine the theoretical tensions at the heart of realist scholarship. Weber's importance in this regard has been highlighted as his relationship to the seminal realist figure, Hans Morgenthau, has become understood.

The relationship between Weber and Morgenthau is a prominent theme in a recent work by Stephen Turner and Regis Factor (1984), which traces the influence of Weberian thought on American intellectual life in general. Turner and Factor succeed in breaking down the conventional view of Weber as a 'liberal' scholar in the modern Western tradition. Instead, he is presented, in intellectual terms at least, as a schizophrenic figure; in many ways the personification of the modern tension between the forces of a progressive rationalism and the lingering anti-Enlightenment pessimism of German Romanticism. Both these themes are important in understanding Weber's *verstehen* influence upon the international relations discipline. The former theme, as Richard Ashley has illustrated (1984: 248-53), is manifested in the means/ends rationality utilised by contemporary American neorealists. The latter element, as we shall see, has had implications for power politics thinking across the realist spectrum.

To explain, even briefly, the nature of the *verstehen* theoretical approach passed on by Weber to early power politics thinkers such as
Morgenthau (and Raymond Aron) and their contemporary heirs, it is worth concentrating on some of the distinctions between Weber's verstehen approach and that of Dilthey. The primary distinction in this regard centred on the mediating influences of neo-Kantian scholars such as Rickert, who sought to 'correct' Dilthey's narrowly based approach and make it more relevant to the ongoing social and political developments of the day. Rickert sought to shift verstehen scholarship away from its psychological emphasis (Geisteswissenschaften) to a more specific study of cultural issues (Kulturwissenschaften). This shift in verstehen emphasis was characterised by a more thorough attempt to integrate social and psychological factors than had been the case even in Dilthey's later work. Its aim was to overcome the narrow egocentricism associated with Dilthey's approach while retaining his basic distinction between the 'cultural' and 'natural' sciences (Dallmayr and McCarthy, 1977:1-25).

In Weber's work the verstehen alternative to a positivist based sociology was predicated upon a 'cultural' rather than a 'natural' scientific foundation. Going further than his hermeneutic predecessors, however, Weber sought to employ verstehen logic in the quest for the great synthesis of the age - the bringing together of a Germanic 'interpretivist' approach and that of British and French positivism/empiricism. In so doing, he confronted, in a highly sophisticated manner, the problems of inductivism and solipsism, and in particular the notion of a logical separation between fact and value.

Weber proposed (like Popper later) that though 'fact' was always culturally derived and value laden, it was nevertheless possible to perceive of it in independently verifiable terms. The contradiction seemingly inherent in this conclusion was explained by Weber in terms which saw him reformulate the knowledge process and radically limit the capacity of the empirical sciences. His perspective was one in which the old philosophical questions of epistemology and methodology were reduced to an instrumental relationship between a scientifically deduced 'is' and a culturally derived 'ought'. The parameters of social and political reality, accordingly, were limited to competing attempts to validate value based and culturally specific 'ends' or 'interests' concerning the way the world 'ought' to be. As a result, there could be no science of society which corresponded directly with an independently existing 'is' as mainstream positivist/empiricist approaches claimed. Rather, according to Weber, the scientific method could only address the question of the appropriateness

In this way Weber sought to overcome the problem haunting modern scientific theory since Descartes and Hume: how is it possible to speak scientifically of reality in human society when, in that context, understanding of reality is dependent upon intersubjective meaning bestowed upon it by subjectivised objects? The 'solution' to reiterate, was provided by Weber's notion of a limited scientific objectivism, and a means/ends logic of technical rationality. More specifically, Weber limited his critical scientific attention to the 'object' of inquiry, assumed to be an individual actor acting in a 'rational' manner (i.e. that which was purposeful in relation to the attempt to attain particular interests or ends). Given this important assumption, the scientific problem associated with overcoming intersubjective meanings was effectively dissipated by a perspective that conceived of meaning as an irreducible quality generated through the pursuit of individual (pre-given) ends or interests. From this theoretical position it becomes possible to calculate and predict (in a limited scientific fashion) the behaviour of actors following culturally constructed interests or ends (Giddens, 1971:133-6, 1977:80-95; Hekman, 1983:18-26, 153-61).

This splintering of the theoretical process is, of course, particularly useful from the point of view of the observing subject seeking some kind of scientific validity. This is because in assuming a means/ends rationality for all 'actors' (either observing subjects or observed objects in the social sciences), a distinction is drawn between the process by which the value laden, socially constructed premises of the observer are derived (the process by which an observer selects and prescribes as valuable a particular fact/event/object) and that process by which the actions of those observed are ultimately described and evaluated. Consistent with Weber's means/ends logic, values, ethics or normative theories of all kinds, in either the observed or the observer, are taken as 'given' and deleted from useful scientific discourse. The social scientific enterprise accordingly is one which can only make judgement upon the behaviour associated with pre-given ends. This, as we shall see, is precisely the way the Weberian verstehen perspective has been utilised by realist theorists in international relations (Ashley, 1984:250-3). Here the behaviour of the observed actors (individual States) is taken as 'given': i.e. perceived as motivated by the rational pursuit of pre-given (and culturally determined)
ends or interests. As a consequence, the observing scholar is relieved of
the tiresome task of reflection upon the theoretical nature of either the
object or the subject.

Weber's contribution to realist thought is more profound than this
however. His scepticism about the capacity of modern social science was
prompted not only by the influences of Dilthey and Rickert, et al, but by a
much older image of reality associated primarily with the Machiavellian
view of human society. It was this fusion of Machiavellian 'realism' and
verstehen method which proved so alluring to Morgenthau.6

11. Weber, Morgenthau and Power Politics

The direct connection between Weber's thought and that of Morgenthau
has been rarely acknowledged by international relations specialists. This
is not purely due to any lack of theoretical introspection on the part of the
discipline. It has as much to do with Morgenthau's own reluctance to
acknowledge Weber's influence until late in his life. While, as Turner and
Factor have illustrated (1984:167-73), Weber's ideas were to form the
backbone of Morgenthau's work, and while the structure of Morgenthau's
argument in his major international relations texts were taken directly
from Weber's writings, Morgenthau consciously avoided any direct
association with him. Turner and Factor explained this situation in
sympathetic terms, stressing that in the 1940s and in the immediate post-
war years, Morgenthau was quite understandably reluctant to emphasise
his indebtedness to a '... German theory of politics'. As a consequence,
Morgenthau adopted a long-term strategy '... which permitted him to
present Weber's views with their full polemical force, without the
disability of their origins' (ibid:169).

In the American context, this resulted in a fundamentally Weberian
critique of liberalism, scientism, legalism and optimism and a defence of
'realism' constructed upon the enduring insights of Thucydides,
Machiavelli, Richelieu, Hamilton and Disraeli: those who understood '... the [real] nature of international politics as an unending struggle for
survival and power' (ibid:170). More specifically, as Turner and Factor
have indicated, Morgenthau's famous propositions concerning the
difference between 'utopian' and 'realist' thinkers in the international
sphere were derived directly from Weber's theory. Accordingly, '... utopianism corresponded to Weber's category of persons who have chosen
ends that cannot be achieved in the world by any known means’. Realists meanwhile, were those who, according to Weber, recognised that ‘... to act in international politics entailed the doing of evil’ (Turner and Factor, 1984:172). The ‘utopian’ basis of scientific liberalism was, for Morgenthau therefore, as it was for Weber, the non-recognition that, in following (value based) ‘interests’ in the world, political action by states was always potentially at risk of doing evil in the pursuit of political interest.

The notion of ‘interest’ derived from Weber, and reformulated slightly by Morgenthau, has become a crucial theme in realist thinking. For Weber (if rather vaguely) the notions of ‘values’ and ‘interests’ were grafted together in order that the *verstehen* social scientist could objectively evaluate the social and political facts of life seen as competing ‘interests’ (ibid:173). For Morgenthau, likewise, it was possible for the analyst of international relations to speak in ‘objectivist’ terms about the reality of the international arena (the struggle for power defined as interests) without taking a normative or value stance in the utopian sense. In this way, Weber gave to Morgenthau (and to Aron and Kissinger and so many more traditionalist realists) a *verstehen* based synthesis which appeared to overcome the problems of crude inductivism associated with the ‘scientific’ approach (including that of the behaviouralists): namely the moralism of the liberals, and the solipsism of the ‘idealists’, seeking to interpret reality as a progressive unfolding of ‘consciousness’.

12. The Problem with Weber’s *Verstehen* Approach: the other side of the positivist coin

For all its sophistication Weber’s attempt to synthesise hermeneutic and positivist/empiricist themes was unsuccessful, primarily because it did not overcome its *verstehen* legacy. This is a theme which has been confronted in different ways by Mervyn Frost (1986) and Richard Ashley (1984) as it relates to the international relations field of inquiry. Ashley’s conclusions on the issue will be addressed in more detail shortly. Frost, in looking more specifically at the *verstehen* influence upon traditionalist-realist thought, has reached a conclusion that requires brief comment at this point. It is that the impact of a *verstehen* strain of hermeneutic thought has manifested itself in the theoretical unselfconsciousness and
paradox associated with the traditionalist-realist approach. It has allowed for the kind of 'splintering' of the theoretical process intrinsic to the positivist/empiricist based 'scientism' it so vehemently opposes (1986:23-5).

For even the most sensitive traditionalist scholar, a distinction is thus drawn between the process by which the subject 'enters the text' as it were (a process in which the scholar's norms, values and socially constructed 'interests' are acknowledged), and the realm of 'fact' emanating from the text itself. As Frost has explained, and as David Boucher has confirmed in a slightly different context (1985), this dualised process can occur even in the most 'contextualist' of works. This is because a verstehen based approach considers that the limits of a social science inquiry are reached at the point where the observing subject has understood the social activities of those observed from the point of view of those being observed (i.e. the statesman, the foreign policy maker, the strategist, the state as actor) (Frost, 1986:24). A verstehen based hermeneutic approach, in other words, does not insist that the observing analyst become an integral, normative, evaluatory (fully human) part of the analytical process. It does not acknowledge that the theoretical process of observation and analysis is a life process.

Frost maintains that the verstehen approach of Dilthey and Weber, for all its interpretivist pretension, ultimately produces for the traditionalist scholar in international relations a one-sided analytical result akin to the more overtly positivist/empiricist scientism of the North American school (Frost, 1986:15). In obliging the observing subject to merely 'describe' the values, ends, cultural norms, interests and moral and ideological perspectives of a particular social practice, it treats these elements of the 'whole' as if they were objective, non-normative 'facts' beyond the interpretive realm. It represents, in other words, the other side of the positivist/empiricist coin. It allows, accordingly, for a series of dualisms between the realm of 'is' and 'ought', 'fact' and 'value', 'theory' and 'observation' and 'object' and 'subject'. It accepts an external realm of 'givens' in precisely the same way as does the crudest 'physicalist' objectivism of contemporary neorealist scholarship. As a result, as Frost has indicated (1986:24), both major realist strands in the contemporary period are theoretically restricted to the paradoxical confines of a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge.
Some of the implications of this situation can now be examined in relation to the realist study of international relations. In the first instance the problems at the epistemological heart of realism can be illustrated by looking at the pronounced theoretical tension - and paradox - associated with two of the most influential realist texts: Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* (1948) and E.H. Carr's *The Twenty Years Crisis* (1939).

13. Implication (1): The founding fathers and the paradox of realist theory

(a) *Hans Morgenthau*

The tension in Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* is apparent from its very beginnings. Within its opening pages, he is both classical hermeneuticist and hard-nosed positivist. In the former mode he provided for realist scholarship the most famous hermeneutic statement in the history of the discipline. Echoing the injunction of hermeneutic scholars down the years to get inside the 'world of text' Morgenthau suggests that realists must, above all

... retrace and anticipate, as it were, the steps a statesman - past, present or future - has taken or will take on the political scene. We [must] look over his shoulder when he writes his dispatches; we [must] listen in on his conversation with other statesmen; we [must] read and anticipate his very thoughts (1973:5).

This power politics realism, underpinned by a Weberian verstehen logic, implies, in this mode at least, that the text analogue - the world of statesmen - is the primary social and linguistic practice to which realist theory must relate. An adequate realist knowledge of international relations must, in this circumstance, seek to understand and explain the norms, rules, ideologies and competing interests of diplomatic statescraft. A realist analyst must attempt to get 'inside' the world of the diplomat, the foreign policymaker, the strategist and the power broker. The conclusions of the realist must correspond with the actual practice - the reality - of statesmanship. It is validated when it has 'meaning' for the practical man of affairs, the diplomat statesman, the human agent of
'power defined as interest'. Taking a slightly wider angle, realist scholarship, following hermeneutic principles of study, must seek to interpret the 'inner' nature of the world of States. It must do more, for example, than simply reaffirm the 'anarchy' of the system, or make more rigorous and systematic the evidence of an endemic struggle for power and influence. It is interested, rather, as Ashley has put it (1981:212) in a more profound kind of 'historical' understanding of the relationship between states, emphasising modes of communication between them through the use of '... intersubjectively understood symbols within the context of rule governed institutions'. For Morgenthau, as it has been for other realists expressing hermeneutic dimensions (e.g. Wight, Bull, Herz, et al), the purpose of realist scholarship was never simply restricted to a 'problem solving' ambition, but was concerned instead with '... the attainment of a possible consensus among actors in the framework of the self understanding derived from tradition' (ibid:210). Such a task, it might be argued, could be carried out only with the total involvement of the 'creative individual' analyst. But for Morgenthau, seeking the authority (and existential comfort?) of the 'scientific' method for the study of international relations, the value laden scholar is magically detached from the analytical equation via a Weberian derived conjuring trick.

Accordingly, within the space of a paragraph or so in Politics Among Nations, Morgenthau is insisting that realists understand that '... [international] politics is governed by objective laws', the operation of which are '... impervious to our preferences'. Realists, moreover, according to Morgenthau in his scientific mode, must distinguish what is '... true objectively and rationally ... and what is only a subjective judgement divorced from the facts as they are and informed by prejudice and wishful thinking' (1973:4-5).

Now, even in a discipline not noted for its critical theoretical tendencies, it might be supposed that an 'ambiguity' of this magnitude within its exemplar text would provoke serious intellectual debate. This has rarely been the case. Instead, in increasingly turning its back on the 'theory question', the discipline has raised hardly a critical murmur.

This paradox is perhaps most clearly illustrated when Morgenthau discusses the nature and purpose of theory and the manner in which realist theoretical statements must be judged or tested. On this issue he demands in his 'two dimensional' guise that a realist theory of international relations must meet both an empirical and logical test. It
must, he stressed, be ‘... consistent with the facts and within itself’. Consequently, the central question that Morgenthau asked of any realist theory is whether ‘... the facts as they actually are lend themselves to the interpretation the theory has put on them’. Moreover, and with the ‘empiricist metaphysic’ looming large, he warns that realist theory

... must be judged not by some preconceived abstract principle or concept unrelated to reality, but by its purpose: to bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomena which without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible (1973:4-3).

Theory, in this sense, as it was in Weber’s false alternative to positivist/empiricist logic, is simply a ‘means’ to a given ‘end’. Its purpose is to (retrospectively) bring ‘order and meaning’ to a (factual) ‘mass of phenomena’ which, in contingent and unique form, exists independent of the theorist. Morgenthau’s realist theory is, resultingy, for all its hermeneutic posturing, finally constructed upon an empiricist theory of knowledge which renders the subject a passive receiver of independently existing sense data. Such an approach, as sceptical commentators from Hume to Hindess have confirmed, is incapable of explaining either its ‘foundations’, or why its image of reality is any more valid than those it dismisses as utopian, irrational, ideological or dogmatic.

(b) E.H. Carr

If Morgenthau has been the most influential American scholar within the realist sector of the discipline, this is a status probably still held on the British side by E.H. Carr. The tension and paradox is, if anything, clearer in Carr’s work than in Morgenthau’s. In a more direct way than Morgenthau, Carr, in The Twenty Years Crisis, sought to confront head on issues of subject/object, is/ought and fact/value in terms which echoed the orthodox hermeneutic attempt to employ verstehen as a method or ‘supplementary’ instrument of analysis. As with Morgenthau, this is not immediately obvious. Rather, in developing his theory of the State and his general power politics approach to reality, Carr engaged in a seemingly cohesive exercise in dialectical logic. In promoting the idea that the nature of the state and political reality in general is constructed
upon the ‘contradictory’ nature of the human actor (as both egoist/individual and sociable/communicator), Carr contended that

The [political] State is built up of these two conflicting aspects ... [therefore] Utopia and reality, the ideal and the institution, morality and power, are from the outset inextricably blended in it (1964:96).

For Carr, on this basis, political reality was to be understood as the sum of a complex dialectical interaction involving the inexorably linked behaviour of ‘creative’ individuals within a broad socio/cultural context (i.e. a sociology of knowledge). Ultimately however, this valuable (if rather vaguely presented) insight is effectively neglected and the original dialectical format is progressively transformed into a one-sided positivist/empiricist approach to knowledge and society. In The Twenty Years Crisis, resultingy, the potential for genuinely open-ended theoretical dialogue at the heart of realist scholarship is effectively stifled, with the introduction to the debate of a series of hard and fast categorical distinctions set in positivist/empiricist terms. The nature of political reality (expressed, in the international relations context, in the relationship between realism and utopianism) is thus not centred on any ‘inextricable blend’, but rather on the absolute distinction between

... the inclination to deduce what should be from what was and what is [and] ... the inclination to ignore what was and what is in contemplation of what should be (ibid:11).

Having introduced this dichotomy - between ‘is’ and ‘ought’ - Carr claimed that it ‘... determines opposite attitudes towards every political problem’ (ibid:11). Consequently, if inevitably, in The Twenty Years Crisis there appeared a dazzling variety of dichotomies and dualised categories of analysis that have since continued to afford realist scholars a theoretical shorthand with which to identify the ‘is’ from the ‘ought’, etc., in every facet of their inquiry. In the dualised fashion that was later to take on epidemic proportions within realist scholarship, Carr had thus shifted from an original position which emphasised the dialectical interaction of ‘subject’ and ‘object’, to a theory of reality which insisted on the factual independence of some aspects of existence over others. Indeed,
for Carr (as it was for Weber, Popper and Morgenthau in similar circumstances), realist analysis was dependent upon the detachment and privileging of ‘fact’ over ‘value’, ‘is’ over ‘ought’ and ‘object’ over ‘subject’.

This becomes clearer when Carr’s views on methodology are taken into account. On this issue he insisted on an approach to study which rejected utopian attempts to transform ‘wish’ and ‘need’ into reality, in favour of a rigorous concentration on the observation and collection of facts. This is a theme developed further as part of his explanation of the bankruptcy of the utopian approach, due above all else to

... its inability to provide any absolute and disinterested standard for the conduct of international affairs (ibid:88).

Carr’s lurch into an unselfconscious positivist/empiricist position is to be gleaned also from his discussion of one of the central theoretical issues of the modern period - the debate over the relationship between the ‘physical’ and ‘social’ sciences.

Here, Carr’s realist analysis, like that of Morgenthau’s, drifted inexorably toward the very ‘empiricist metaphysic’ it sought to reject. In crudely dichotomised form, Carr sought to distinguish the ‘physical’ from the ‘political’ sciences on the basis that the latter was dominated by the theoretical ‘purpose’ and interests of the analyst (i.e. the ‘ought’ factor) while the former, because of the nature of the object of study, defied the corrupting influences of such analysis. Thus, in the study of the physical sciences, according to Carr

... purpose is in the strictest sense irrelevant to the investigation and separable from it [the physical scientist’s] conclusion can be nothing more than a true report on facts. It cannot help to make the facts other than they are; for the facts exist independently of what anyone thinks about them (ibid:3).

In the post-Kuhnian era, of course, this perspective seems particularly implausible. But in the present context the really significant feature of Carr’s ‘inductivist’ notion of scientific method is that it was proposed as the model for a realist pursuit of knowledge in international relations. For E.H. Carr, the superiority of a realist approach to study was centred on its capacity to overcome (theoretical) purpose, in favour of
factual analysis, of the kind associated with the natural sciences. He proposed, that

[Realism in its mature stage] places its emphasis on the acceptance of facts and on the analysis of their causes and consequences. It tends to depreciate the role of purpose [value based theory] and to maintain, explicitly or implicitly, that the function of thinking is to study a sequence of events which it is powerless to influence or to alter ... realism tends to emphasise the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies, and to insist that the highest wisdom lies in accepting, and adapting oneself to, these forces and these tendencies (ibid:10) [my emphasis].

This is one of the most important and classically unselfconscious statements in international relations scholarship, presented as a central tenet of the attempt to highlight the theoretical inadequacy of utopian thought. The point is, of course, that one does not need to reject Carr's critique of utopian scholarship to recognise the theoretical chaos associated with his own; for in attempting to construct a cohesive realist theory of international relations upon a sophisticated dialectical foundation, he had instead plummeted into a one-sided positivist/empiricist determinism which acknowledged a sphere of reality, independent of the function of thinking, which the observing subject is powerless to influence or alter. More significantly, in splintering the theoretical process (by detaching the subject, as a creative force, from the realist analytical equation), Carr introduced to realist scholarship, at its very beginning, an inductivist logic which Hume had shown to be an entirely inadequate basis on which to understand or explain the reality of human existence.

As the following discussion will illustrate, fifty years after Carr's seminal contribution to realist thought, and nearly forty years after Morgenthau first published Politics Among Nations, realist scholarship has, in general, not overcome the paradoxical implications of their legacy. As a result, realist scholars of both the British and American schools continue to objectify the 'irresistible' character of existing tendencies, while 'wisdom' continues to be bestowed upon those who detach
themselves from the theoretical process and merely accept and adapt themselves to the external 'givens' of an independently existing reality.


The direct theoretical connection between the early power politics realists and their contemporary heirs has been highlighted in two recent works by Richard Ashley (1981, 1984). The second, 'The Poverty of Neorealism' (1984), dealt with the latest attempt by American scholars to stiffen the disciplinary spine with a large dose of scientific rigour. As Ashley illustrated, however, the neorealism of Waltz, Gilpin, Krasner and Keohane, etc., whilst committed to an open, pluralist, historically acute perspective on the world had reduced realist scholarship to an ahistorical, atheoretical, structuralist determinism, underlain by a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge (1984:226-35). Neorealism, in short, was a '... theory of, by and for, positivists' (ibid:248), dependent upon a series of self-affirming, self-enclosed axioms about the study of international relations drawn largely from Popperian and Weberian sources.

In Kenneth Waltz's Theory of International Politics (1979), this intellectual debt is readily apparent. Theorising for Waltz, as it was ultimately for Weber, Morgenthau and Carr, was a process which occurred literally 'after the (observed) fact'. Consequently, as Waltz explained

> By a theory the significance of the observed is made manifest. A theory arranges phenomena so that they are seen as mutually dependent: it connects otherwise disparate facts (1979:9-10).

Waltz was at pains to stress that his theoretical perspective was free from the oft discredited logic of inductivist reasoning, but he gave short shrift to the question of where theory comes from. His response on this issue was to duck for cover behind the seemingly impenetrable wall of scientific-rational logic erected by Weber and Popper. Buoyed by the proposition that the 'subjective' process of theorising is beyond the explanatory pale, Waltz satisfied himself with a reply born of a Popperian
faith in 'bold conjectures'. For Waltz, as Ashley has charged (1984:216-18), theories are mysterious 'things in themselves' created by spontaneous and intuitive flashes and detached from social and political practice.

The process of theory construction (and/or the question of theoretical self-reflection) is, in this circumstance, dismissed as a serious issue. For Waltz the genesis of theory is of little consequence because, as he put it, one simply cannot '... say how the intuition comes or how the [theoretical] idea is born' (1979:9). His understanding of international relations accordingly is set upon the rather shaky principles of a positivist/empiricist epistemology, which insists that theory is a retrospective manifestation of observed factual reality. The problem with this position, to reiterate, is that if, as in Waltz's case, the process of observation is detached from the process of theorising, there is no explanation as to the nature of the observed reality other than in the discredited terms associated with inductivism, solipsism and variants of the correspondence rule format.

In this situation, neorealists in general fall back on the tried and (in some quarters) trusted Weberian formula. Theory, becomes merely a post-priori tool by which to 'scientifically' describe the activities of an independently existing real world of states made up of rationally acting individual units, each perceived as generating its own ends (national interests). This basic theoretical principle is manifested in the neorealist attitude to the central unit of their analysis - the sovereign state. The state, consequently, is treated as an external 'object' '... capable of having certain objectives or interests'. More precisely, the state, from a neorealist perspective, represents:

... an unproblematic unity, an entity whose existence, boundaries, identifying structures, constituencies, legitimations, interests and capacities to make self-regarding decisions can be treated as given (Ashley, 1984:238).

The state (allowing for all the 'protective clauses' utilised by realists sensitive to their vulnerability on the issue) (Waltz, 1979:91; Gilpin, 1981:18), stands as an untheorised 'fact' and ahistorical entity at the heart of neorealist analysis. It is in this context that Ashley has proclaimed the neorealist 'state as actor' notion a '... metaphysical
commitment' effectively exempted from scientific (falsificationist) or any other kind of critical inquiry (1984:238).

The basic conceptual form and language of neorealist theory is that of utilitarianism as expressed through the seemingly 'axiomatic' principles of neoclassical economics. In this circumstance, the international system of states is analogised into a competitive 'market' in which sovereign states strive to maximise their objectively given interests. The behaviour of states is defined as 'rational' activity displayed in means/ends or instrumental terms, or more precisely, in Ashley’s terms, as

... efficient action in the service of established ends whose value or truth is properly the province of the individual actor [which] cannot be held to account in public [or theoretical] terms (ibid:213).

Underpinned by this premise neorealists can (directly/ atheoretically) 'observe' the relationship between states as the endemic struggle for scarce political and economic resources. Understood this way, the state system is bound together not by any deeper intersubjective understanding but by the determinate and essentially anarchical nature of the 'system itself'. Arguments which propose the weakening of the traditional state structure under the effect of (say) multinational capital and/or transnational forces (i.e. religious fundamentalism) can, on this basis, be dismissed from serious consideration on the grounds that the 'system itself' (based on the objective necessity of interstate conflict) must ultimately undermine such tendencies in the long run.

From this perspective there is little need to theorise the nature of power in the state system. Power, like other 'facts' in neorealist analysis, 'speaks for itself'. It is, considered synonymous with the military capability of individual states. The less tangible aspects of the power issue (i.e. morale, ideological commitment, etc.) are, in means/ends fashion, generally relegated to 'psychological' factor, outside the purview of realist analysis (Ashley, 1984:244-5).

The neorealist notion of 'order' is also constructed against this sparse utilitarian logic. Order, as Ashley has charged (ibid:243-5) is perceived as a form of equilibrium, spontaneously generated over time which, in any period, represents the outcome of the relative power capability of states in
their struggle to obtain their interests. The nature of the institutional structure at the international level is (as it is for pluralists in the domestic sector) perceived simply as the outcome of the struggle between instrumentally acting 'interest' based (aggregated) individuals. Explanations of change in international relations are also restricted to the logic of the 'system itself'. Change can only occur spontaneously as part of an accommodation of interests between those with the capacity to make change happen. As a result, propositions which indicate (say) a growing class, anti-state and/or anti-nuclear consciousness among the world's peoples, can be simply dismissed as 'irrational', 'normative', 'idealistic', 'ideological' and lacking in serious intellectual merit.

Ashley's critique of the neorealist position is centred on the inadequacy of its propositions concerning the nature of the state and the state system, power, order and change. Firstly, he has maintained (ibid:253), it cannot adequately confront the issue of change for it denies '... history as process'. It cannot deal with the possibility that the nature of the system of states might be fundamentally different in the 1980s than it was in the 1940s and 1950s. This, primarily, is because its central categories of analysis (the state and the state system) are objective 'givens'. Accordingly, even when some aspects of change are recognised, it is change limited to the confines of the previous analytical structure. The problem, put another way, and more directly in line with the debate over positivist/empiricist influence, is that because neorealists do not perceive themselves having 'theorised' the reality of the international system in the historical period of Fascist threat and the Cold War, they cannot 'actively' conceptualise change to the system in the contemporary period. Instead, as Carr and Morgenthau instructed, they must simply accept the 'irresistible character' of objectively existing forces and tendencies in the world, as it 'is'.

Secondly, says Ashley, neorealists can't deal with the prospect of a changing world (even a state centric one) because it '... denies the historical significance of practice' (ibid:258-9). Neorealism acknowledges only a world of (narrowly defined) rationally acting individual units following pre-given ends or interests in a market situation and detaches from the analytical equation the conscious activity of people beyond the confines of *homo economicus*. Factored out of neorealist analysis is an image of reality in which people, shaped by historical and social circumstances, reflect upon their world and, in coming to know it more
profoundly, change it. In the neorealist view, people are understood as passive receivers of a reality which imposes universal and ahistorical (utilitarianist) 'sense data' upon them.

Further, Ashley has argued, for all its posturing about a real world of power politics, neorealist scholarship cannot adequately deal with the concept of power. This is because, in classical positivist/empiricist form, it treats power as it treats the state - as an independent object of analysis - a 'fact' to be theorised after the event, as it were. It can, on this basis, say nothing about '... the social basis or social history of power' (ibid:259). Because it does not reflect upon the social and historical dimensions of power relations, it continues to reduce power to 'capacity' - a given entity possessed by a single actor. As both Ashley (1984:260) and Frost (1986:65-72) have maintained this is one of the major weaknesses in contemporary realist theory, for power can never be calculated purely in some means/ends matrix, but must always be understood as a complex, rule governed, social relationship. Power relations, thus, should not be analysed in terms of the capacity of one state to destroy another (e.g. the USA and Vietnam) but instead, are better understood as governed by certain rules of behaviour established by the international community as a whole.

Finally, Ashley has argued, neorealism cannot deal in a comprehensive and sophisticated way with the complexity of political life in contemporary human society. Rather, it reduces politics to those aspects of political practice which '... lend themselves to interpretation exclusively within a framework of economic action under structural restraint' (1984:260). Politics, in other words, for the neorealist, is reduced to a determinist utilitarian technique for most efficiently achieving the pre-given end of overcoming 'scarcity'.

The major significance of Ashley's work for this chapter (and allowing for its weaknesses) is that it helps substantiate, in a contemporary context, an argument which until now has been set on what might have appeared a rather distant historical/intellectual plane. Ashley's critique of neorealism is important in a broader sense, too. It has sparked off a lively and generally constructive debate within the American branch of the discipline concerning the need for a more sophisticated appeal to questions of theory in the study of international relations.
In a modest way this is the kind of contribution I would like to make to the Australian discipline. The final section of the paper, consequently, will seek to show that the debate to this point, unconventional as it might have been, is directly relevant to the realist literature on international relations in this country. It will do so by examining the work of four of the leading scholars in the field in the period since 1962: Coral Bell, J.D.B. Miller, T.B. Millar and Hedley Bull. It will indicate how an unacknowledged commitment to positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge has (to varying degrees) limited the kind of understanding scholars of this stature have had of the study of international relations. The treatment of their work will be brief, selective, critical but hopefully not unfair. It cannot hope, in the present circumstances, to do justice to the contribution they have made to the Australian discipline in a period of almost constant political and intellectual tension. Its aim, in line with Hedley Bull’s ‘critical theory’ perspective, is to expose the theoretical foundations of their realist approach - in this case a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge - and reiterate in a more direct context some of the problems associated with its unselfconscious application.

15. Implication (3): The Australian realists and the influences of a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge on the works of Bell, Millar, Miller and Bull

One of the most prolific and internationally respected of Australia’s international relations thinkers, Coral Bell*, is also perhaps the most reticent of the realist establishment to reflect upon the issue of theoretical foundations. Indeed, on the very rare occasions when such reflection takes place, Bell is dismissive of the theoretical enterprise, as it applies to the study of international relations, to the extent that she has likened the debate over international relations theory to the futile search for the

* Among the works she is rightly admired for are: Negotiation from Strength: A Study in the Politics of Power (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962); The Diplomacy of Détente (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1977); and Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988).
unicorn. Doomed to frustration and ultimate failure, therefore, the theorist of international relations is, according to Coral Bell, engaged in the pursuit of a mythical beast which can never be captured, because, as she puts it ‘... it is not there’ (1983:1).

Confronted by this kind of uncompromising stance on the part of one of the most capable of Australia’s international relations specialists, ‘theorists’ of the field might well be excused for concluding that theirs is indeed an enterprise beset by futility, irrelevance and a basic ignorance of the real nature of the ‘object’ at issue. But only for a moment, for when Bell reveals precisely how a realist, in non-theoretical circumstances, comes to know and explain the real nature of contemporary affairs, it becomes evident that, even at the highest level, Australian realist scholarship has major problems of analysis which it has not confronted in a serious or sophisticated manner.

The problem is manifested most clearly when Bell’s perspective on the nature and role of theory, is examined in greater detail. Here, for example, she contends that ‘... the function of theory is to illuminate reality’ (1983:2). The theoretical process is, in other words, not intrinsic to the creation and understanding of reality, but rather it serves to ‘illuminate’ its actual character. This is a theme further developed when Bell explains that the test of a theory’s validity must centre on whether it illuminates reality, or merely ‘... reflects it in a distorting mirror’ as, it is claimed, Marxism does (ibid:2,15). The distinction between theoretical ‘illumination’ and ‘reflection’ of reality is an important one in this context. It signifies for Coral Bell the difference between valid theory: that which ‘corresponds’ with reality, and which has the ‘... capacity to predict and in some cases control the phenomenon under scrutiny’, and invalid theory which does not possess such a capacity (ibid:3). In positivist/empiricist fashion then, she acknowledges two primary assumptions concerning the relationship between theory and reality. The first is that theorising is a process detached from reality which, in certain circumstances, can ‘illuminate’ its actual nature. The second is that theory emerges after the fact, and as such must be ‘tested’ (empirically) against existing factual evidence in order to confirm its validity.

This positivist/empiricist understanding of the nature and analytical role of theory is reinforced when Bell confronts the vital question of where theory comes from. Here she adopts an essentially Popperian mode of explanation (or non-explanation) utilised in similar circumstances by
Kenneth Waltz (1979:9-11). The process of theorising consequently, is one that ‘... in the natural sciences ... seems mostly to begin with a leap of the scientific imagination’. Following this mysterious ‘leap’ by the individual scientist, the process continues when ‘... a [theoretical] hypothesis is framed’. The mystically created hypothesis is then put to the scientific test, and ‘... experiments are devised to validate or falsify’ it. Finally, if the hypothesis survives the (presumably non-theoretical) testing procedure, it is then ‘... promoted to rank as another fragment of [valid scientific] theory’ (1983:3-4). The problem with a proposition such as this, presented in 1983, and in the wake of the insights of Kuhn (1962), Feyerabend (1975), Hesse (1974, 1980), Chalmers (1976), Toulmin (1970), Suppe (1977) and even Lakatos (1970), is that it is not credible as an explanation of the way that ‘science’ is done and theory is constructed.

But this is only the beginning of the problem, for according to Coral Bell the obstacle that prevents the construction of a ‘correspondence theory’ of reality in international relations is not centred on the difficulties of the ‘hermeneutic circle’, but rather on the very

quest for theory [which] can and often does corrupt the process of observation in the social sciences in a way that is comparatively rare in the natural sciences (1983:4) (my emphasis).

Leaving aside this naive view of activity in the ‘natural’ sciences, this particular assertion brings to the fore the most important aspect of Bell’s positivist/empiricist approach to the study of international relations. It centres on the distinction she draws between the process and ‘quest’ for theory, and the ‘process of observation’. Echoing a well-worn positivist/empiricist principle, she is committed to the view that the only way in which ‘real’ knowledge of international relations is to be achieved is via a process of observation, independent of, and freed from the corrupting influences of, the ‘quest for theory’.

Given the nature of the preceding discussion, little more needs to be said about a contention such as this except, perhaps, to reiterate two themes. The first is that no sophisticated thinker on social and political affairs in the past generation (including Popper), has seriously questioned the inevitability of ‘theory impregnated’ observation. But given the nature of Bell’s argument the major debates in sociology, literary theory, philosophy, political science and the history and philosophy of science
might never have taken place. Consequently, in projecting the superiority of a traditionalist-realist approach to international relations, she pronounces not only the possibility of a ‘theory free’ observation process but its actuality. The superiority of the traditionalist-realist approach over its (theoretically corrupted) alternatives is, therefore, its capacity to connect ‘... truth to observation’ (ibid:22).

The second point that requires reiteration is that whatever else it represents, the notion of a realist approach which provides the ‘truth’ about international relations through a process of direct ‘observation’, is emphatically theoretical, even on Bell’s own terms. It is theoretical, as we have seen, because it is derived from an empiricist theory of knowledge which assumes into existence an independently existing realm of factual reality which can be captured only through direct ‘experience’, and/or the observation methods of the natural sciences. In Coral Bell’s case, the distinction she makes between ‘theorising’ and ‘observing’ would necessitate that she face the Humeian dilemma and defend the traditionalist-realist approach either in inductivist terms or as some kind of individual, subjectivist ‘psychologism’.

The problems do not end here. Her whole approach to the theory question becomes even more problematic when its intersubjective, universalist dimension is taken into account. The point is that, for all the emphasis on the need for a theoretically uncorrupted observation of international relations by the individual realist, Bell leaves little doubt that the ‘truths’ provided by traditionalist-realist observation techniques are enduring and intersubjectively available.

All the problems of this perspective are on view when she attempts to explain the difference between theory which illuminates (corresponds with) reality and that which does not, by drawing on the example of Margaret Mead’s anthropology. On the Mead issue, Bell’s critical argument is well made, as far as it goes. It is that Mead, following the methodological dictates of Franz Boaz, sought to generate from an empiricist ‘particular’ (direct observation of social/sexual relations in Samoa) a ‘universal’ theory about the (socially constructed) nature of adolescence per se. The problem with Mead’s work, as is rightly pointed out, is that some years after its completion, another anthropologist, using the same basic approach, found factual evidence which totally contradicted Mead’s earlier ‘observation’ - thus undermining her ‘general theory’ (Bell, 1983:4-7). The lesson to be learned from this incident,
according to Bell, is that it was Mead's quest for a general theory which corrupted and distorted her empirical observation. The later anthropological observation, she intimates, was not theoretically corrupted and, as a result, the real nature of the Samoan social scene was finally 'illuminated'.

Now a number of quite obvious questions are left begging by the parable of the theory-sodden anthropologist (e.g. was the second anthropologist simply more insightful, rigorous and experienced than Mead?). But in the present context this is not the most important issue. More significant is the paradoxical consequence which flows from the use of the Mead example as it relates to the 'atheoretical' traditionalist-realist approach to international relations. This latter approach, Bell has argued, in contrast to theory impregnated approaches such as Mead's, does not produce distorted and inaccurate 'reflections' of reality, but instead

... [provides] illumination of the realities of international politics and illumination which facilitates a sort of prediction by analogy (ibid:23).

More explicitly, according to Coral Bell, the traditionalist-realist approach produces a 'truth' from observation which is manifested in a series of atheoretical and transhistorical 'concepts' and 'maxims' which allow contemporary realists to understand the real and enduring nature of international affairs. The concepts in question include notions of '... the national interest and the balance of power'. The maxims meanwhile include such enduring gems as '... neighbourhood maketh enmity' and the great alliance truism '... my enemy's enemy is my ally' (ibid:23-4). This, according to Bell, is the theoretically uncorrupted raw material of traditionalist-realist thought derived directly from 'observation'. But the questions still remain of how this represents a 'sort of prediction by analogy', or how the contemporary realist is to go about connecting these 'truths' to their 'observation' of current international affairs. This again is a process uncorrupted by theory which, as Bell has made clear, is dependent upon the correct reading of selected 'great texts' of Western philosophy. In particular, she has maintained, realists must read the texts of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes; the 'backroom boys' who, from their practical experience of the real world of political conflict
through the ages, have passed on to the present generation the enduring 'truths' contained in the aforementioned concepts and maxims (ibid:22-4).

Given much of the recent debate in literary theory (and historiography), a proposition such as this is hard to take seriously. But, in making the effort, three further dents can be made in Coral Bell's argument concerning the atheoretical nature of traditionalist-realist thinking. The first is that concepts such as balance of power and national interest are, as we have seen, unquestionably 'theoretical'. They represent, in the most abstract sense, not 'illuminations' of reality per se, but a particular kind of theoretical perspective on the nature and relations of subjects and objects in international relations (i.e. independent, atomised entities engaged in endemic conflict). They are theoretical, secondly, in the sense that they only have meaning in analytical terms if and when they are bound together in a larger explanatory whole - a whole which cannot be 'experienced' (observed) in empiricist terms and therefore must be theorised (as for example in a traditionalist-realist approach to international relations). The concepts and maxims of traditionalist-realist thought are theoretical, in a third sense, in that their value as enduringly real categories of knowledge can only be recognised if one accepts a particular method (i.e. positivist/empiricist) of 'reading' history through the great texts. It depends, in other words, on the (theoretical) assumption that the text is an independent 'object', from which can be extracted an essential truth, or factual reality, devoid of the corrupting theoretical influences of either the author or the contemporary reader.

On this issue, one final, and rather peculiar, note is worth recording. It revolves around Coral Bell's recommendation (ibid:24) to students of international relations, of the theoretical insights of Collingwood and Oakeshott, the two British scholars perhaps most associated with the verstehen approach of Dilthey. Yet as David Boucher has affirmed (1985:52-65) both Collingwood and Oakeshott vigorously denied that there was a 'real' past from which historical fact could be unproblematically derived and both denied also the existence of 'perennial questions' or (answers) against which the contemporary scholar could define the reality of the present.

The most significant aspect of the preceding discussion is not that it exposes Coral Bell's approach to the 'theory question' and the study of international relations as, at best, rather inconsistent. For those who
pursue the unicorn, or even occasionally join the hunt for amusement value, inconsistency is an occupational hazard. In Dr Bell’s case the problem is more straightforward and fundamental. Having dismissed as invalid all approaches to international relations ‘corrupted by theory’ she is left with a claim for realism centred upon the inductivist/solipsist format of a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge. This is a position beset by paradox and untenable even in its own terms. For someone as contemptuous of theoretical endeavour as Coral Bell (particularly of the overtly ‘scientific’ kind), the consequences of such a position are particularly stark.

The problem is by no means Coral Bell’s alone. The positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge also directs the worldview of her major realist colleagues in the Australian discipline. Its influences are manifested in a slightly different manner in the works of T.B. Millar, who on occasions over the years, (1968, 1978) has made an effort to come to grips with the complex issues surrounding the ‘theory question’ as it applies to the study of international relations. In 1978, for example, in *Australia in Peace and War*, Millar confronted the problem of objectivism and the fact/value conundrum in a manner which suggested a trace of hermeneutic sensitivity on the issue of social and political reality. He pronounced that the international relations analyst

... cannot avoid having a set of values about man and society, good and evil, advantage and disadvantage, which will determine how he will select his facts and assess them (1978:4).

Following the (unacknowledged) lead of Weber and Popper, Millar seemed, at this point, to have recognised what Coral Bell did not - that all ‘factual’ analysis is inherently value laden and theory impregnated and that direct atheoretical observation of reality is impossible.

Once investigated, however, it becomes clear that this is not quite the position Millar was seeking to defend. Like Weber and Popper, he too is committed to the proposition that there exists a realm (third world?) of ‘fact’ which is available to the earnest observer despite the problems of human subjectivism. As a consequence, in attempting to perform the Weberian conjuring trick by which the subjective human actor is transformed into the ‘objectivised’ (*verstehen*) subject, Millar ends up in the same paradoxical quagmire as his colleague.
The problems begin for Millar, as they did for Morgenthau and Carr, when the hermeneutic theme is juxtaposed with its positivist/empiricist 'other side'. In Millar's case, in *Australia in Peace and War*, this juxtaposition occurred when his initial insight concerning the value laden nature of all observing subjects was qualified, rather dramatically in order to distinguish his own position from that of the 'radicals' he perceived as questioning the traditional approach to foreign policy analysis. Such people, he suggested, were intent on investigating the foreign policy process for particular theoretical purposes. Some, indeed, were 'normatively' committed to the interests of '... humanity at large [perceiving] men, women and children as individuals entitled to certain minimum standards of living which the foreign policies of more fortunate states should be promoting'. Others similarly 'radical' and theoretical, were interested in whether foreign policy assisted the less fortunate to '... throw off all dependence on foreign economic or political, governmental or non-governmental, national or multinational institutions' (ibid:4).

This was not good enough, argued Millar. The *a priori* commitments and emotive language of such groups could '... easily become a substitute for thought and analysis' which ignored the reality of the situation; which was, that '... we have to deal with the world as it is, whether or not we want to make it into something else' (ibid:4) (my emphasis). In the rarified tradition of Carr and Morgenthau, therefore, Millar, in the space of a paragraph in *Australia in Peace and War*, had shifted from a position which indicated an understanding of the inexorable links between subjects and objects to one which presented the real world of states as the arena of 'is' and 'ought'.

His commitment to a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge was more clearly exposed when, having dealt with 'radicalism' in general, he turned his attention to a few specific targets particularly 'corrupted by theory'. At the forefront, in this regard, were 'sociologists' who, in analysing the foreign policy process, might '... wish to discover the background beliefs, values, images and associations of the decision makers'. Similarly, there were '... appropriately trained' outsiders (presumably political scientists) who might, by '... extensive professional questioning, arrive at some conclusions [about, for example] the ... Department of Foreign Affairs'. Neither of these approaches could possibly describe how the world really 'is' because:
However professional the analyst may be, his own beliefs and values and training bring a highly subjective and unmeasurable element into his analysis (ibid:5) (my emphasis).

This is an important (if unintended) statement of theoretical intent on Millar’s part. At one level, of course, it seems to nearly reinforce his earlier insight into the unavoidably value laden nature of social and political analysts - at least as it relates to the observing subject (and to some more than others). But it represents more than this, for it exposes Millar’s limited understanding of the theory process and the relationship between theory and reality.

It is an understanding very similar to that expressed in Hedley Bull’s attack on the behaviouralists (1966, 1969). It recognises ‘theory’ in ‘splintered’ form - as synonymous with the conscious pursuit of some social science holy grail - which does not take into account the ‘subjective and unmeasurable’ human factor. It perceives of theory, accordingly and paradoxically in the circumstances, as an approach to society and politics derived from positivist sources which seeks in vain for the ‘measurable element’. Most importantly, it acknowledges the possibility of knowing the ‘is’ of the world via ‘factual’ analysis which is not based upon such theoretical premises.

In distancing himself from the theoretical perspectives of the ‘radicals’, Millar explained that Australia in Peace and War ‘... does not attempt such inquiries or explanations’ but instead ‘... it seeks to give the facts about policies’ [my emphasis]. This non-theoretical, ‘factual’ analysis was to be achieved, he added, by observing ‘... past policies from the perspective of the present’ (1978:5-6). The analytical difficulties with this position are clear enough; for if, like Millar, one wants to finesse the ‘theory question’ by reading the ‘facts’ of the past through the present, then two major questions need to be confronted. The first has to do with the ultimate status of such ‘facts’ given that the reader in the present is as subjectively encumbered in choosing and assessing them as Millar admits to being. The second has to do with the proposition, rejected by sceptical empiricists from Hume to Oakeshott, that there is an ‘objective’ past from which a subject in the present can read the ‘facts’ of history.

Having wandered into alien epistemological territory, T.B. Millar attempted to extricate himself from this predicament in a rather strange way. His first response was to (apparently) commit himself to an extreme
subjectivist position. Indicating that his work represented that special relationship between the ‘individual’ and ‘sense data’ that only an empiricist can truly know, Millar pronounced that Australia in Peace and War was about ‘... Australia as it is, or as I see it; [about] Australia’s policies as I see them’ (ibid:5) [my emphasis]. Taking account of the value laden nature of the ‘I’ in question, Millar’s pronouncement is not very convincing as a basis on which to explain the ‘is’ of the world. Indeed, if his reduction of the ‘is’ (reality) to the value based sphere of the cognitive ‘I’ were to be taken seriously, his realism would be as one-sided and mind dependent as Berkeley’s and its ‘facts’ as sterile and analytically useless as Hume suggested all such facts were.

But this is only to describe half the problem for, while proclaiming his presentist subjectivism on the one hand, Millar also needed to validate his realist analysis by reference to the past and its intersubjectively available ‘facts’ in order to distance it from ‘radical’ alternatives committed to a priori theoretical goals. As a result and in slipping unselfconsciously from a solipsist mode to a fully inductivist one, Millar located the public documents and policy statements of past statesmen as the objective textual base from which a reader in the present could glean the ‘real’ nature of the foreign policy process. Setting out the parameters of his approach to the ‘is’, Millar explained that:

Even in a democracy it is not always easy to discover all the details and implications of foreign policy. Not all the assurances given to foreign governments, formally or informally, are made public ... Nevertheless, on the whole, the policies are known and can be debated (ibid:5) [my emphasis].

Ultimately Millar sought analytical refuge in Morgenthau’s injunction to ‘peer over the shoulder of the statesman’. In Millar’s case this provided no haven of (even superficial) hermeneutic security. Rather, in seeking to reconcile his ‘I’ position with his attack on a priori theoretical intent, he anchored his realist analysis to a notion of history as an ‘object’ detached from the (value laden) present and from any particular theoretical interpretation. It was in this way, by detaching history and historical evidence from the distorting effects of the ‘theorised’ present, that T.B. Millar, in Australia in Peace and War, made a claim for realism based on the reading of the past through the present.
There is a substantial literature which undermines the crude inductivism associated with textual analysis of this kind. Yet, as Martin Indyk (1985:300-2) and Richard Leaver (1978:14-19) have noted, this is one, among many literatures, that has been ignored by Australian realists in international relations. Australian realist scholarship in general has been characterised by an approach to reading history which the literary theorist Noel King has explained, perceives of ‘reading’ as

... largely unproblematical, [it] being thought of as a natural, neutral activity, whereby an interested individual [an 'I'] enters into some sort of imaginative encounter with a [literary] text, reading it respectfully on its own terms ... and teasing meaning from it (1982:78) [my emphasis].

As Ian Hunter has made clear (1982:87), such an approach is by no means the neutral activity it is presented as. It is, rather, an ‘ideology’ of reading based on positivist/empiricist principles which announces ‘... let’s have no more theories or ideologies; let’s go direct to the text’. What it means however, is ‘... let’s have no more [theories or] ideologies except this one, the one that tells you to go straight to the text at the same time as it sends you to [a] set of [knowledge] rules for reading’ the text. This is indeed the way that scholars such as T.B. Millar (and Coral Bell) utilise the historical method of the British school of international relations in order (consciously or otherwise) to finesse the theory question. In T.B. Millar’s case, in Australia in Peace and War, this was a particularly questionable strategy, given his simultaneous attachment to a rather virulent strain of solipsism.

J.D.B. Miller’s understanding of the relationship between ‘subject’ and ‘object’, ‘fact’ and ‘theory’ is not substantially different from that of his colleagues. In Miller’s case, however, the positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge is expressed in a way not typical of the mainstream of realist scholarship in this country. Miller, for example, is more assertive than the other major figures in the Australian realist establishment when it comes to outlining his theoretical position on the ‘real’ nature of human society at both the domestic and international level. And this, it must be said, is a refreshing trait in a discipline characterised by a marked preference for hiding theoretical lights under often quite dense analytical bushe. The difference in Miller’s case, perhaps, is his training as an

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economist. In the contemporary era it has been the economist, or, more precisely, those trained in its mainstream neoclassical genre, that have been accorded the status and responsibility of the medieval alchemist. Increasingly it has been towards the economist that ailing modern societies have looked to transform its social raw material into something more ‘precious’. Not surprisingly, in these circumstances, economists have become a particularly assertive sector of the intellectual community when it has come to providing explanations for, and solutions to, the crisis of contemporary Western society (i.e. Hayek, Friedman and Laffer, etc.).

The influence of neoclassical economic themes has been substantial in the development of the neorealist perspective as described by Ashley (1984). Scholars such as Waltz (1979) and Gilpin (1981) have utilised neoclassical theoretical premises (both implicitly and explicitly) to ‘transform’ and make more systematic, realist thinking in the 1980s. The impact of economic theory upon the more orthodox traditionalist-realist approach has been less immediately evident. It is, in this context nevertheless, that J.D.B. Miller’s approach to international relations is best understood.

Miller’s perspective offers an interesting example of the fusion of neoclassical economic doctrines concerning the fundamental nature of human behaviour, with a traditionalist power politics explanation of international affairs. In short, Miller represents, in the Australian mainstream context, the nearest thing we have to a neorealist scholar. His brand of neorealism is generally of the more sensitive variety associated with the work of Robert Gilpin which, as Walker has affirmed, has been ‘influenced by ... the [hermeneutic] tradition and is quite modest in its approach to positivist method’ (1987:79). On the positive side also, J.D.B. Miller’s approach has added a dimension to the traditionalist-realist study of international relations in Australia that has been sadly lacking in those of his colleagues who, ostrich like, have continued to insist on a distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ politics (Baldwin, 1985:61). Miller, in other words, has acknowledged that the study of international relations must take into account the intrinsic relationship between politics and economics.

Miller’s ultimate commitment to a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge serves, nevertheless, to lessen the initial insight a political economy perspective undoubtedly contributes to a realist theory of international affairs. The major distinction between J.D.B. Miller and his
realist colleagues is that the positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge directing his realism is transmitted more overtly through the axioms and conceptual meaning scripts of a neoclassical economic format. The fuller significance of this situation for his approach to international relations is not an issue that can be dealt with in this paper. In the present circumstances the complex relationships between a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge and 'economics' can only be alluded to as it relates to the general nature of J.D.B. Miller's realist approach to international relations.

Broadly, Miller's approach is one which adheres to the proposition of E.H. Carr in The Twenty Years Crisis that the function of thinking is circumscribed by a 'sequence of events which it is powerless to influence or alter'. In Miller's case, this axiom of power politics realism is underscored by a particular variant of the positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge which recognises the real nature and relationships of subjects and objects in the world as 'individuals' engaged in an eternal struggle for scarce resources. (Miller, 1965:13-18, 1976:10, 1979:1, 1981:207). Consequently his commitment to the external 'sense data' format of Carr's power politics perspective is reinforced and given specific shape and direction. Not surprisingly it is a realism which emphasises the 'irresistible character of existing forces and tendencies' and which perceives of 'wisdom' as the acceptance and adaptation of thinking to such forces and tendencies.

Put less obliquely, J.D.B. Miller's realism is one which acknowledges a series of 'givens' or 'brute facts' which exist beyond theoretical boundaries, but which must be observed as part of an attempt to describe the way the world really 'is' in this or any other period. The most important 'given' in Miller's approach to study is the sovereign state. His state as actor premise is very similar to that of Waltz and Gilpin with its utilitarian means/ends behaviour pattern and built-in rational actor capacity. States, from this perspective '... operate as essentially self regarding entities which submit all questions to the standard of their own advantage as they see it' (1976:10). Just, therefore, as the utility maximising rational individual actor is accorded certain inherent needs, desires and motivations by the neoclassical economist, so the state, for J.D.B. Miller, becomes an analytical 'thing in itself'. There is, from this perspective of course, no need for a theory of the state for there is no point if we already know all we need to know about its 'real' nature.
Miller is quite adamant about this issue. While the State must remain the central unit of realist analysis, it is not an issue for theoretical discourse because, as he puts it: ‘... Just as we know a camel or a chair when we see one, so we know a sovereign state’ (1981:16).

Faced by a statement such as this, one is left to ponder the significance of the debate over inductivism and the relationship between the ‘mind’ and ‘reality’ which, in one form or another, has been going on in Western intellectual circles for at least two and a half thousand years. One is left to wonder precisely why the issue of observation and theory impregnated fact caused so much trouble to modern scholars such as Locke, Hume, Kant, Weber, Marx, Kuhn, Popper and Habermas, et al, if indeed we can ‘know’ a camel or a chair (or a sovereign state) simply by observing it empirically. The point is, of course, that we can’t. As this paper has sought to illustrate, in a number of different ways, the process of ‘observation’ is always a component of a broader process of theorising in which seemingly independent ‘objects’ (including camels, chairs, ‘interests’ and sovereign states) are social, cultural and linguistic expressions of theoretical prejudice.

Hume, the father of positivist/empiricist thought, understood this in the 18th century. His conclusions on the fallacy of the inductivist position have not been overturned. To further illustrate how this is so in relation to J.D.B. Miller’s particular variation of the inductivist theme two diverse, yet complementary, commentaries on the issue are worth brief perusal. The first introduces to the debate the work of Roger Gregory and his study of sensory perception. Gregory, in his *Eye and Brain* (1972), was concerned to address the sense data issue by exploring the process by which the subject (literally) ‘sees’ the object, and how the sighted information is transmitted by the senses to the brain

> What the eyes do is to feed the brain with information coded into neural activity - chains of electrical impulses - which by their code and the patterns of brain activity, represent objects (1972:10).

But, and this is the important point in the present context, the process of seeing objects involves ‘... many sources of information beyond those meeting the eye when we look at an object’. More explicitly, and in terms
which reinforce arguments presented here in more conventional historical and political terms, Gregory has confirmed that

Objects are far more than patterns of stimulation: objects have pasts and futures; when we know its past or can guess its future, an object transcends experience and becomes an embodiment of knowledge and expectation (ibid:10).

Objects, in other words, are never independent of our 'understanding' of them, nor as Locke and Hume explained can they ever be. Facts do not speak for themselves, nor can there be any self explanatory evidence about the world we seek to 'know'. Notions of interest/ends/rational action are precisely that - notions. They are categories of theory, impregnated with a meaning bestowed upon them in the process of observation and simultaneous interpretation. As Gregory has concluded, in terms which are pertinent for the whole range of 'givens' associated with realist scholarship

... perception involves going beyond the immediately given evidence of the senses ... the senses do not give us a picture of the world directly: rather they provide evidence for the checking of hypotheses about what lies before us (ibid:13).

If Gregory's work on direct sense perception might seem a trifle esoteric in the present circumstances, the work of Robert Cox (1986) could not be more directly relevant. Distressed by the theoretical unsophistication of contemporary realist scholarship in international relations, he has spelt out some basic theoretical premises which, elsewhere, might be considered axiomatic.

Cox has stressed that one cannot understand the real nature of the international scene by simply observing it, but that it is '... academic convention [which] divides up the seamless web of the real social world into separate spheres, each with its own theorising'. Developing the point further, he explained that '... such a conventional cutting up of reality is at best just a convenience of the mind'. Stressing that the theoretical construction of reality is not the work of the mind alone but derived always from social practice, Cox emphasised that '... social knowledge [about reality] roughly corresponds to the way in which human affairs are
organised in particular times and places' (1986:126). His point here is one which has been central to the new critical attitude towards theory within the international relations discipline. It implies that realists, committed to a discredited tradition of analytical dualism, have 'divided up' the seamless web of reality in a way which perceives of its 'parts' as atomised, independent objects of existence. They have, consequently, not understood the theory process and have effectively detached their realism from the social, historical and cognitive circumstance in which it was set. The major implication of this, for Cox, is that a theory of realism constructed, in positivist/empiricist terms, in a particular historical and political period (i.e. the struggle against Fascism and the Cold War years) has become an ahistorical and atheoretical dogma unquestioned but perhaps no longer relevant to the time and space it seeks to describe.

Like his critically inclined colleagues, Cox has urged that realists reassess the relationship between their theory and the image of reality constructed upon it and, more importantly, not take their atomised 'state as actor' formula for granted. More serious theoretical attention must be paid to the prospect of different kinds of state formation emerging on the world scene in the wake of (for example) quite fundamental changes to the structure of the international economy (ibid:144-52). Ultimately, he has argued, realists must come to grips with a sophisticated interdisciplinary approach to theory, expressed in holistic and dialectical terms, which might allow them to go beyond the inadequate inductivism so characteristic of their analysis.

This is not an argument that cuts much ice with J.D.B. Miller. The reason, as intimated, has to do with the particular understanding he has of the theoretical process and the basic relationship between subjects and objects in the world. Indeed, his perspectives on these issues are set in the same general epistemological mould as those of Bell and Millar. On the odd occasion when questions of epistemology are confronted, this becomes abundantly evident. On the issue of the relationship between the physical and the social sciences, for example, Miller's perspective in The Nature of Politics (1965) might have brought a smile to the face of Popperian based theorists such as Kaplan or Deutsch and a frown from his friend and colleague Hedley Bull (and one suspects from Coral Bell). In this work Miller propounded the view that, when it comes to the problem of how one 'knows' the reality of political society
The problem of scientific method is no different in politics from that which exists in any other body of systematic knowledge - to make the knowledge as systematic as possible, to erect hypotheses and expose them to the facts (1965:282).

Moreover, according to Miller, the student of political society at any level is engaged in an enterprise no different from the student of ‘... psychology, sociology [or] meteorology’. This, he suggested, was because they shared exactly the same analytical purpose - to get ‘... the facts into some orderly sequence and [attempt] to frame hypotheses about them’ (ibid:282).

It is difficult in the present context, as it was in relation to the theoretical efforts of Coral Bell and T.B. Millar, to know how to react to a proposition such as this from a scholar who, throughout his career, has been associated with an anti-positivist, anti-behaviouralist British traditionalist approach to study. The most charitable course is perhaps to note the date (1965) and contemplate that later in life Marx and Engels expressed their embarrassment at what they wrote in 1844. The problem in J.D.B. Miller’s case is that when one allows for the passage of time and for more than two decades of fierce debate concerning the nature of the theoretical enterprise in both the natural and the social sciences (the tip of which extended to the international relations discipline via the ‘behaviouralist’ dispute), there appears to be no substantial change in attitude.

This is not to suggest that the early commitment to Popperian rhetoric has survived. It, one assumes, was jettisoned when Hedley Bull hinted at the paradox associated with the falsificationist process of ‘testing’ theoretical hypothesis. But there is little doubt that in the contemporary period J.D.B. Miller’s understanding of the relationship between the thinking subject and the observed object remains incarcerated in a positivist/empiricist ‘conceptual goal’. As a consequence, in 1986, as part of the otherwise engaging piece on the life and thought of Norman Angell, Miller proposed, quite simply and unequivocally that

‘Realism’ is no more than recognising facts and choosing between those which are ephemeral and those which will prove to be important. (1986:137).
The positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge would appear to be alive and flourishing at the core of realist international relations theory in Australia at the present time.

During the period of the professional study of international relations in Australia, Hedley Bull has been the most revered scholar produced by the discipline. There is nothing at all surprising about this. Bull's work was internationally respected, his capacity as a thinker acknowledged by the discipline as a whole. Since his untimely death, his stature has been reaffirmed in the tributes of those who knew and worked with him. This chapter, in its own way, is a tribute to him also, or more specifically perhaps to the spirit of critical inquiry and scepticism associated with his career as a writer and teacher. Interpreting Bull's legacy as (at its best) a critical theory approach to study, it has argued that a realist understanding of international relations is dependent above all on understanding the process of understanding; that is, the theoretical process. More explicitly, following Bull's example in his commentary on Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars*, it has sought to illustrate that a critical questioning of 'theoretical foundations' must be at the heart of any adequate realist analysis.

It was in this spirit that the works of Coral Bell, T.B. Millar and J.D.B. Miller have been evaluated here. Acknowledging their capacities as experienced, professional analysts of international relations it indicated that their works generally lacked the critical dimension so admired in Bull's contribution to the discipline. It is in this same spirit, finally, that I touch upon some of the theoretical problems associated with Bull's own work. I will suggest, in so doing, that Bull's legacy must be the starting point for the second generation of international relations study in this country. The task for international relations specialists, in this period, must be to go beyond Hedley Bull, rather than reify him or simply replicate his analytical style. This of course is no easy task, but as intimated throughout this work there is nothing easy about the study of international relations once one appreciates that there can be no 'givens' assumed to exist objectively beyond the realm of the theorising subject.

In the present circumstances, it is possible only to indicate in general terms the direction the discipline might take in the post-Bull period. There is however, one particular 'anomaly' concerning Bull's work which must receive critical attention if genuine progress is to be made. It is that Bull, for all his awareness of the need for theoretical self-reflection and
the critical scrutiny of 'theoretical foundations', was rather negligent in the application of this rule when it came to his own work. As Stanley Hoffman has noted, even when Bull adjudged Walzer's efforts '... liberal dogma' he left his own position on the morality issue unexplained (1986:184).

The first task of a more critically oriented Australian realist approach must be to attempt to rectify this situation on Bull's behalf. The discussion to follow will seek to contribute to this effort by pointing to three 'linkages' which connect Bull to a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge, albeit of a particularly sophisticated kind. The first concerns the influence upon Bull of verstehen principles associated with Weberian thought. The second to the empiricist realism of John Anderson and the third to the history of ideas perspective of Martin Wight.

In searching, retrospectively, for Bull's 'theoretical foundations', Stanley Hoffman proposed that Bull's realist approach sounded '... remarkably like Max Weber's concept of understanding'. Hoffman concluded that Hedley Bull's realism was a blend of '... intelligent social science and humanism' which took a predominantly Weberian form. Like Weber, Bull '... wanted the social scientist to respect and empathise with the meaning that political actors [gave] to their actions'. It was this Weberian insight, suggested Hoffman, that led Bull to an appreciation that all thinking on international politics was value laden and inherently normative. Hence his abiding interest in moral issues and the search for some kind of moral and cultural unity in the society of states (ibid:179-85).

The linking of the work of Weber and Bull is of course of significance. It brings to the fore once again the relationship between hermeneutic and positivist/empiricist themes within realist thought, this time as it applies to the exemplar scholar of the Australian discipline. It helps also to substantiate the proposition, put at the beginning of this chapter, that even Hedley Bull's work cannot be assumed to have escaped the influences of a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge. But Hoffman's line of argument needs to be kept in perspective. Bull's work might, as he suggests, 'sound very much like Weber's' but there were other influences upon Bull which were derived more directly from British intellectual sources, particularly from Anderson and Wight.11

Anderson's idiosyncratic and complex approach to knowledge and society was overtly committed to the principles of '... pluralism, positivism
and empiricism' (Overend, 1983:2). In Anderson’s case however, the
finessing of the inductivist/solipsist problem saw the positivist/empiricist
format redefined in line with a particular reading of Kant. This involved
rejecting entirely one half of the Kantian dualism (i.e. that the general
categories of existence are produced by the mind) in favour of an approach
that concentrated attention on the other half (i.e. that there exists ‘things
in themselves’ independent of the ‘known’ world). In seeking to overcome
the influence of ‘idealist’ thought, Anderson (like Popper with his ‘third
world’ of theory) sought to eliminate from his theory of knowledge ‘... all
mind dependent ingredients’ (Baker, 1979:7). Following the lead of
British anti-idealists such as Russell and Moore, Anderson constructed an
image of reality made up totally of ‘things in themselves’; of atomised
contingent entities in which no fundamental distinction was
acknowledged between the physical and social spheres of existence.
Everything, in this sense, including Kant’s a priori ‘mind’ categories of
space, time, difference, particularity, universality and causality were
reconstituted as interwoven, qualitatively equal elements of ‘reality
(Baker, 1979:6, 1986:95-110). In reorganising the Kantian format in this
way, Anderson was able to propound a ‘common sense’ notion of realism
based on a direct relationship between ‘real’ things (including objects and
minds). He could, on this basis proclaim a single method (empiricism) by
which the objects of the world were to be understood. Using the terms
‘empiricism’ and ‘realism’ interchangeably his position was, as A.J. Baker
has put it (ibid:1), that ‘... we can and very often do know or observe real
trees, tables or ... material things or objects’. Exposing Anderson’s
motivations more clearly, another commentator (Overend, 1983:5) has
described Anderson’s realism as ‘... a scheme for the dismantling of
barriers which stand against unrestricted enquiry into a single empirical
reality.

The ‘barriers’ in question of course were those erected by various
‘idealist/rationalists’ who argued that reality could only be known through
the mediating agency of the knowing subject. In rejecting this
proposition, Anderson contended that

The thing which is known ... is not constituted by the knower ...
or by being known ... nor is the thing which knows ... constituted
by knowing ... or by the known (ibid:4).
Anderson, in this way, sought to disengage himself from the paradoxical consequences of the ‘sense data’ position. Indeed he attempted to distance his approach entirely from the tradition of Locke, Hume and Berkeley and the whole epistemological and methodological edifice he associated with mind dependent subjectivism (Baker, 1986:3-28, 33-50). The knowledge process consequently was deemed primarily ontological rather than epistemological.

Fundamentally the issue is logical ... [it is] ... about ways of being or truth, not about ways of knowing truths. It is only after it has been assumed that there are truths other than matters of fact, or that there are objects which ‘transcend’ existence, that a special faculty has to be invented to know them (ibid:19).

The question might be posed of course of how one ‘assumes’ that there are only ‘matters of fact’ and not ‘transcendental’ objects without engaging in epistemological discourse. Similarly, the question remains as to how one can pronounce as logical the existence of ‘truths’ independent of them being known as truths without engaging in the epistemological act of detaching the truth as ‘object’ from the ‘knowing’ logician (subject). But this is not the place to engage in such a debate. Suffice it to say that Anderson’s empiricist realism, for all its complexity and sophistication does not escape the positivist/empiricist paradox. Like Popper’s objective ‘third world’ of theory, Anderson’s independent realm of ‘things in themselves’ have no meaning for the social scientist in other than cognitive and linguistic categories of understanding.

It is difficult in the present circumstances to do other than hint at the implications of the relationship between Anderson’s approach and Bull’s subsequent realism. In a general sense, Bull’s concern for rigour and clarification in the setting out of categories of analysis is, it seems, typically Andersonian. At another level, his insistence that ‘... theory should be consistent with the philosophical foundations of modern science’ (1969:36), is perhaps indicative of Anderson’s continued influence. More importantly, and negatively, the influence of Anderson (and the notion of the logical independence of all ‘things’) might ultimately have prevented Bull from coming to grips with the issue of ‘order’ and ‘justice’ which he grappled with over the years. The point is that if ‘order’ and ‘justice’ are perceived as independent objects as they were by Bull in The Anarchical

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Society (when ‘order’ alone was considered the keystone of the state system) then the study of ‘justice’ which Bull was concerned to write, could presumably not have been written from the perspective of a state centric realist (Bull, 1977:8-10 and 77-8). Bull, in other words, would have had to break free from the positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge (and his realism) in order to take international relations scholarship that normative step further he sometimes acknowledged was necessary for it.

Martin Wight’s approach to international relations was that of the British ‘... arts man par excellence’, as Michael Nicholson (1981:21) has put it. It was an approach that owed much to the influence of Toynbee (Bull, 1976:2-3) and what Duncan Forbes (1952:63) has called the ‘Liberal Anglican philosophy of history’. As opposed to the middle range theorists of the overtly ‘scientific’ school, it stressed the necessity of large scale historical and philosophical inquiry. Its ambition was ‘... to discover, to assemble, and to categorise all that had been said and thought on the subject throughout the ages’ (Bull, 1976:104). While others dismissed questions of morality as inappropriate to the study of international relations, Wight proclaimed them as intrinsic.

Against this kind of background Wight came to a series of conclusions about the nature of international relations and its study. He concluded, for example, that international relations was ultimately the realm of recurrence and repetition rather than progressive and cumulative change. (Wight, 1966a:89-132). As a consequence, the study of international relations became the historical pursuit of ‘fundamental and enduring’ themes concerning the relations between states. The most prominent of such themes, perhaps, was that the great state systems of the past were held together by a (broadly defined) ‘cultural unity’ (Bull, 1977:9-20). The major issue of the contemporary period, from this perspective, was that the Western State system born in the European Renaissance, was confronted by fundamental crisis following the breakdown of Western Christendom, two world wars and the emergence of ‘Third World’ states on to the international arena. As John Fitzpatrick has noted (1987:46), this was the major problem Bull inherited from Wight and which, in The Anarchical Society, was interpreted as the problem of maintaining ‘order’ in the face of ‘cultural’ disunity.

Significantly also, Wight concluded that it was possible for scholars in the present to understand the enduring realities of international relations by entering a particular textual debate involving three groups or
categories of thinkers: the Machiavellians (realists), the Grotians (rationalists) and the Kantians (revolutionists) (Wight, 1966a; Bull, 1976:104-13). From the textual utterances of historical figures deemed to belong to these groups, Wight believed, the timeless, universal axioms and principles of interstate relations could be transferred across the centuries.

There were however some substantial problems with Wight's conclusions on international relations which, in one form or another, limited the scope and nature of Bull's realism. Wight's conviction, for example, that international relations was the realm of recurrence and repetition complemented his view that the international and domestic spheres of politics were separate and that the former had a particular 'recalcitrance to be theorised about' (Wight, 1966b:33). Leaving aside the issue of what 'theory' meant in this context, this domestic/international dualism characterised Bull's work to the extent that valuable dimensions (derived from political economy and sociology for example) were effectively ignored. (Suganami, 1986:145-8; Fitzpatrick, 1987). Wight's system of states proposition was also seriously flawed, as Roy Jones (1981), Murray Forsyth (1985), and John Fitzpatrick (1987) have noted. Ultimately, it was '... fleshed out with data drawn in unproblematic fashion from a range of widely separated state systems' often juxtaposed in abstract and highly selective fashion. Its purpose however, was clear enough; to 'universalise' '... the traditional image of the European international system' and to identify the perspectives of international relations per se '... with the perspectives of a great power elite' (Fitzpatrick, 1987:47).

The implications of all this for Bull's work have been well summed up by Fitzpatrick, who, in discussing Bull's analysis of the contemporary world situation in The Anarchical Society, notes that Bull '... remains imprisoned in the restricted categories ... central to European international society'. Bull, in other words, remained locked within Wight's eurocentric and elitist model, to the extent that '... the only analytical categories available to discuss stratification between states [was] a simple distinction between the great powers and the rest' (ibid:46).

The facet of Wight's work which most clearly exposed his positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge was his attitude towards 'doing' history. For Wight, in short, history was considered an 'object' against
which his theory of international relations was to be ‘tested’. From this perspective (and whilst ignoring the messy business of epistemology and methodology) he could, quite unproblematically, go direct to the great texts of ‘realism’, ‘rationalism’ and ‘revolutionism’ and extract the (independently and universally existing) ‘facts’ held therein. Without wishing to delve into the problems associated with this approach again, it is worthwhile recalling that it was the most revered of British realists, E.H. Carr, who, in What is History, proposed that ‘... the necessity to establish ... basic facts rests not on any quality in the facts themselves, but on the *a priori* decision of the historian’ (1964:11).

Hedley Bull was clearly aware of some of the problems of Wight’s historical approach. Indeed it was Bull who maintained that the historical debate between the Machiavellians, Grotians and Kantians might be understood less as an exercise in the history of ideas and more as an ‘invention’ on Wight’s part, similar to the imaginary philosophical conversations in Plato’s dialogues. More revealingly still, Bull indicated that Wight’s approach to history was centred on an underlying assumption that there was a ‘... rhythm or pattern in the history of ideas which is there, waiting to be uncovered’ (1976:111) [my emphasis]. This is not so surprising given Wight’s Christian pessimism (ibid:109) and his debt to Toynbee but it raises some interesting questions about the status of his historical scholarship. It does not however, negate the proposition that Wight’s understanding of theory and history was constructed upon a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge. As many commentators have affirmed, Christian scholars made their peace with ‘scientific’ philosophy a long time ago (Smith, 1967; Kolakowski, 1972).

The impact of all this upon Bull’s approach to international relations is perhaps best illustrated in relation to his own attitude to ‘history’ and ‘theory’. In the former context, Bull’s perspective has more than a trace of the ‘transcendentalism’ that Roy Jones perceived in Wight’s thinking, in which ‘... time and change [were] a troublesome irrelevance’ (1981:10). Accordingly, when dealing with the attempt to theorise some kind of ‘world society’ for the future, Bull’s instinct, as Ralph Pettman has put it (1975:4), was to ‘... appeal directly to the history of political thought’ and pronounce the project merely a ‘... return to the ... theory of the 16th to mid-18th centuries ... [and] the era of Grotius’.

It is not necessary here to take a position for or against the ‘world society’ position to recognise the problem associated with Bull’s dismissal
of it, which assumes it possible to simply test a contemporary hypothesis (the prospect of world society) by relating it directly to a textual object in the past. This kind of approach, for all its association with pluralism, rests on a reductionist premise which (in this case) merely ‘identifies the 20th century with the 17th’ without acknowledging the social and cognitive impact of the industrial revolution, an event considered as ‘... the most fundamental transformation of human life in the [recorded] history of the world’ (ibid:4). The point of course, is that the nature of any Grotian revival, in this circumstance, could not simply be assumed to correspond with some 17th century ‘essence’. The larger point is that Bull’s historical method, derived primarily from Wight, can be seen as a highly problematic basis for a realist explanation of the ‘facts’ of international life in the contemporary period.

If there are some important questions left begging by Bull’s historical approach, then his approach to theory, honed by both Anderson and Wight, requires critical investigation also. Richard Leaver (1978) has made some interesting comments on this issue whilst bemoaning the lack of a sophisticated political economy perspective within the international relations discipline in general. Leaver’s argument was that the primary ‘... stumbling block to progress’ was a positivist epistemology which directed the thinking of the dominant state centric realist sector and those who claimed to have added an ‘economic’ dimension to it (e.g. Keohane and Nye). He concluded that the discipline was epistemologically unified around a major principle of knowledge which proposed that ‘... facts are pre-given and ... such facts are quite separate from theory’ (1978:14-19). Well before Ashley, Walker and Frost drew attention to the positivist/empiricist underpinnings of both ‘American’ and ‘British’ realist schools, Leaver perceived Hedley Bull’s role as pivotal in the continuing theoretical unselfconsciousness of the discipline. In Leaver’s view ‘... the very idea of theory was anathema to Bull [because] international relations was a unique discipline dealing with unique combinations of factors’ (1978:16).

Given the earlier acknowledgement of Bull as a scholar with a critical theory approach to study, it might seem rather incongruous at this point to be highlighting his apparent inadequacy in this regard. But it is not. Bull was clearly concerned about theoretical self-reflection and the exposition of ‘theoretical foundations’, but his understanding of what constituted ‘theory’ was limited by his own unselfconscious commitment
to a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge. Consequently, it was possible for Bull to conceive of a sphere of ‘fact’ independent of theorised propositions and hypotheses concerning it. And, in Andersonian style, by concentrating attention on a world of logically independent subjects and objects (rendered knowable by an empiricism cum realism), it was possible for Bull to proclaim an international realm of contingent fact accessible only through the non-theorised ‘rough and ready judgement’ of the individual empiricist scholar.

On this basis he could, in all genuineness, insist upon theoretical self-reflection when it came to the neo-Kantianism of Walzer or the scientific modelling techniques of the behaviouralists while effectively excluding his own empiricist-as-realist formula from such rigour. Bull thus perceived the work of the scientific realist as analytically inept, not because of any lack of theoretical sophistication per se, but because they didn’t understand the real nature of international relations made up as it was of atomised contingent entities (nation states) bearing ‘interest/values’ which ‘... cannot by their very nature be given any sort of objective [theoretical] answer’ (1969:26) [my emphasis].

Once again, one does not have to reject Bull’s critique of the behaviouralists’ objectivism to acknowledge the problem of his own position which projects the international relations ‘object’ (the state ‘thing in itself’) as the ultimate source of ‘real’ knowledge. Once this is done, of course, the whole empiricist enterprise becomes self-confirming. If ‘reality’ is assumed to emanate from the independent object (the state), then the ‘atheoretical’ analysis of the traditionalist scholar (the subject) is guaranteed a realist status via its direct correspondence with the realm of reality (interstate activity).

As Leaver has pointed out, however, the atheoretical premise associated with such a position is finally an ‘... impossibility which is self-refuting ...[It is] to endorse a theoretical and epistemological position while simultaneously blinding oneself to one’s own actions’ (1978:16). Ultimately Leaver had this to say about the theoretical approach associated with Hedley Bull’s work

The idea that theory itself can be a creative force is excluded from consideration [instead] the scholar has an entirely passive role in the formation of knowledge, since knowledge already exists independently of his activity in the facts of the real world.
It is his job to expose himself to the external impulses of knowledge emanating from independently existing facts, and except for that brief moment when external knowledge deposits its sensory imprint ... the object and subject of knowledge are perpetually separated from one another (Leaver, 1978:19).

The proposition here is clear enough. It is that, even at its most sophisticated - in the work of Hedley Bull - the traditionalist realism of the Australian discipline is an expression of a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge. It represents, as such, an inadequate basis on which to understand and explain reality in international relations.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered a lot of ground, most of it contentious, all of it complex, in the pursuit of three analytical goals:

(1) To explain what is meant by a positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge, and to emphasise its inherent limitations as a basis for social and political analysis.

(2) To illustrate that particular variants of the positivist/empiricist theory of knowledge are at the core of the dominant realist approach to international relations.

(3) To indicate that the works of some of Australia's most prominent realist scholars are constructed upon positivist/empiricist epistemological principles and to consider some of the implications this has had for their approach to the study of international relations.

More generally, the chapter has sought to establish the relevance of a broad, critical, interdisciplinary debate in social and political theory for the study of international relations in this country. It has maintained in this regard, that if the Australian discipline of international relations is to confront the problems it faces in the 1980s, its realist sector, in particular, must acknowledge the significance of a number of themes drawn from the wider debate:
(1) That the post-Enlightenment pursuit of an incorrigible 'foundation' for human knowledge was always based upon untenable and inadequate theoretical premises.

(2) That, in consequence, all approaches to knowledge and society set upon 'foundationalist' premises, must be rejected by contemporary theorists of human society and politics. Rejected, in particular, must be the most influential modern articulation of such a theme: a positivist/empiricist approach which posits an external world of fact (object) as existing independently of the observing human subject (expressed either in direct 'sense data' or indirect 'correspondence rule' terms).

(3) The need for a more sophisticated approach to analysis which recognises no analytical 'givens'; which rejects dualised and dichotomised frames of reference that privilege one side over another ('fact' over 'value', 'is' over 'ought', 'object' over 'subject', 'mind' over 'matter', etc.).

(4) The need for a holistic view of theory which acknowledges theorising as a 'connected' enterprise, intrinsic to which are its epistemological and philosophical dimensions. Theorising in this sense is not merely a set of 'conscious' propositions or hypotheses set against a realm of existing real objects (ideas, issues, events, facts) but a life process which takes into account an inexorable relationship between subjects and objects in which the former, in the act of observation and simultaneous interpretation, bestow 'real' meaning upon the latter.

(5) The recognition that all thinking about reality in the social and political world is theoretical; and that claims for realism do not exist independently of the theorising subject but are the site of social and intellectual conflict and contradiction, of competing perspectives, aspects and images of the 'real' world.
(6) That knowledge of the reality of international relations can never be reduced to static (ahistorical) or absolute (atheoretical) categories capable of ultimate capture by any self proclaimed realist tradition. Always a heterogeneous phenomenon, it defies all attempts to unify it as part of a single tradition of thought (as gleaned from selected great texts, or as the ‘observed’ behaviour of atomised self-regarding state units following an interest defined as power). Knowledge of reality is always incomplete. It is always in the process of change as we come to ‘know’ more about it.

(7) That ‘reality’ in the social and political world is best understood as a conceptual entity derived from an ongoing dialectic between a world of objects and the thinking subjects that render them meaningful in thought. This is not to suggest that knowledge of reality is dependent on the workings of the mind alone but that reality is also made up of a world of tangible material objects or ‘things’ which act upon the mind and help shape the understanding of their nature. It rejects the proposition however, that there can be ‘things in themselves’, or that the reality of human existence can be calculated as the sum of its ‘objects’ or ‘things’ minus their ‘mind dependent’ qualities. (How, for example, is it possible to conclude that all things are logically independent of each other unless one engages in an interdependent relationship with such objects in order to ‘know’ their real nature?)

(8) That there are no easy answers, no quick fix solutions to the problems which face Anglo-American scholarship in general and the international relations discipline in particular.

This chapter offers no fully blown ‘alternative’ to the traditionalist realist approach which dominates in Australia. The problems are too complex for such a tacile response. It recognises that the realists are undoubtably correct in pointing to the state as a major actor in the
modern world. It acknowledges, moreover, that much of the alternative literature concerned with issues of 'consciousness', ideology and models of behaviour, does not take seriously enough the cognitive, behavioural and ideological impact upon modern peoples of three centuries or more of living in states.

Rather the chapter has sought to indicate the necessity for a more serious inquiry into the 'world of states' aided by the theoretical insights of the wider interdisciplinary debate. The first step in the reconstruction of realist thought in this regard is to acknowledge the problems it faces at the theoretical level. Instead of setting up self confirming dialogues with 'straw' opponents (e.g. the 'neo-marxists' and 'globalists' in K.L. Holsti's *The Dividing Discipline* (1985) it must come to grips with the inadequacies of its own 'theoretical foundations'. As Martin Indyk (1985) has made clear, this is a process long overdue in the Australian context. If success in the first twenty-five years of professional scholarship in this country has been marked by the emergence, development and consolidation of the discipline, the period to follow must be one characterised by a fundamental questioning of its theoretical foundations. This would indeed be the mark of a genuinely mature discipline.

Notes

1 Before J.D.B. Miller was appointed, the Chair had been vacant for ten years. The previous and original incumbent (1949-52) was the diplomat Walter Crocker, who resigned to become High Commissioner to India. Professor Miller was, in this sense, the first professional international relations scholar to hold the Chair. For a fuller account of this issue see Indyk (1985).

2 The debate across the social science disciplines encompasses an enormous diversity of work. Synthetic titles, such as 'postempiricism', 'postpositivism' and/or 'critical theory' have been bestowed upon the debate, all of which capture its flavour to one degree or another. On the other hand, labels of this sort do not adequately confront the complexity or the conflicts associated with some aspects of the debate (e.g. the dispute between 'post-structuralists' and 'hermeneutic' theorists - the dispute over epistemology/ontology and over dialectics etc., and the linguistic turn in philosophy. For some good overview works of the debate as a

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4 On Hume's 'pragmatist' connection see Kolakowski (1972:181-203), Keat and Urry (1975:71-87). The more sensitive positivist tradition in question is perhaps best described by Hekman (1983) as 'positivist humanism' (verstehen theory, phenomenalism, ordinary language analysis, etc.).


6 Weber's connection to Machiavellian thought, particularly concerning the 'warring gods' principle (irreconcilable value systems) is discussed in Giddens (1971:135-7 and 1972). See also Bernstein (1976:45-51). For a broader debate on Machiavelli and the 'warring gods' theme see Berlin (1972:147-206).

7 Carr's debt to Mannheim has been hinted at over the years. More work in this area might prove fruitful in explaining Carr's theoretical and historiographical approach.

8 The weaknesses of Ashley's work are ultimately outweighed by the insight he brings to bear on the theory question in international relations. He is vulnerable nevertheless when he attempts to distinguish the 'traditionalist' approach of Morgenthau from the neorealist position he ascribes to thinkers such as Waltz and Gilpin. For some critical comment on Ashley's work see Kratochwil (1984), Gilpin (1984). For an interesting summary of their response to Ashley see Walker (1987:66).

9 Aside from the complex epistemological questions involved concerning the relationship of the reader to the 'great texts', there is also the issue of different and sometimes quite contradictory 'readings' of such texts. On this theme see Isaiah Berlin's comment
cited in O'Brien (1972:21) that he (Berlin) knew of at least 28 different major interpretations of Machiavelli's work. See also Alan Gewirth's discussion (1951:1-4) on the great variety of interpretations of Marselius of Padua's *Defensor Pacis*. In the broader context see Ashcraft (1971, 1975, 1982), Boucher (1985). On the specific problem of 'reading' Thucydides see Sears (1977).

10 A larger work dealing with this issue is now in progress. It will seek to explore three themes in particular that are far too complex to confront here. (1) The general relationship between positivist/empiricist theory and 'economics'; (2) The issue of 'scarcity' as a philosophical postulate rather than as an analytical 'given'; (3) The notion that a 'market' analogy necessarily equates with a non-normative approach to social and political analysis. On the first issue see Boland (1982), and Caldwell (1982). On the scarcity issue see Schaefer (1983) and on the relationship between a 'market' analogy and normative thinking see Kratochwil (1987:137).

11 It is worth noting that the qualities Hoffman describes as Weberian are to be derived also from a sensitive reading of Hume's work, as Farr (1978) has shown.

Bibliography


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Introduction

This chapter contrasts two broad approaches to international politics, international political economy and (implicitly or explicitly) the political economy of development: a problematic of society, and a problematic of coexistence. The term problematic is used here in a very general sense - roughly analogous to Imre Lakatos's concept of a 'research programme' (Lakatos, 1970) - to indicate the relationship between a theoretical problem, a set of a priori assumptions or axioms, and a constellation of questions (both questions addressed and questions suppressed or excluded by the dictates of the axioms) (Abrams, 1982:xv).

My primary concern is with the boundary between questions addressed and questions suppressed, or with the level at which systematic theoretical analysis 'cuts in' (and 'cuts out') and beyond which any variables acknowledged as empirically significant in a particular case must be treated as exogenous or ad hoc from the viewpoint of the general theory. On this basis, I distinguish between relatively open problematics (in which the axiomatic content tends towards the minimum necessary to balance empirical openness and theoretically structured argument) and relatively closed problematics (in which excess axiomatic content produces minimal empirical reach, dictating either the active suppression of relevant areas of empirical enquiry or any early slide into unstructured causal pluralism). Finally, I argue that the problematic of coexistence performs well on this criterion of empirical openness and the problematic of society poorly.

There is an evident tension between critical and positivist perspectives in the above paragraph which requires some preliminary clarification, given the strong opposition between these perspectives.
implied in the essays of Jim George and David Campbell elsewhere in this volume. On the one hand, I would follow Robert Cox in making a rough practical distinction between problem-solving theory, which takes ‘prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action’, and critical theory, ‘which does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and with how and whether they might be in the process of changing’ (Cox, 1981:128-30). I also strongly agree with Cox on the pressing need for a critical perspective on contemporary world politics, which would move ‘beyond international relations theory’ cast in the traditional state-as-actor mould and systematically address the complex interplay between ‘social forces, states and world orders’. Thus the recurring emphasis in this paper on endogenous/exogenous distinctions is meant to draw attention to the narrowly problem-solving character of the various state-as-actor approaches (collectively described here as the problematic of society) and to highlight the uncritical (and patently unrealistic) way in which ceteris paribus assumptions about ‘domestic’ politics are used to defend misleading judgements about the normality of ‘order’ and even ‘society’ in the ‘international’ arena.

On the other hand, the emphasis upon endogenous and exogenous variables is also intended to signify a basic commitment to the positivist convention of realities effectively external to any theoretical discourse - against the evidence of which various kinds of knowledge claims may be assessed as more or less adequate. Taking Michel Foucault’s distinction between such positivist approaches, for which ‘the truth of the discourse lies with the external object’, and eschatological approaches, for which ‘the objective truth of the discourse lies within and is produced by the discourse itself’ (Foucault, cited in Ashley, 1984:251), I would argue that the former are clearly preferable, upon the practical grounds commonly invoked in interpretive or discourse theory critiques of positivism: that they at least hold open the practical possibility of intersubjective validation of knowledge claims, whereas the latter approaches effectively close off that possibility.

In making this argument, I would contest the relatively straightforward equation between positivism and empiricism implied in the George and Campbell papers. As Ernest Gellner has argued, empiricism (or the assertion that a ‘claim to knowledge is legitimate only
if it can be justified in terms of experience') is only one dimension of a dualistic ‘ethic of cognition’ which has shaped the history of modern Western science. The other dimension is materialism (‘alias mechanism, structuralism, with other possible variant names’) or the assertion that ‘a claim to knowledge is legitimate only if it is a specification of a publicly reproducible structure’ (Gellner, 1974:56). Moreover, although empiricism has been far better represented in abstract philosophical argument (especially in the Anglo-American tradition), it is much less flexible than materialism as an overall epistemological criterion. Though extremely strong as a criterion of evidence, it is virtually useless as a criterion of explanation, leading to the recurring problems of relativism and solipsism documented by Jim George in his discussion of Hume. By contrast, materialism (in the very broad sense intended by Gellner) not only provides ‘the only plausible candidate’ as a criterion of explanation but is also ‘surprisingly good’ as a criterion of evidence, since knowledge claims specified in terms of reproducible structures are open to progressive subdivision along the same lines, and thus to progressive approximation towards the image of a world of discrete, isolable units of ‘experience’ promoted by empiricism (Gellner, 1974:56-85).

Thus, although I am in full agreement with George and Campbell’s criticisms of the epistemological basis of established Anglo-American international theory, I would argue that these criticisms apply not to the entire positivist enterprise but only to a one-sided empiricist version of it which has in practice dominated Anglo-American theoretical discourse (to empiricist positivism, so to speak, rather than to positivism/empiricism). By contrast, a materialist positivism, which keeps clearly in sight the inherent tension between the materialist and empiricist dimensions of the scientific enterprise, seems to offer a way out of the relativist dilemmas which plague both simple empiricism and those strong interpretive/discourse theory approaches which represent, in practice, the other side of the coin from the simple empiricist position.

The argument for this alternative position has in fact been extensively canvassed in recent years and canvassed precisely as a reformulated case for epistemological realism, defined by Gregor McLennan as ‘the claim that scientific knowledge illuminates the relationship between generative mechanisms and empirical phenomena’ (1981:3; see also Bhaskar, 1979; Outhwaite, 1983; Benton, 1977). As McLennan points out, a leading role in this reformulation has been taken
by Marxists concerned to establish an epistemological grounding for historical materialism; but the realist position ‘does not begin with Marx and goes well beyond him’, being drawn inevitably to ‘abstract from parts of his work’ and to ‘make a case about the spirit, rather than the letter, of Marx’s endeavour’ (McLennan, 1981:33). Of primary relevance to the present chapter, this reformulation appears to offer an epistemological basis for an account of the interplay between states and other social forces in contemporary world politics around the integrated themes of geopolitics and uneven development. I make a preliminary case for such an integrated approach in this paper, drawing upon two further principles which, I believe, extend the above considerations about scientific argument in general to the more specific area of social theory. These are the principle of ‘methodological infrastructuralism’ (with social infrastructures, once again, being defined much more broadly than in the traditional Marxist notion of the economic base) and the principle of according methodological priority, on grounds of explanatory parsimony, to explanations couched in terms of strategic rationality over explanations in terms of some imputed common moral framework.

This is a controversial cluster of propositions and the positive case for taking them as a package-deal receives only a sketchy, preliminary exposition here. However, I do attempt to demonstrate in some detail that even state-as-actor analyses with overt structural/strategic commitments necessarily slide away from these commitments towards relativism and intuitionism and that the only way to avoid this slide is to break decisively with analyses cast in the state-as-actor mould.

The Problematic of Society

The problematic of society is identified here with a broad spectrum of Anglo-American international relations theory since World War II, embracing the English ‘international society’ tradition (Wight, 1977; Bull, 1977; Donelan, 1978), American ‘classical Realism’ of the immediate post-war era (Kennan, 1954; Morgenthau, 1967; Kissinger, 1973) and the American structural Realist revival from the mid-1970s onwards (Waltz, 1979; Gilpin, 1981; Krasner, 1978; Keohane, 1984). In this exposition, however, I will ignore classical Realism (on the grounds that it represents a confused mixture of the other two positions) and concentrate primarily on the tensions within structural Realism (and the closely
FIGURE 1

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY
TRAJECTORY

COMMON AXIOMATIC BASE

STRUCTURAL REALIST/ REGIME THEORY TRAJECTORY

UNITARY NATIONAL SOCIETY

EXOGENOUS/BRACKETED

UNITARY NATIONAL STATE

AXIOMATIC

STRUCTURED CLASH OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

INTERNATIONAL ORDER

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

PRE-CONDITIONS OF LIBERAL MARKET ORDER

EXOGENOUS/BRACKETED

STRUCTURED CLASH OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

HEGEMONIC STABILITY

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY ('INTERNATIONAL REGIMES')

PRE-CONDITIONS OF LIBERAL MARKET ORDER

EXPLICIT ANALYTICAL GOAL BUT EFFECTIVELY EXOGENOUS/BRACKETED
associated literature on 'regimes' and 'hegemonic stability'). Both the ostensible methodological starting point of structural Realism (strategic rationality/structural logic) and its ostensible substantive concern (the interplay of international power politics and transnational economic interdependence) imply a movement well beyond the international society position. But in practice, I will argue, the two positions produce remarkably similar conclusions, dictated by their common adherence to the state-as-actor assumption.

The basic theoretical structure of the two approaches is represented by Figure 1. The pivotal axiom is the assumption of a unitary national state, carrying with it the corollary assumption of a unitary national society, not so much as an explicit axiom but rather as an implicit 'bracketing' of questions about domestic structural conflict which could undermine the coherence of the state-as-actor model. The international society approach directly acknowledges an internal, conceptual connection between these assumptions and the problem to be investigated: the notion of the sovereign state is a 'fundamental constitutive principle or criterion of membership' of international society (Bull, 1977:29). Structural Realism adopts a stance of 'methodological statism' (Ashley, 1984:238-42) closely analogous to the treatment of the individual 'consumer' or 'firm' in micro-economic theory. The convention of a unitary, autonomous state actor is openly acknowledged as a conscious abstraction from reality, whose utility is allegedly to be demonstrated in explanatory parsimony and predictive power (Waltz, 1979:1-17, 68-73).

From this common axiomatic base, the international society argument proceeds along a relatively straightforward path, most clearly mapped out by Hedley Bull. The convention and practical reality of a world of sovereign states provides the basic problem - an 'international anarchy' - but also the grounds for its solution. The clash of interests in the international arena is greatly simplified by the practical dominance of the state over other 'actors' and further simplified by the dominance of a small group of great powers, which ensures 'that the say of some states will prevail while others will go under, that certain conflicts will form the essential theme of international politics while others will be submerged' (Bull, 1977:206). The structural pre-conditions thus exist for a prudential international order, based upon both the subjection of the weak to the strong and the recognition by the strong of the need to temper their own mutual conflicts. On this basis, a genuine international society may (but
need not necessarily) emerge, where the states in question also come to acknowledge 'certain common interests and values', accept the legitimacy of 'a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions' (Bull, 1977:13).

A crucial ambiguity enters the argument at this point, directly related to the basic ambiguity regarding structural determination or necessity which occurs throughout the entire literature of the problematic of society. On the one hand, Bull employs a very weak conception of necessity to establish a wide scope for the institutionalist mode of international society analysis. Order is possible without rules, he concedes, as where 'a balance of power arises in an international system quite fortuitously, in the absence of any belief that it serves common interests, or of any attempt to regulate it or institutionalise it' (Bull, 1977:65). But this would be a very limited order, based merely on 'contingent facts'. To adequately account for the broader dimension of order in international politics, it is necessary to chart the pattern of common understandings and common purposes in the interaction of the relevant actors - states and especially great powers.

On the other hand, Bull employs a very strong, if highly abstract, concept of structural necessity - the international anarchy - to establish the limits of society in the international area, and thus to demonstrate the superior realism of the incremental institutionalism of the international society approach, as opposed to the utopian institutionalism of liberal or radical 'world society' approaches. A densely institutionalised world society and world government is impossible; a thinly institutionalised international society of states (and implicitly, perhaps, of great powers) is all that can reasonably be expected.

There is also a closely related ambiguity on whether common (or intersubjective) understandings between states on the nature of rules and institutions necessarily involve a common moral framework, in which those rules are generally accepted as in some sense morally binding. On the one hand, such a necessary involvement seems implied in Bull's attempt to delineate between institutionalised order based on common interests and values and order based on the mere contingent facts of relative power. But, on the other, his concern with the realities of power politics often leads him in practice to treat rules and institutions as one further set of strategic constraints and resources, to be observed, flouted or honoured in the breach according to the general strategic or prudential
calculations of the relevant actors. This ambiguity is somewhat muted in Bull's own argument, as his whole institutionalist case is cast in narrowly procedural terms. But for an institutionalist case with more clearly substantive implications, it would become crucial.

This raises the final point. The international society approach implies that states with very different substantive purposes and very different forms of social organisation may nonetheless find it useful to organise their relations as states along thinly institutionalised, procedural lines. It provides no grounds for asserting the general validity of rules and institutions with major implications for the substantive internal organisation of states (and, most relevant for the present discussion, no theoretical grounding for the rules and institutions of a liberal world market order). Bull does observe that ‘trade - or more generally economic and social intercourse between one country and another - best typifies international activity as a whole from the international society viewpoint’ (Bull, 1977:27); and Richard Ashley has suggested that the classical/international society approach in general is silent upon major economic questions because ‘it pre-supposes a deep consensus’ around ‘capitalist relations of production and exchange’ (Ashley, 1984:276). But insofar as Bull specifically addresses the broader social questions involved with the global extension of market capitalism, his strategy is to push them sideways into different categories of discourse, such as ‘world order’ and cosmopolitan (and international) ‘justice’. International order is a procedural order between states. It is different from world order (which is ‘morally prior’ to it) and order in general is different from justice. The baseline defence of the international society concept is retained (‘if there is to be aggrandizement by the strong against the weak ... it is better ... that it should take place without a conflagration among the strong than with one’) but at the cost of a radical restriction of its explanatory and evaluative claims (Bull, 1977:108).

Thus the theoretical trajectory of the international society perspective once more reaches the boundary of exogenous variables with questions of economic organisation under global capitalism; and it does so because these questions are fundamentally related to those defined as exogenous at the outset, by virtue of the unitary state/unitary national society axioms. But for the majority of structural Realists, the preconditions of global capitalism form precisely the thing-to-be-explained. Indeed, their basic enterprise is best interpreted as an
attempt to provide a technical solution - within the boundaries of an expanded theory of international politics - to those problems shunted off as unanswerable within the confines of the international society approach. Their first major theoretical move - the concept of hegemonic stability - seems initially to short-circuit Bull's competing discourses of justice and world order with a frankly power political response to the problem. A stable market order is achievable when - and only when - there is a single hegemon with the self-interest, will and power resources to organise the provision of the 'collective good' of a global market order and to discipline any recalcitrant 'consumers' at either state or sub-state level. But in practice the concept of hegemony is thoroughly incoherent in two inter-related senses.

First, its measure of relative power systematically privileges economic and maritime capabilities, abandoning the traditional canons of international power analysis without any clear grounds for doing so. Thus, Kenneth Waltz, who restates the traditional position in structural Realist terms, continues to treat the 19th century order as multipolar and the post-1945 one as bipolar, with a 'maturation of bipolarity' as a result of Soviet successes in 'catching-up' militarily with the United States in the late 1960s (Waltz, 1979:129-93). And Robert Gilpin who straddles both sets of concerns, contrives to treat the 19th century order as simultaneously hegemonic and multipolar and the post-1945 one as simultaneously hegemonic and bipolar (evidently working with an unsubstantiated notion of a separate maritime 'sub-system', allowing a major maritime power to have a bit of hegemony, so to speak, on the side) (Gilpin, 1981:29, 136, 234-5).

Second, the concept of hegemony has typically involved a large infusion of poorly defended assumptions about prestige, legitimate leadership and international 'governance' (Gilpin, 1981:27-38), exaggerating in this respect the worst features of the 'great power' concept in the international society approach, but further compounding the problem by systematically bracketing the contemporary power position of the Soviet Union. Even in its original form, therefore, the hegemonic stability thesis accorded a large role to governance through 'regimes' - defined as 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations' (Krasner, 1983:2). And as the practical focus of analysis has progressively shifted to the
problem of ‘co-operation after hegemony’ (Keohane, 1984), the usage of the ‘regimes’ concept has expanded from an initial ‘issue area’ focus to all-embracing questions (the ‘balance of power regime’, the ‘colonial regime’) which are indistinguishable from the core questions of the international society approach.

In charting the further trajectory of the ‘modified structural’ approach which seeks to accommodate the autonomous role of regimes to the initial principles of Realist analysis, I will concentrate on the work of Robert Keohane. Not only is he a useful counterpart to Bull in the thoroughness of his exposition: his basic argument, both methodological and substantive, develops along remarkably similar lines.

Methodologically, Keohane’s attempt to move ‘beyond Structural Realism’ takes off from Lakatos’s criteria for evaluating theoretical progress in a major ‘research programme’: that it should continue to produce auxiliary hypotheses which relate new facts in a systematic rather than *ad hoc* way to the ‘hard core’ of *a priori* assumptions which defines its basic parameters of analysis (Lakatos, 1970:116-22, 132-8, 173-80). But these criteria are dismissed almost immediately as useful for ‘asking penetrating questions’ but impossibly restrictive in practice. Structural Realism fails to measure up to them, but ‘all actual theories of international politics - and perhaps all conceivable theories - would fail the test’. Thus, Lakatos’s argument becomes a stalking horse behind which Keohane can move to a ‘softer, more interpretive test’, which he finds in Clifford Geertz’s claim that the role of theory is ‘not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalise across cases but to generalise within them’. Keohane concedes that this concept seems ‘the virtual antithesis of the standards erected by Lakatos, and could all too easily serve as a rationalisation for the proliferation of atheoretical case studies’.

Nonetheless, culture as discussed by Geertz has something in common with the international system as discussed by students of world politics. It is difficult to generalise across systems. We are continually bedevilled by the paucity of comparable cases, particularly when making systemic statements - for example about the operation of balances of power. Much of what students of world politics do, and what Classical Realism in particular aspires to do, is to make the actions of states
understandable (despite obfuscatory statements by their spokesmen): that is, in Geertz’s words ‘to provide a context within which they can be intelligibly described’ (Keohane, 1983:505-6).

Except for the largely rhetorical invocation of Lakatos, Keohane’s modifications to the scientific aspirations of structural Realism are very similar to the criteria proposed by Bull almost two decades ago, in his defence of the ‘classical approach’ against the encroachment of an earlier ‘scientific’ movement in American international relations theory: as much logical rigour and precision as possible in the definition of organising concepts, disciplined intuition and ‘judgement’ in substantive analysis based upon those concepts (Bull, 1966:361-77). And a similar convergence is apparent in the more substantive part of Keohane’s analysis. Like Bull, he seeks to delineate a middle ground of incremental institutionalism between the extremes of utopian institutionalism and naked power politics, seeking to justify ‘the Institutionalist claim ... that international institutions help to realise common interests in world politics ... not by smuggling in cosmopolitan preferences under the rubric of ‘world welfare’ or ‘global interests’, but by relying on realist assumptions that states are egoistic, rational actors operating on their own conceptions of self-interest’ (Keohane, 1984:245). Like Bull, he is notably ambiguous about the strength of international structural imperatives and about whether international institutions represent a distinctive level of analysis demanding a shift from the strategic mode of Realist analysis to the interpretation of substantially autonomous moral frameworks, or merely an additional set of constraints and resources to be weighed within the Realist strategic calculus. His general statements - such as the above comparison between the ‘international system’ and the anthropological notion of culture - suggest the former. His distinctly modest claims about the impact of specific regimes on specific state actions suggest the latter.

This pattern of practical convergence between perspectives often treated as very different is interesting in itself and it could be further documented in the epistemological arguments of those international society and modified structural theorists who have moved more decisively than either Bull or Keohane towards a thoroughgoing interpretive conception of their respective enterprises (Donelan, 1978; Kratochwil and
Ruggie, 1986). But far more important, for my purposes, is the way in which structural Realism becomes parasitic upon the intellectual strategy of the international society approach at precisely the point where the more self-aware theorists of the latter frankly acknowledge that they have hit the boundary of exogenous variables.

As noted above, Keohane begins by attempting to bring international political economy within an expanded theory of international (or world) politics and not surprisingly concludes that this cannot be done within the framework of state-as-actor Realism. His attempt comes, moreover, when a growing movement in comparative sociology and political economy is attacking similar problems from the opposite direction and presenting an explicit case for 'bringing the state [and international politics] back in' to the study of coalition formation and conflict around major issues of socio-economic development (Evans, Rueschemeyer, Skocpol, 1985). This particular movement, which takes its most immediate impetus from the work of Alexander Gershchenkron and Barrington Moore, is in turn only one part of a broad groundswell of neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian literature on state-making (Anderson, 1974a and b; Tilly, 1975), nationalism (Gellner, 1983; Nairn, 1977), revolution and collective violence (Skocpol, 1979; Tilly, 1978; Trimberger, 1978), the dynamics of tribal and agrarian-imperial orders (Gellner, 1981; Mann, 1986) and the reconstruction of general social theory with special reference to its neglect of warfare and the state (Mann, 1986; Giddens, 1981, 1985). Through all this literature there is an impressive convergence upon (1) a methodological emphasis on structural logic, strategic location and strategic choice and (2) a substantive concern with the complex interplay between international and domestic social forces - to the extent, of course, that distinctions between 'international' and 'domestic' make any historical sense in regard to the specific subject matter under discussion.

Thus, Keohane has the option of drawing on an extensive literature (the development coalitions and revolutions literature) which is obviously relevant to his central substantive concerns, and couched in an identical theoretical idiom to that of his structural Realist starting point. If he were prepared to accommodate the broader historical sweep of the other literature mentioned above, he might even given some substance to his own and his colleagues' currently meaningless assertions that Realism 'has constituted the principal tradition for the analysis of international relations [sic] ... for over 2,000 years' (Keohane, 1983:503). Keohane
himself directly acknowledges the importance of the coalitions literature and counsels that it should be subsequently brought into play as a separate source of ‘insights’ in a ‘sophisticated’ and eclectic framework incorporating elements from ‘Structural Realism, modified structural theories, other systemic approaches and actor-level analyses’ (Keohane, 1983:532).

But despite the common theoretical idiom which it shares with structural Realism, it is not considered as a candidate for incorporation within a wider structural/strategic theory of world politics, because to move to ‘the domestic or actor level of analysis’ would involve ‘sacrificing the benefits of systemic theory’. By contrast, Keohane argues, a move via modified structuralism to outright Institutionalism should be seen as retaining and building upon those benefits, even though it represents the virtual abandonment of the structural/strategic theoretical idiom, because ‘structural approaches should be seen as only a basis for further systemic analysis’ (Keohane, 1983:528-32).

Whatever the inflated claims made from the organicist constructs of structural-functional and general systems theory during the behavioural era, it is clear that ‘system’ has no explanatory force in the original structural Realist project. Thus, although ‘systems level’ is regularly repeated in the literature as a kind of magic spell to ward off threatening exogenous variables, it should be seen as simply an assertion about the legitimate boundaries of analyses of ‘international’ structure: that they must not transgress the unproblematic starting-point of the state-as-actor. However, as the modified structuralists circle around within this circumscribed space, seeking to implement Keohane’s supplementary project for the ‘thick description’ of the thinly institutionalised arena of state elite interaction, they become increasingly enmeshed in another organicist construct: the fluid ‘system’ (or ‘tradition’ in the Oakeshottian sense) of elite practices, rules and institutions depicted in the international society approach.

The distinctive mixture of pluralistic and totalistic emphases involved in this organicist conception of traditional statecraft has been nicely captured by Richard Ashley. ‘Statesmen’, he suggests, ‘never literally possess power and never truly hold the reins of control’, according to the internal society tradition.
Rather, competent statesmen are engaged in an unceasing struggle, at once artful and strategic, to be ‘empowered.’ They succeed to the extent that they can strike balances among all aspects of power - e.g., industrial capacity, population demands, military capability, nationalist labor, internationalist bankers, and the consent and recognition of other statesmen - to establish an at least momentary equilibrium that, in turn, defines the state and its interests ... The compromises among contending forces must ever be won again ... The strategic alliances with various factions ... must ever be drawn anew. Always and everywhere, balances are in jeopardy. Always and everywhere ... strategic artistry is required (Ashley, 1984:269-71, emphasis in original).

Ashley describes this, in Habermasian terms, as the problematic of the ‘competent statesman’: but, more simply, it is a gloss upon the worldview of a traditional ruling elite. Behind the explicit reservations about the role of rationality in world politics lies an implicit assumption of differential levels of rationality for masses and elites. The emphasis upon strategic artistry, the hostility to ‘cribs’ and ‘models’, and the insistence upon the ‘recalcitrance of international politics to being theorised about’, all serve to shroud and mystify the sharper edges of national and transnational power structures.

In concluding this section, it should be noted that Ashley himself, though critical of these mystifying characteristics of the international society approach and its readiness to ‘honor the silences of the tradition it interprets’, nonetheless presents it as distinctly superior to the ‘lifeless, ahistorical closure’ of the structural Realist position. His proposal is to build upon the first approach, filling in its silences on structural conflict, crisis and the like and replacing its ‘simple competence’ model with a ‘dialectical competence model’ (Ashley, 1984:273-81). It seems to me that this is a mistaken strategy; and that any approach which systematically privileges discourse on this grand scale must fall captive to the specialist practitioners of obfuscatory discourse on a grand scale.

By contrast, the modified structural theorists such as Keohane appear to be grappling with genuine problems which should, in principle, carry them decisively beyond the silences of the traditional approach. The problem lies in the extraordinarily abstract notion of social structure
which structural Realism, by refracting the traditional international system concept through the distorting lens of neoclassical economic theory, has managed to produce. A preliminary attempt to sketch a more flexible approach to structural analysis is made in the next section.

The Problematic of Coexistence

By a problematic of coexistence, I mean a theoretical perspective on contemporary world politics which works from a (hopefully) minimalistic base of axiomatic assumptions about strategic coexistence between ‘conflict groups’, towards a conjunctural, relational and situational analysis of historically and geographically specific ‘social orders’. It would involve a blending primarily of Marxist and Realist elements, in particular the notions of geopolitics and combined and uneven development.

The term currently indicates a project and a statement about a desirable direction in which to move, rather than a coherent set of concepts identifiable anywhere in the established literature - though the most promising moves in that direction are currently occurring outside, rather than inside the formal international relations literature. My original concern was with the handling of the interplay between internal and domestic pressures in Russian Marxism from the 1890s to the mid-1920s - and in particular the indications under NEP that the Soviet regime was groping towards a dualistic conception of coexistence, both with foreign capitalist regimes and with other social forces inside the territory of the Soviet Union, before these tensions were resolved in the brutal simplicity of Stalin’s combination of internal class warfare and external ‘capitalist encirclement’. I have also been influenced by aspects of the classical/international society approach - in particular by E.H. Carr and F.H. Hinsley, perhaps the only mainstream theorists of the Anglo-American tradition to combine a strong sense of the historical ‘givenness’ of the modern interstate order with a broadly progressive view of history.1

However, my immediate strategy is to argue that the substantive concerns of modified structuralism should lead not to a premature slide away from structural analysis into an emphasis on institutions understood as common moral/cultural frameworks, but to an extension of the formal charter of structural Realism to embrace the structural/strategic orientation of the comparativist literature mentioned
in the preceding section. It is therefore useful to proceed through a more systematic statement of my areas of agreement and disagreement with the structural Realist/modified structuralist position, in terms of the simplified model of my proposed approach set out in Figure II. Given the preliminary, largely methodological, character of the present argument the bulk of my comments will be concerned with the axiomatic base.

FIGURE II

ASSUMPTION OF RATIONAL STRATEGIC INTERACTION BETWEEN CONFLICT GROUPS

(AXIOMATIC)

'DISCONTINUIST' OR 'EPISODIC' IDENTIFICATION OF PROGRESSIVE MORE SPECIFIC STRUCTURES AND CONJUNCTURES

(PROVISIONAL BRACKETING OF BACKGROUND 'INITIAL CONDITIONS')

CONJUNCTURAL/RELATIONAL/SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF HISTORICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY SPECIFIC SOCIAL ORDERS

I begin with the assumption of 'actor' rationality. Such an assumption, taken as a 'trivial animating law' to establish a baseline for analysis (Popper, cited in Keohane, 1983:532) may, I think, be regarded as an inevitable component of any social science enterprise. But the analysis here also assumes that explanations in terms of imputed strategic rationality based upon self-interest are more parsimonious (and therefore, other things being equal, preferable) to explanations claiming to demonstrate some specific form of 'value rationality' within a specific common moral framework. This further assumption is also perfectly
compatible with the original structural Realist position. But since it is challenged not just by the ambiguous Institutionalism of international society and international regime theorists, but increasingly also by radical and critical theorists, such as Ashley, who have moved even more emphatically to a strong interpretive/discourse theoretical position, some limited defence of the assumption is required here.

One approach is provided in the discussion of intentional explanation by Jon Elster, in his recent attempt at a rational choice reformulation of Marxism. ‘Not all rational actions are selfish’, Elster notes, ‘but the assumption that agents are selfishly motivated does, however, have a methodological privilege’. Altruistic behaviour (whether as an individual or as a loyal participant in some wider movement), is ‘logically parasitic on selfishness, since there can be no pleasures of giving if there are no selfish pleasures of having’ (Elster, 1985:9). But rather more useful for the present argument is Martin Hollis’s discussion of the ‘Other Minds’ problem in anthropology.

Gaining access to another value universe, Hollis argues, is like decoding an unknown language. The ‘Enquirer’ can make no progress without establishing an initial ‘bridgehead’, involving ‘definitive interpretations of enough terms or practices to restrict possible meanings of others’; and this must be done a priori by identifying certain fundamental issues which must be addressed in any ‘language’ and imputing self-interested rationality in the treatment of those issues by the Other Mind. Like Lakatos’s hard core, such a bridgehead can then generate a range of empirically testable hypotheses which may be retained, discarded or recycled in the detailed exploration of the new world; and if this exploration reveals excessive deviations in practice from the Enquirer’s expectations about relationships between terms (or practices) and situations, it may lead in turn to retrospective changes in the bridgehead itself. ‘But there are wholly crucial limits’ to the extent of such changes tolerable without the effective abandonment of the decoding proposal defined by that particular bridgehead; and there is no way round the a priori character of the original starting point.

[The Enquirer’s] only access to the Other Mind’s experience is through interpreting behaviour and utterance. If he had to get at the phenomena before he could interpret and had to interpret before he could get at the phenomena, there would be no way
into the circle. He assumes a single world being described in two languages less because there is than because there will have to be. On any other assumption, he cannot begin at all (Hollis, 1977:144-9).

In itself, the assumption of strategic rationality would not produce substantive results without some middle range conception of the logistical or infrastructural terrain on which the strategic manoeuvres of the various actors must take place. This raises, in turn, the vexed question of how one is to distinguish such an infrastructural dimension without arbitrarily according some aspects of reality (such as ‘materialist’ factors in the fundamentalist Marxist schema) the methodological privilege of being somehow more ‘real’ than others. And the only answer seems to be that it is done by doing it, by attempting to specify with as much care and discrimination as possible the specific ensemble of elements which provides the infrastructure in specific social orders.

The case for such a ‘methodological infrastructuralism’ has been stated by J.G. Merquior, in a discussion which specifically takes off from Geertz’s notion of culture as a framework for interpretation and thick description, which has been taken by Keohane as an analogue for the exploration of the international system. If culture is a framework in this sense, Merquior asks, how is that framework itself accounted for without either taking it as a self-sufficient, organic whole or collapsing it into another holistic conception of ‘society”? Following Gellner’s defence of analytical reduction ‘and the need to unite alertness to contexts to that indispensable search for determinisms inherent in all genuine explanatory enterprise’, he insists merely on ‘a certain sense of infrastructure’, which acknowledges that ‘reality is composed of several levels, all ontologically legitimate (though, admittedly, varying in the degree of their ontological density)” (Merquior, 1979:70, emphasis in original).

Merquior’s arguments are echoed in the concepts employed in a variety of recent treatments of this fundamental problem of grounding large-scale social analysis: ‘multiiform materialism’ (Gellner, 1973:107-37), ‘multi-structuralism’ (Soviet development theory, reported in Valkenier, 1983:85-96), ‘organisational materialism’ (Mann, 1986: Hall, 1986, as characterised in Jessop, 1987:20-1). Mann, in particular, has attempted to implement this approach in a study of great historical sweep
and impressive analytical power which is explicitly concerned with bringing the role of warfare, geopolitics and the state into alignment with the more common materialist concerns of Marxist and liberal social theory. His basic strategy is: (1) to bracket all questions of human nature, motivation and substantive goals (except for the basic animating assumption of rational egoism) and with them all ‘causal sequences too complex to be theorised’; and (2) to concentrate on causal sequences which can be theorised because they are ‘organised by the power sources’ most instrumental to the achievement of any substantive goals. The four basic power sources, Mann argues, are ideological, economic, military and political (with the last signifying the specific institutional resources of ‘centralised territorial states’ and ‘geopolitical-diplomatic’ networks of states. These power sources are distributed in multiple ‘overlapping networks of social interaction’ which are ‘rarely coincident with each other’ and require a ‘level of analysis which is concrete, socio-spatial and organisational’; concentrating on the central problems of ‘organisation, control, logistics and communication’ (Mann, 1986:1-3, 22-32, emphasis in original).

Such an approach clearly entails the claim that intersubjective understanding, in relation to ideological and institutional ‘power sources’, should not automatically be conflated with moral community (as, I suggested in the previous section, tends to be the case with regime theory and the international society approach). It also implies that explanations which assume that actors treat ideological and institutional resources and constraints in a strategic rather than a ‘value rational’ way have methodological priority. Nonetheless, these two modes of accounting for behaviour must inevitably become closely intertwined as any analysis shades off from clearly infrastructural claims into detailed interpretation and thick description and it is useful to have some rules of thumb for preserving rudimentary distinctions at this point.

Once again, it seems that this is something which is done by doing it, with as much care and discrimination as possible. Thus, Philip Abrams, in his argument for a common enterprise of theoretical history and historical sociology, argues that the problem is to sustain not just a common logic but a common rhetoric of argument across the various levels of analysis (Abrams, 1982:xvi-xviii). Arthur Stinchcombe provides a striking dissection of the practicalities of such an approach, through a detailed examination of Trotsky’s history of the Russian revolution and
de Tocqueville’s account of the crisis of the old regime in France. Large-scale ‘epochal narratives’, of a Marxist, liberal or other variety, are too ‘flaccid’ to organise an historical analysis with genuine empirical reach, Stinchcombe claims. This can only come where the analyst is prepared progressively to adjust the original schema to bring in causally significant variables originally classed as exogenous or ad hoc, pushing on until the boundaries of the genuinely exogenous seem finally to be reached. Analysts who do this successfully preserve an underlying skeleton in their argument by the use (often implicit) of ‘deep analogies’ (such as the explicit concept of ‘dual power’ in Trotsky’s history and an implicit version of the same concept which Stinchcombe claims to find in de Tocqueville) which relate back to core assumptions about the logic of social structure of the kind spelled out by Mann. In this way, they are able to move around the various parts of the argument, holding substantial sections constant for a time while picking up particularly puzzling pieces for closer examination - building ‘as a carpenter builds, adjusting the measurements as he goes along, rather than as an architect builds, drawing first and building later’ (Stinchcombe, 1978:3).

It seems to me that the Trotskyist notion of ‘combined and uneven development’ - when united, as it must almost inevitably be, to a ‘socio-spatial’ or geopolitical emphasis - provides a particularly versatile rhetorical vehicle for traversing the no-man’s land between formal modelling and thick description in historical/sociological analysis. In addition to Trotsky’s own work, its value can be seen in E.H. Carr’s massive history of the Russian revolution and in Perry Anderson’s account of the rise of European Absolutism (Anderson, 1974b). I have attempted elsewhere to document the way in which it leads Anderson to draw in, and accord virtually equal status to, military and geopolitical variables which initially seem exogenous to his favoured class struggle explanation of Absolutism (Fitzpatrick, 1986). By contrast (as I have also argued in more detail elsewhere), a striking illustration of the theoretical closure imposed when an apparently similar concept is yoked to an indiscriminate use of the state-as-actor assumption is provided by Robert Gilpin’s attempt to ground the rise and decline of the postwar ‘Pax Americana’ in a general cyclical theory of the rise and decay of imperial or ‘hegemonic’ orders throughout recorded history (Gilpin, 1981; Fitzpatrick, 1987:47, 49-50).
Gilpin actually begins by emphasising that the general notion of the 'conflict group', rather than the specific notion of the state, represents the key 'actor' in the broad Realist problematic. He also notes that states have differed widely in character over the centuries, and that the national state is a relatively recent phenomenon. But these genuflections to historical complexity concluded, 'methodological statism' takes over for all substantive analysis. Thus, when Gilpin proceeds to his central dynamic concept, the Realist 'law of uneven growth' between states, it can be contrasted - in terms highly favourable to Gilpin's Realism - with the Marxist law of uneven development. The former applies only to the very specific developmental tendencies of 'capitalist economies' (a formulation that completely ignores much of the content of Trotsky's analysis of Russia and the more extensive analysis of the intersection of geopolitics and pre-capitalist class structures in Anderson's account of the emergence of Absolutism from the 'uneven development of feudalism'). The latter, since states-as-actors are always with us, can claim the usual grand historical sweep from Thucydides to contemporary realism (Gilpin, 1981:15-18, 93-4).

When Gilpin actually comes to discuss 'the triumph of the Nation-State - an absolutely pivotal question for his subsequent analysis of the 'nation state system' and the 'succession of hegemonies' within it - he manages to traverse the entire period from 1000 AD to 1700 AD without once mentioning Absolutism. There is also no mention of the massive and recurrent waves of localised revolt and generalised revolution unleashed by the 'state-making' transition from fuedalism to Absolutism, although 'sub-optimisation' (the problem of regional groups attempting to exit from wider imperial or hegemonic orders) is consistently highlighted elsewhere in the book, not least in regard to the question of economic nationalism in the contemporary Third World. And although the formal analysis accords a central role to the major wars and subsequent peace settlements in Europe in establishing and periodically modifying the 'constitution of the states system' (Gilpin, 1981:34-6) there is virtually no discussion of the continental military struggle. Gilpin's historical account simply bypasses the greater part of the European state-making process, leading unerringly towards its pre-ordained goal: that 'fortunate conjuncture' between 'the interests of the state and the interests of the progressive sector of society' which emerged in the Netherlands and England, setting the stage for the subsequent 'breakthrough to economic growth' (Gilpin, 1981:116-37).2
We may now move to the major implications flowing from the definition of the axiomatic base: the intersection of 'interests' and 'power' in a generalised conception of social structure. 'Base' is indeed the operative word in this connection, for the structural Realists, by abandoning the traditional 'billiard ball' model for a 'tectonic plate' model of international power politics, have produced a set of methodological dilemmas regarding the 'structure'/regimes' relationship with uncanny echoes of the long-standing base/superstructure problems of Marxism. Indeed, insofar as the problem of cooperation after hegemony has focussed their attention increasingly on the relative autonomy of regimes, conceptualised in terms of regime 'lag' and regime 'feedback', they also echo the Stalinist rationalisation of the Soviet revolution from above (Krasner, 1983:355-68). But on the other hand, their basic building block - state sovereignty - is an exceptionally idealised abstraction, which can most plausibly be seen along the lines advocated by Bull, as a constitutive norm or principle of international society. The logical conclusion of this, in one of the strong Institutionalist contributions to the 'autonomy of regimes' debate, is a direct reversal of the Marxist analogy, treating state sovereignty as a diffuse, normative superstructure which is then reflected in more specific, substructural regimes (e.g. the oil regime) with a regional and/or 'issue area' focus (Puchala and Hopkins, 1983:61-6).

This means that structural Realist analyses enter the 'systemic' level at a point already high up in an idealist stratosphere, with the substantive character and interests of individual states permanently bracketed and their common characteristic as states an unceasing quest for 'power' - conceived as a kind of undifferentiated currency, both instrumental and fungible, for the pursuit of any substantive interests. The ascent into the stratosphere is further exacerbated because the only real 'system level' distinction between states available on this basis is a distinction between great powers and the rest. The possibility of the interests and capabilities of smaller states contributing to a complex network of 'place markers' in estimates of overall structure is thus ruled out and the definition of international structure is reduced to distinctions based on imputed numbers of great powers: multipolar, bipolar or hegemonic.

Since interests in this schema are patently - indeed axiomatically - 'undetermined by structure', analysts who accept this definition of structure but still wish to discuss substantive questions about the world
political economy are pushed in the Institutionalist direction advocated by Keohane on the grounds that ‘what it is rational for states to do, and what states’ interests are, depends on the institutional context of action as well as on the underlying power realities and state position upon which Realist thought concentrates’ (Keohane, 1983:530). But this tells us nothing more about the specific interests of states. It merely asserts that the competitive interest common to all states - the search for power - must be tempered by the recognition of a general interest common to all states - a commitment to moderation, legitimacy and the rules of the game.

In practice, of course, it allows for one particular class of state to be singled out as a threat to international stability. This is the ‘revolutionist’ state, which either makes utopian rather than incrementalist institutionalist demands, or openly bases its accommodation to the prevailing order not on the rhetoric of international legitimacy and shared interests but on specific structural/conjunctural calculations about the prevailing ‘correlation of forces’. The Soviet Union has been the major contemporary representative of the latter position and the major polemical target of classical Realism. The Third World radicals of the NIEO era have been the major representatives of the former and drawn most of the polemical ire of the political economy oriented structural Realists (though, of course, an exceptionally simplistic revival of the traditional attack on the Soviet Union, also under the banner of resurgent Realism, has increasingly dominated the American political debate over the past decade).

A closely related pattern of intellectual closure and practical political bias emerges from the major strategies, within the structural Realist version of the state-as-actor problematic, for dealing with the recurring ‘fungibility’ problem in the measurement of power. Those analysts who have been dissatisfied with Waltz’s theoretically rigorous but practically futile insistence that variables not explicable in terms of multipolar/bipolar contrasts must be banished from ‘system-level’ theories of international politics (Waltz, 1979) have typically moved in one of two directions. The first is to supplement arguments about relative power with heavy doses of assertions about relative prestige (Gilpin, 1981:14, 30-3), thus faithfully retaining all of the fungibility problems of relying on a generalised ‘currency’ criterion of structural location, but further compounding these problems by wrapping extra layers of idealist
abstraction around the crude material realities which make power an inescapable tool for social structural analysis.

The second, more immediately related to political economy concerns, is to emphasise the relevance of different types of power capabilities in different ‘issue areas’ (Keohane, 1984; Keohane and Nye, 1977). This does indeed make for a greater sensitivity to the complexities of international power while the frozen moment of a more-or-less liberal capitalist economy over a substantial section of the postwar world holds: but it provides no firm basis for analysing complexities outside that frozen moment. It is idealist twice over, implicitly assuming both a stable interstate order and a liberal market order supported by the former. Since the threats to this combination come not merely from Third World radicals or hostile Communist powers but from the general structural imperatives towards mercantilism built into a capitalist interstate order (Buzan, 1983:128-49), treating issue area analysis as a solution to the fungibility problem begs precisely the central questions of the larger problematic in which that analysis is embedded.

The only solution to this complex of problems, I would argue, is to reverse the situation in which the major load-bearing concepts of interest and power are suspended high up in an idealised and abstracted superstructure and allow them to settle down, in piecemeal fashion, into a complex, differentiated ‘multiform’ infrastructure. This latter would be defined, along the lines recommended by Mann, in terms of the global distribution of the four major power sources and in particular by the most prominent positions of strategic or logistical advantage produced by the intersection of the various power networks. The analysis would have a strong socio-spatial emphasis, concentrating on situational logics grounded not just in the more obvious facts of geographical location, but also in the facts of location at differential stages (or combinations of stages) of socio-economic development (as emphasised by Trotsky, Lenin, Gerschenkron, Moore and other theorists in this tradition). It would attempt to accommodate the reciprocal, structuring relationship between ‘power’ and ‘interests’ by consistently relating them both to a single concept of strategic position. Such a concept would preserve the emphasis on instrumental goals, but abandon notions of fungibility, since it would depend precisely on the activity of defining key locations: in space, in ‘historical time’ and in the various ‘layers’ of social structure. At the grand level, of course, general notions of overall power would remain
crucial and the basic skeleton of the general world order would still be
defined substantially in terms of the interests and capabilities of major
powers. But there would be much more concern for localised 'place
markers', where the interests and capabilities of the weak, as well as the
strong, were an important consideration.

An analysis of this kind would, I think, allow for more logical and
rhetorical bridges to be built between general theories and the great bulk
of what is actually said about international politics, usually under the
label of 'regional' or 'area' analysis. In that sense, it could be seen as an
extension of Barry Buzan's concept of a network of intersecting 'security
complexes', from the regional to the global level (1983:93-121). But it
would differ from Buzan, first by placing less reliance on the 'culturalist'
cement which seems to hold his regional complexes together and second,
by dropping the notion that security complexes must be defined
essentially as clusters of states.

This last point is crucial, for I have tried to show that even familiar
concepts such as geopolitics have only an ad hoc basis in theoretical
analyses of world politics grounded in state-as-actor assumptions. Dropping
these assumptions would mean accepting not just that
international politics had many of the structural features commonly
ascribed to domestic politics (which transnational theorists of various
persuasions have always wanted to claim) but also that domestic politics
has many of the characteristics normally ascribed to international
politics. As Randall Collins has observed, in a commentary on Theda
Skocpol's analysis of revolution in France, Russia and China, the most
persuasive analyses of the origins and subsequent development of major
revolutions are those which draw systematic links between 'international'
and 'domestic' power structures and international and domestic
geopolitics and relate their conjunctural analyses of these factors to an
ongoing dynamic of 'strategic emulation' (or 'catching-up' in Soviet
terminology) occasioned by the uneven spread of military and economic
capabilities across the globe (Collins, 1981; Skocpol, 1980).

It may be objected that this claim seizes upon the atypical case of
revolution and upon the peculiar social order of the 'modernising agrarian
bureaucracies' which Skocpol takes for her case studies. But the global
expansion of imperialism in the late 19th century and the subsequent
decolonisation process has created a situation in which formally
constituted states with various combinations of industrial and pre-
industrial social structure now cover most of the globe, and in which the internal pressures generated by the imperatives towards state-making, ‘nation building’ and economic development are especially acute for being collapsed together in a way that was not the case in the earlier European experience. Moreover, it is increasingly clear that major impulses which contradict the common assumption that social homogeneity goes together with ‘advanced’ industrial status are now flowing back from the Third World to the advanced capitalist societies, first in the impact of migration and ‘guest worker’ movements and increasingly now with the destruction of established industrial sectors and regions under the New International Division of Labour.

Finally, it is necessary to make some brief comments relating this extended discussion of the axiomatic base to the other two levels of analysis depicted in Figure II at the beginning of this section. As regards the third level - the practical application of analytical concepts to contemporary social orders - the chief implication of my argument is that international relations theory should emulate the major rethinking of inherited 19th century concepts of ‘society’ now developing with increasing strength in ‘social theory’ in general. There is some paradox in this claim, for one of the key areas of neglect now emphasised in classical social theory is precisely the place of war and international politics, which is also one of the major motifs of the ‘bringing the state back in’ movement in studies of comparative development. But the crucial dimension of general social development the revisionists wish to stress is pre-eminently its uneven and contradictory character; and I have tried to show that established international relations theory based on the ‘problematic of society’ cannot allow this. It is in fact the other side of the 19th century concepts of domestic society, based like them on the extrapolation of apparent trends in the Europe of the day into a future that has patently turned out very differently. Bringing the state (and the state/society relationship) back in to its proper place as a pivotal question of general social theory entails taking the state (in the sense of the unproblematic state-as-actor assumption) back out of international relations theory and the related areas of inquiry which it compartmentalises at present.

As a general principle, this means a very substantial blurring of conventional distinctions between social ‘actors’ and social structures/social orders. Society comes to be seen, in Mann’s terms as
'confederal' rather than unitary, characteristically based on 'asymetrical alliances' and 'loose confederations of stratified allies' - and at the bottom of the pile, on a large measure of exclusion and straight coercion of the masses, whose 'normal' quiescence is most parsimoniously explained by the fact that they are 'organisationally outflanked' (Mann, 1986:2-31). The state becomes, in Nicos Poulantzas's terminology, not a unitary actor but a 'strategic terrain' characterised by struggles among fractions of the 'hegemonic bloc', but also affected by mass struggles outside that immediate terrain (Carnoy, 1984:121-7; Jessop, 1985:124-31). 'International system' and 'international society' should, in my opinion, disappear altogether as analytical concepts, in favour of the notion of a broad transnational arena and the distinction between states and non-state or sub-state actors should be replaced by a crude distinction between transnational elites (including state elites), primarily national elites and masses whose potential range of action is at most national and often merely sub-national.

It would be absurd to deny the objective reality of the global interstate order and, for the moment at least, of a capitalist market order on a near global scale. They are fundamental examples of what Mann calls 'diffused power', determining the lives of people throughout the globe but beyond the control of any existing or foreseeable centralised authority (Mann, 1986:7-8). But what must be emphasised is the extreme fragility of this combination, both because of the inbuilt mercantilist tendencies mentioned above and also because of the fact that mass actors who had achieved a degree of successful mobilisation at the national level in the advanced industrial societies are now increasingly 'organisationally outflanked' on a global scale.

At the intermediate level of the 'episodic' or 'discontinuist' linkages between the axiomatic base and the practical analysis of specific social orders, the major point to be emphasised is the one which has recurred throughout this paper: that to the extent compatible with theoretically structured analysis, the activity of cutting into and out of an argument and the bracketing of exogenous variables should be provisional only. The 'Right consensus' in the United States in the 1980s (Ferguson, 1986) or the 'Meiji Restoration' in Japan may for some purposes provide unproblematic starting points for the investigation of the Reagan Administration's foreign policy or Japanese military and economic policies in East Asia in the 20th century. But they should always be capable of
being converted into things-to-be-explained, of being opened up to a mode of analysis couched, as far as practically possible, in the same terms as those used to investigate the 'international politics' questions.

By contrast, the problematic of society involves a rigid theoretical closure in which any factors which fundamentally challenge the state-as-actor assumption cannot be investigated in its own terms. This is best illustrated by the cone-shaped character which its analysis assumes if pushed sufficiently far back into history (especially in its highly formalist, structural Realist variant). In the late 20th century there is a global system of states; in the 19th century a primarily European one; in the 18th century, the same, except less so; and so on back down the cone to a vanishing point somewhere in the 15th century. Where an area falls outside the cone it cannot contain subjects but only objects within the terms of theory. Where it has come inside the cone, the subjects - autonomous states - must be treated in certain basic senses as uniform, despite their enormous internal variations both over time and ‘laterally’ within the one time period. The theory practises a particularly ruthless version of Hegel’s dictum that a people cannot come under history until they have formed a state, adding the practical corollary that a people (in the case of the masses) cannot get back into history after they have formed a state (or after a state has been formed over them).

Conclusion

In the introduction to this paper, I attempted to highlight certain ways in which its epistemological and methodological approach seemed to differ from other papers in this volume and indeed from the predominant tenor of recent critical writing on international relations theory. In concluding, I should like to make some related points about my approach to the more substantive dimensions of what is commonly referred to as ‘state-centric Realism’.

The chief thrust of my argument has been that the application of the term ‘realism’ to analyses based on the state-as-actor axiom involves a case of mistaken identity. It would be quixotic to hope for a change in conventional labelling practices in this regard, which are deeply ingrained in the usage of both defenders and critics of Anglo-American Realism. But the substantive point cannot be emphasised too strongly. There is no genuine realism - in the sense of a genuinely open inquiry into the
multiple dimensions of contemporary power politics - in the mainstream Anglo-American debate. There are only variants of the problematic of society, which move from unwarranted high-level assumptions about society in the ‘domestic’ sphere to a predetermined and quite misleading solution to the problems of order and society in the ‘international’ sphere.

In this sense, the paper is substantially less critical of realism as a central analytical goal than the other papers in this volume. I do not wish to contest the point, forcefully argued by David Campbell, that the bogus armoury of ‘scientific’ neutrality deployed by self-styled Realists in their regular ritual slayings of ‘idealist’ and ‘ideological’ opponents has seriously cheapened the conceptual vocabulary in which the most fundamental issues of global survival are discussed. But the basic proposition honoured in Realist rhetoric - that a coherent philosophy of coexistence in the contemporary era must be grounded in a clear-sighted acknowledgement of the structural realities of contemporary power politics - remains a valid and important one. The problem lies in the extraordinarily narrow conception of structural realities currently on offer.

This raises in turn the major theoretical inhibition to a more adequate understanding of those structural realities: the state-as-actor convention. In this regard, the critical stance of this paper is more fundamentalist than that of the others in this volume. In particular, I would argue that any attempt seriously to accommodate basic questions of international political economy (and the political economy of development) will not merely ‘complicate’ the state-as-actor perspective (as Richard Riggott suggests) but effectively undermine it, by removing the axiomatic underpinning to that perspective’s ‘solution’ to the central problem of international order.

I have attempted to demonstrate the implications of this in detail in the work of Keohane, showing how a refusal to break completely with the state-as-actor convention leads him to duplicate the institutional claims of the traditional international society approach, while simultaneously ignoring the rigorous limiting clauses built into the argument of a self-aware international society theorist such as Bull. If these contradictions emerge so clearly in an argument such as Keohane’s, whose charter is narrowly confined to the political economy of the advanced capitalist societies, they must be even more in evidence in attempts to accommodate the situation of the socialist states and the Third World - an essential
prerequisite of any critical perspective on contemporary world politics. The ‘state-as-actor’ perspective cannot be reformed from within, or adjusted in its details while leaving the axiomatic base intact. The only solution is to jettison the lot and to start again on new foundations.

Notes

1 In regard to Carr, I am thinking less of his works on ‘international relations’ than of his massive history of the Soviet revolution and his closely associated arguments on the philosophy of history. While accepting Jim George’s critique of The Twenty-Years Crisis, I would argue that the real force of that critique falls not on Carr himself but on the post-war Realists, who have elevated this early, special purpose polemic into their pantheon, while totally ignoring the outright challenge to their ‘recurrence and repetition’ assumptions in Carr’s later work. This is just one instance - particularly striking because it involves a writer whose main work was directly contemporary with post-war Realism - of the way in which the Anglo-American mainstream has created its ancestors in its own image and likeness.

2 The ‘fortunate conjuncture’ statement is actually a quotation - clearly endorsed by G. Gilpin - from Douglass North and Robert Thomas’s neoclassical economic history of ‘the rise of the Western World’ (1973). The whole argument of this work is skewed by a liberal teleology. France and Spain figure as ‘the also rans’ in the race to modernity, with Prussia, Austria and Russia presumably scratched before the bell.

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...
THE STATE AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: OF TERRITORIAL BORDERS AND INTELLECTUAL BARRIERS

Richard Higgott

Introduction

'International theory is in disarray', says Kal Holsti (1985a:1) a distinguished scholar of the realist tradition and recent former president of the International Studies Association. He is, of course, not alone in his opinion. The general sentiment, albeit for a variety of different reasons, is echoed across the discipline, in for example the recent work of Richard Ashley (1986). It is not the purpose of this chapter to attempt to trace all the components of this current malaise in what has been, for much of the post World War II period, a fairly untroubled and uncontested discipline. Indeed, my colleagues have dealt in considerable detail with many of the broader epistemological and theoretical difficulties facing international relations in the 1980s in the earlier chapters of this monograph. Rather, this chapter will focus on two specific issues. Its dual brief is, therefore, to deal with the issue of the 'state' as a factor in international relations and show how the increased saliency of economic issues and the search for an international political economy (IPE) questions many of the assumptions concerning the state that have predominated in the realist tradition to date. The importance of such an enterprise is, I think, threefold.

Firstly, and at a general level, the development of international political economy as a legitimate and central concern of international relations has proceeded apace over the last decade or so. Its growing influence and sophistication is to be found in work that transcends the politico-ideological spectrum of the discipline and need not be discussed here (but see, for example, the recent surveys of the literature in Mavalankar, 1986; Strange (ed.), 1985; Hollist and Tullis (eds), 1985; Stanniland, 1985 and Gilpin, 1987). Issues in IPE, especially the degree
to which it is weakening states or strengthening markets that is bringing about change in the international economic order are, of course, strongly contested. Although there does seem to be agreement from both the left (see, for example, Block, 1977; Wallerstein, 1979 and 1984:69-79 and Parboni, 1981) and from within the broad realist tradition (see, for example, Gilpin, 1975, 1981 and 1987; Keohane, 1984; Krasner (ed.), 1983 and 1985 and Winham, 1986) that to the extent that the post World War II economic order was quasi-liberal, this was due in large part to America’s role as hegemon of that order. It is, more than anything else, the demise of America’s position as hegemon of that order - using hegemon here simply to mean the predominant actor rather than in its Gramscian sense - and the re-occuring economic crises of the post 1970 period that has seen the need for the development of a more sophisticated understanding of things economic in the international arena. And Susan Strange, who contests the notion of declining US hegemony (1987), has been one of the strongest advocates of the general point.

It has been the growing saliency of an international political economy that has exposed inadequacies in the realist notion of the state. These inadequacies are the subject of this chapter. They are recognised even within the heartland of the realist tradition. Whilst, as Michael Donelan has noted ‘... the study of the state is not prior to the study of international relations but part of it’ (1978:18) this has in fact not been practised as the methodological canon of the discipline. As Holsti, whilst accepting the notion of the nation-state as the ‘essential actor’ in international relations, points out, the ‘... nature of the essential actors, was more often assumed than explored in the classical literature’ (1985a:19). The first aim of this chapter will, therefore, be to explore and question the nature of the state as a unit of analysis rather than assume it.

The second reason for asserting the importance of this enterprise is that there is, as yet, an extremely small body of literature on what we might call the ‘politics of Australia’s international economic relations’. This term is preferred to the notion of international political economy in deference to, what are to my mind often unreasonable, objections that exist in some quarters of the Australian political science and economics communities to the notion of political economy. I have discussed, briefly, elsewhere why this is so and why the academic literature has failed to reflect the saliency of the economic factor in the study of Australia’s
international relations (see Higgott, 1987a:3-4, 1987b and 1987c:2-8). Of the major scholars of Australia's international relations in the last couple of decades, Bruce Miller and Stuart Harris alone appear to be sensitive to the nexus between politics and economics (see Miller, 1980, 1981 and 1982 and Harris, 1982 and 1986). The study of Australia as an actor in the international economic order has perforce been left to either the neoclassical economist, or the dependencia theorist (see, for example and respectively, Hughes, 1983 and 1985; Rosendale, 1983; Corden, 1983; Perkins, 1979 on the one hand and Crough and Wheelwright, 1982 on the other).

This has been unfortunate to say the least and although there is now a small, but growing, body of literature that no longer treats the Australian polity and economy as if they were autonomous spheres, the majority of this work has been of either an historical nature or focusing on the domestic end of a domestic-international continuum. With the exception of an edited collection of unconnected essays on the interaction of economic, political and strategic factors in Australia's external relations in the 1980s (Dibb, 1983) there has been no real effort to date by scholars of international relations to join the debate over the relationship between international relations and the international political economy in a manner similar to the work of British scholars such as Susan Strange (1986) or those in the USA such as Peter Gourevitch (1986) and Peter Katzenstein (1983, 1985a and 1985b).

In their pioneering works these latter two authors have attempted to analyse the impact of the international economic environment on the domestic policy making process and, at the same time, set the parameters of a relationship between the state and the international arena - especially to the extent that the state is the principal agent of adjustment. As yet, there is no comparable major work that attempts to focus on these questions as they pertain to Australia. A reading of Martin Indyk's analysis of international relations in Australia (1985) reveals no major research or publication in international political economy as opposed to the vast body of literature, by distinguished Australian scholars, writing on the international system of states from within the realist tradition. Similarly, there is no major research or publication on the role of the state in terms other than those of realist/rationalist discourse, nor any substantial research or publication on the exogenous/endogenous linkages that characterise the contemporary...
international political economy. This final sin of omission should not be laid solely at the door of the scholar of international relations.

A further scanning of the Survey of Australian Political Science, in which Indyk’s review appears, shows no chapters on those areas of the discipline that might deal with such linkages: comparative politics, public policy, political sociology or political economy. Indeed political economy is narrowly subsumed within the chapter on Radical Political Science, in which we also find the only attempt to consider seriously the concept of the ‘state’. The book makes desultory reading. I should hasten to add that this charge is less an indictment of the editor and authors than it is a reflection of the state of the discipline of political science, and its sub-branches, in Australia at the time of its publication. Although it should perhaps also be noted that there is no reference to any of the issues raised here in the editor’s ‘Agenda for the Future’ (Aitkin, 1985:31-2).

The situation within the international relations discipline seems only marginally improved by a reading of the most recent survey of work in progress in the international relations community in Australia (see Kubalkova and Cruickshank, 1987). Pending the arrival of a major work, this chapter can be but merely a prolegomenon. The generalisations and assertions that follow on the importance of analysing the role of the state as an actor in the politics of Australia’s structural adjustment to the international economic order must, therefore, be seen merely as an attempt to outline research agenda for students of Australia’s international relations.

A final reason for asserting the utility of this research project is, that in attempting to examine broader theoretical issues in an Australian context, the discipline of international relations ‘...born and raised in America’ is moved ‘away from the fire’ to which Stanley Hoffmann (1977:59) claims it has become too close. Hoffmann argued that international relations as a discipline needed ‘distance’ away ‘... from the perspective of the superpower ... toward that of the weaker ... away from the impossible quest for stability: from the slide into policy science back to the steep ascent towards the peak which the questions raised by political philosophy represent’ (ibid). The purpose of this chapter (and indeed this book in general) is to attempt to reopen the speculative nature of international relations as a discipline.
By looking, albeit briefly, at Australia we move away from the glow of the fire generated by the superpower; by focussing on the international political economy, and the need for a state to adjust to it, we add a dimension to international relations as a policy science that has been notably absent in the discipline for all but the last decade since World War II. Starting from an assumption that the current international economic order is in crisis (see Higgott, 1987a for a justification of my position) this chapter treats the quest for stability as problematic. Finally by raising questions about the nature of the ‘state’ rather than assuming its centrality this chapter returns to the broader questions of a philosophical nature urged on us by Hoffmann.

This chapter is very much an exploratory exercise. It is neither an attempt to establish a full blown critique of the realist paradigm as it applies to Australia nor an attempt to substitute an alternative one; be it a globalist, world systems theory, transnationalist, interdependence, dependency perspective or whatever. This paper’s aim is much more modest. Its intent is to complicate the study of the state in international relations by introducing a series of issues that are not readily apparent in the literature of the dominant realist tradition. This will be done in two ways.

Firstly, by asserting that the search for national economic well being in the international political economy is every bit as important as the search for politico-military security in the international system of states for a country such as Australia as it enters the last decade of the 20th century. Even more so than their colleagues in North America, Australian scholars of international relations have, for too long, relegated the study of international political economy to a secondary position behind the primary issues of ‘war, peace, power and influence’ (Holsti, 1985b:1). Once the economic dimension is given its due status as a factor in international relations then the simple, attractive, parsimonious view of the state that prevails in the realist tradition appears somewhat exposed.

The second way in which I wish to complicate our understanding of the state, departing from the traditional analysis of Australia’s international relations, is by suggesting that the domestic and international arenas are not discrete entities that can be addressed with different methodological baggages. One does not have to argue the notion of a ‘single policy environment’ to recognise the degree to which the
bonding between the domestic and international polity - especially in economic policy making - acts as much as a conduit as it does a barrier in the last quarter of the 20th century. Only, I will suggest, by appreciating the impact of the contemporary international economic order on Australia can one understand the processes of economic (and political) restructuring that are taking place within Australia and the complex role played by the state, broadly defined, in that process.

I should add that, whilst this is in part a theoretical exercise, it is not an attempt to present a theory of the state - an exercise not dissimilar to the search for the holy grail. Neither is it an attempt to buy into arguments concerning the relationship between the state and civil society that has dogged political theory for centuries. As important as it is to understand the origins and nature of the state in its abstract form the purpose of this chapter is, much less dramatically, to consider its functions. Realist scholars of international relations have specifically focussed on the international functions of the state - force, power, war, etc. I intend to complicate the picture by looking at some of its other functions that are, but have not always been considered to be, equally 'international' in flavour.

The limited nature of this exercise needs to be justified. If my working assumption is that the realist view of the state is not sufficiently adequate to allow full description of the processes taking place in the 1980s then, as a first step, it is sufficient at the outset simply to attempt to move beyond this point. In this sense, following Clifford Geertz 'The role of theory is ... not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible' (cited in Keohane, 1986b:162). This is, of course, a limited view of theorising and, as the reader will note, it is of a much lower level of abstraction than that of my co-authors in this volume. The danger of such an approach is that it can serve to rationalise empirical case studies devoid of any attempt at generalisation - which is, after all, the hallmark of theorising (Sartori, 1970). This path is, however, deliberately chosen. The provision of 'thick' description represents what we might call the 'lowest common denominator' for theorising. If a realist theory of the state cannot satisfy even this baseline, then its prospects of satisfying more abstract levels of theorising would appear to be even more remote.
International Politics and the State: a critique

Very often the great strength of a concept turns out also to be its Achilles heel. Nowhere would this appear to be more so the case than with the realist conception of the state. Its strength is its simplicity that has enabled it for so long to rebut, or ignore, attempted criticisms. What I propose, therefore, is to outline the model and then look at the growing body of criticism of the realist conception of the state or what I now prefer to call the ‘state-centric’ approach. The critiques fall into three broad categories which I have chosen to call i) empiricist, ii) sociological, and iii) epistemological. The emphasis in this paper, whilst recognising the indiscrcrete nature of the boundaries, will be on categories i) and ii) rather than iii). The epistemological critique of realism needs to be located within a wider discourse than that provided within the discipline of international relations. The basis of this critique was established by my colleagues in the earlier chapters of this volume. The other two categories are capable of treatment within the language and terms of the international relations discipline per se. As such they represent ‘in house’ challenges to the realist view of the state.

The realist view of the state

The essence of the realist view of the state, with variation of course, is to be found in the works of its exemplar authors such as Arnold Wolfers (1962), Raymond Aron (1981), Kenneth Waltz (1959 and 1979), Hedley Bull (1977) and Martin Wight (1979). Whilst Americans such as Morgenthau, Wolfers and Waltz may see an international system of states in equilibrium and ‘British’ authors such as Bull and Wight observe a more mediated international society, all operate from a state-centric position in which the balance of power occupies a position of importance comparable to that of the market place in classical economics.

I am, of course, sensitive to the fact that there are considerable philosophical and intellectual differences in the works of the respective scholars mentioned. I am also aware that some scholars designated ‘realist’ reject any such labelling. For the purpose of this chapter such qualifications are not particularly important. There is an overall process of categorisation that takes place in scholarship and the position adopted here is not a major diversion from this general process.
One quotation must suffice to illustrate my point. Presenting a keynote paper to a conference on Arms Control and Security in the North Pacific, the distinguished Australian strategist Paul Dibb indicated how his analytical views were informed by

... the writings of Hedley Bull, Stanley Hoffman (sic), Kenneth Waltz, Robert Gilpin and others of the so-called realist school which remains the dominant paradigm in the study of international affairs (1987:2-3).

I am thus not disposed to engage battle with those who, with Socratic sleight of hand when confronted with the notion of a realist school of thought, reply by asking ‘what do we mean by realism?’ To suggest realism is a complex phenomena in international relations is an acceptable line of argument. To suggest that there is no identifiable realist position is chicanery.

The essence of realism as a state-centric paradigm (Keohane, 1986b:163) has been summed up by Holsti (1985a:10) in the following fashion: The ‘causes of war and the conditions of peace/order/security ...’ is the central and legitimate issue of concern for scholars of international relations; ‘... the main units of analysis are the diplomatic-military behaviours of the only essential actors, nation states ... [and these]... states operate in a system characterized by anarchy’. What Wolfers calls:

The ‘billiard ball’ model of the multi-state system which forms the basis of the states-as-actors theory leaves no room for corporate actors other than the nation-state. By definition the stage is pre-empted by a set of states each in full control of all territory, men and resources within its boundaries (1962:19).

States operate in a manner described by Hoffmann as a ‘tournament of distinctive knights’ (1978:110). In addition to this ‘essence’ of the realist view of the state several other factors need to be appended. Not only are the states the key units of activity in international relations, power is seen not only as a means to an end - the security of a given state - it is also an end in itself (Keohane, 1986a and b). Further, whilst the state may be the linkage point between internal and external sovereignty...
(McKinlay and Little, 1986:71ff), the analytical tools of domestic politics are deemed by realists to be neither appropriate nor desirable for international phenomena. ‘The realist structural arrangement ... does not embrace any domestic political features’ (McKinlay and Little, 1986:74). Finally, the realist tradition assumed what Ashley has called ‘the autonomy of the political sphere’ (1986:261). This, at its boldest, constitutes the core of the realist state-centric paradigm which has, for a variety of reasons - some legitimate, some not - withstood a substantial critical onslaught over the last few decades. Of course, not all scholars of the realist persuasion have treated the political and economic spheres as autonomous nor have all scholars treated the domestic and international spheres as discrete entities. What is under challenge in this paper is the ideal types presented in the state-centric position and which have largely dictated analysis until recent times. Whilst the walls may have been breached in the first rush, damage was not sufficient to allow troops over the top, or cause the realists to redraw their defensive strategies. There has, however, been a second more sustained attempt to undermine the realist view which has caused some rethinking and modification on the part of the realists. Let us consider the two waves in their turn.

The first level critique: empiricist

The first batch of objections to a state-centric approach to international relations are called empiricist because they can be found within the core of the realist tradition itself. Simply by taking the realist position on its own terms we can find inconsistencies. That is, we do not need to reject the premises of the state-as-actor to recognise the limited nature of its analytical capabilities. What I am suggesting is that even whilst accepting realism’s essentially spatial or territorial definition of the state as an actor in the international arena operating with a set of norms distinct from those that prevail in the domestic arena we can still establish a substantial critique.

The first wave of dissenters to the realist tradition appeared in the early 1970s in the guise of what came to be known as the interdependence or transnational school. This had both an empirical and normative component to it. In essence the empirical argument was that the state, in terms of clout, was no longer the actor it used to be and, in addition, it was no longer the only actor. As two of the leading exponents of the
transnational school asserted at the time, emphasis needed to shift to: ‘contacts, coalitions and interaction across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of governments’ (Keohane and Nye, 1971:331).

But, Keohane and Nye (1977) and some of their contemporaries (for example, Cooper, 1972) allowed the realists to argue that they had attempted to throw out the baby with the bathwater. It was not, for example, necessary to endorse Kindelberger’s claim that ‘... the state is about through as an economic unit’ (cited in Keohane and Nye, 1977:3) to recognise that it is in the international economic arena that the power of the state has been most severely curtailed. As Bull (1979), for example, pointed out, the growing interdependence of states in the international political economy was not axiomatically at odds with the survival of the nation-state. Transnationalism was thus established as a ‘straw’ argument which realists could portray as an inadequate assertion that the ‘decline of the nation-state’ was proceeding ineluctably apace.

Views that questioned the state-centric nature of realism were held up not as attempts to reform or modify the paradigm (to engage in problem solving, in Kuhnian jargon) but to establish an alternative paradigm be it transnationalist, global society or dependency/world systems theories (Holsti, 1985a:11) or what Donelan, in contrast to the realists who see the world in which ‘states are the central reality’, described as those who have ambitions towards ‘... grasping a final unity of mankind’ (1978:19). Whilst there are certainly those whom we could call ‘idealist’ who do subscribe to those goals, the tendency for most opposition to the realist position to be portrayed as ‘idealist’ was both mischievous and misleading. It would portray those who would search for a more sophisticated understanding of the role of the state in normatively idealist terms.

The real issue was not normative in the way Donelan would have us see it. It was analytical - which is not to say value free. The transnationalist approach had identified a series of changes taking place in the post World War II world that, if they did not threaten the nation state, certainly suggested a series of constraints that state-centric theorising needed to acknowledge.

States were not the only actors in the post World War II era, especially by the 1970s; there was little or no approximation of equality between and amongst states; states were not largely impermeable and, as
I shall suggest pace Beitz, the formulation of domestic and foreign policy was not carried out with discrete sets of rules in all circumstances (1979:36). The dominant realist assumptions concerning the role of the state-as-actor were formulated on a view of the world's major powers in the historical period prior to the internationalisation of the production process. The implications of this process are more important than is often credited from within the confines of the realist paradigm. But these implications represent a more fundamental critique than emanates from within the mainstream of realism and will be discussed in the next section. Prior to that several other questions closer to the realist fireside need to be raised.

Even in its own terms the realist tradition's view of the state is found wanting. Giving the second E.H. Carr Memorial Lecture in 1985, Inis Claude noted that whilst it was the business of the scholar of international relations to '... try to understand the external behaviour of states ... [we] ... know rather less about states than we think we do' (1986:1). For example, espousing the rhetoric of the sovereign equality of states, he argued, was not the same as saying they are all the same.

The myth of the similarity of states owes something to both our intellectual laziness and to our intellectual ambitiousness ... we learn something about one or two states and then happily grasp the assumption that if we have seen one we have seen them all; we need not trouble ourselves to examine all those other states ... If they are called states, surely they must be essentially familiar to the states that we know. The rub is that we do not call them states because we have learned that they are similar to the states that we know, but that we assume that they are similar to the states that we know because they are called states ... our generalisations about states derived almost exclusively from observations about great powers (1986:2).

Claude is correct. Such a perspective overestimates the strength of states; as does the argument that the burgeoning of states in the post-colonial era is also a sign of strength in the system (Bull, 1979; Holsti, 1985a:52-4). This would be true were it not paradoxical. The state system is not the sum of its parts. Whilst there are nowadays close to three times as many states as there were fifty years ago, and whilst the
leaders of these states jealously guard their ‘sovereignty’, we should not miss the point that many of these new states exist solely because they are granted *de jure* recognition by the system. It is difficult to see how many of the states of Africa, for example, can be seen as giving strength to a system without which they would not long exist (see Higgott, 1985, and Jackson and Rosberg, 1981 for a discussion).

Again, the issue here is not the disappearance of states as spatial or territorial entities but rather the diminution of some of those constituent elements that realists take to be central to their view of the state. We need to accept that notions of national interest and sovereignty, for example, are neither absolute nor inviolable but contested and circumscribed concepts. Were we, for example, to add another dimension to Hoffmann’s call for distance, and look at international relations from the perspective of say the LDCs and the student of development, rather than from the perspective of the scholar of international relations trained in North America or Europe, then central concepts such as sovereignty and national interest take a more problematic air.

It cannot be discussed in detail here but, for example, in much of the literature of international relations, as Steve Smith notes, the notion of national interest has a seductive appeal that is not borne out in detailed observation (1986:23). The problematic nature of the concept of ‘national interest’ is most apparent when ‘interest’ is defined in economic terms rather than in the political sense of the survival of the state as a territorial or spatial entity.

As with the notion of national interest, then so too with the notion of sovereignty, the utility of the concept is questionable, even within its own realist terms. If the notion of a ‘national interest’ implies what Claude calls ‘the myth of monolithic government’, then so too does the idea of sovereignty:

sovereignty emphasises the singularity of the state, its monopoly of authority, its unity of command, and its capacity to speak with one voice (Claude, 1986:4).

Again without labouring the point, this is clearly too simplistic a view of state behaviour. The concept may be theoretically attractive, given its parsimony, but it denies the complexity of state activity and the plural, or class based, nature - it matters little which form of analytical discourse
one prefers here - of the domestic political coalitions that formulate state policy. As Claude notes, governments very often fail to act with '... the unity, purposefulness and discipline that the theory attributes to them' (1986:6). To the extent that governments 'speak with one voice' it has more to do with force (broadly defined) than with factors of solidarity, consensus or common values.

Further, one does not have to be a marxist to recognise the manner in which economic transnationalism has limited the utility of sovereignty as an absolute category. As I shall suggest in the next section, the failure of the transnationalists to make the point effectively in the first instance notwithstanding, the internationalisation of capital and production does inhibit the ability of citizens of states to control their own economic (and consequently socio-political) destinies. There is, in the last quarter of the 20th century, a tension between the state (as the basic formal legal structure) and the strength of the international economic order (as an environment for the largely unregulated movement of capital and productive capacity). As Seyom Brown has noted:

[with] ... the growing interdependence of states and the swiftness with which resources and other assets can be transferred in and out of national jurisdictions by transnational corporate enterprises and financial networks, national politics have been losing a good part of their capacity for self government (1984:524).

In many instances, practitioners and scholars of domestic structural adjustment are more aware of this than are their counterparts in the world of foreign policy and diplomacy.

In pointing to what I consider to be the inadequacies in the realist conception of the state - in a manner that addresses the state in realism's own state-as-actor terms - I am not suggesting, it needs to be stressed, that the state in a world of states is somehow outdated. This is a straw argument that has in part been used in the past as a rationale for not taking substantive criticism of the realist view of the state on board. The agenda of debate has frequently, and misleadingly, been formed by defenders of realism as the 'state or what?' As Bruce Miller, one of the more sophisticated proponents of this position affirmed in the preface to his World of States, '... sovereign states are here to stay because there is
no visible alternative' (1981:np). This is, it seems to me, a largely uncontestable assertion but not directly related to the broader question being raised by some critics of the state-centric approach. As Walker notes:

... the problematic nature of the state is not whether it will or will not disappear. That formulation has become more a form of ideological mystification than a useful guide to theory (1984:552).

The aim of this study is to suggest that it is the nature of states, especially their organisational structures, functions and behaviour that is in need of more complex analysis, not that their existence is in question. Again, in Walker's words:

... the realist insight that states as such will not go away does not imply that their spatial organisation either internally or externally will remain as it has been (1984:551).

I have pondered frequently why realists worry about that issue so much, and as a consequence, about the vibrancy and influence of realism. The impact, for example, of the works of Bull (1977), Waltz (1979), Gilpin (1981) - all published within the last decade - is surely testament to the viability of the product and its influence. This is especially the case when those works are considered *vis à vis* their would be assailants in the international relations community of the 1960s and 1970s; be they functionalists, integrationists, transnationalists or world order/global community scholars. The vigour and force of many of these counter arguments was always, as Walker (1984:552) notes, problematic.

This is not to say, however, that major change has not come about in the world order. Indeed the growth of what Ashley calls neorealism, (1986), as an attempt to reform realism from within, is evidence of the perceived need to deal with forces in the international system other than those of a politico-strategic nature. The work of Krasner (1978 and 1985), Keohane (1984) and Gilpin (1987) and the growth of regime analysis generally represents a sensitivity to the saliency of economic factors in international relations largely unthinkable within the realist tradition a decade ago. The growing sensitivity to issues of interdependence
(complex or otherwise), dependency (see Duvall, 1978 and Higgott, 1983 for a discussion of the differences between these positions) and the growing impact of world markets on international politics generally has occurred in no small part as a result of the state-centric need to respond to alternative analytical approaches - best illustrated in the growth of world systems theory (WST) (see for example, Wallerstein, 1979 and 1984). As Holsti notes, irrespective of how one views the the normative nature of WST, ‘... it frees ... [us] ... from viewing the field only in terms of overt actions of states’ (1985a:68).

Holsti, of course, still holds fast to the virtue of the state-centric paradigm. In supporting the proposition of the importance of innovations in WST, and other areas, he argues that ‘... critics of the classical tradition have many telling points to make, and all ... paradigms make significant contributions in their own domain’ (his emphasis) (1985a:129). What I wish to argue in the next section is that the way in which Holsti attempts to compartmentalise scholarship, in effect hermetically sealing the political from the economic worlds, debilitates the advancement of our knowledge.

The problem with the realist paradigm in the 1980s is less that it does not recognise the role of other paradigms in their own domains of international relations than that it does not recognise the analytical potentiality of other disciplines outside of what have been the traditional confines of the discipline. Thus a two dimensional learning process is required. At the first level we need a recognition that change, as a multi-dimensional and complex process, is not explicable, for example, in terms of either a loose system of states operating in an ‘ordered anarchy’ on the one hand, or the logic of an international division of labour and global economy on the other. At the second level, ability to explain change in the international arena needs to transcend the simplistic notion of the state’s demise or growth as a territorial or spatial entity as the key issue. It needs to take account of the state’s vertical and philosophical dimensions as well as its spatial ones. Only by utilising the analytical insights of other disciplines can it do this.

In sum, the existence of the state system is not under challenge, but rather the somewhat superficial and limited manner in which the process of theorising, and consequently analysing, its behaviour has been carried on within the realist paradigm. Particularly, it needs to be recognised that realism has not been up to the task of analysing and explaining
those processes and logics that operate in the contemporary international arena in an era of increased saliency of economic factors in that arena.

Even on its own terms, realism's conceptualisation of the state would not appear to be up to incorporating or accommodating these changes. As I shall try to suggest in the next section, this situation becomes more critical still if a notion of the state, more complex than that which prevails in the realist literature, is used.

The second level critique: sociological

This second order of criticism of the realist notion of the state I have designated as 'sociological' rather than 'theoretical'. I have chosen to do so quite specifically. All analysis, as my colleagues argue in the preceding chapters, is 'theoretical' in nature - if not in intent. This was the case in the last section even though I designated the first order critique as 'empirical'. I justified doing so on the grounds that the realist notion of the state should be treated on its own terms, within its own theoretical boundaries and using largely its own mode of discourse. In this section, the discussion will be broadened somewhat. It can be termed 'sociological' to the extent that discussion moves beyond realist discourse to incorporate thinking and analysis on the state from within the broader corpus of knowledge of the other social sciences.

It is not, however, criticism that might be termed epistemological in orientation similar to the approach taken by my colleagues. The importance of their approach cannot be underestimated. Without it I would, in this chapter, be unable to proceed to a process of analysis that did not appear to be anything other than counter-assertion to the realist view of the state. It is within the context of their broadly based epistemological analysis of realism that the following sociological discussion of the inadequacies of state-centrism makes sense.

A second reason for terming this critique sociological is much more straightforward. It is from within the sociological tradition that the major attempts to conceptualise the structure, functions and behaviour of the state as a complex phenomenon have emerged. This is the case whether we are concerned with either of the broad intellectual traditions in analysing the state - namely the Weberian and the Marxist. International relations as a member of the family of social sciences has failed to develop a theory or, more appropriately, set of theoretical
perspectives, on the state similar to other disciplines - most notably political science and sociology. Nor has it sought to borrow insights from other disciplines. In fact, intellectual contact across the boundary between international relations and the other social sciences has been as limited as the realists assume to be the contact between international relations and domestic politics. This is a pity. For in denying to themselves the insights of other disciplines in the social sciences, scholars of international relations have also missed the opportunity to provide other disciplines with the very important insights of their own research agendas.

We live in an age characterised not only by potential nuclear confrontation between two military superpowers but also the internationalisation of production, capital, technology and information, and a state system that has tripled in number in less than fifty years. The social and political theory of the 19th century, be it liberal or socialist, is decidedly ill-equipped to deal with these changes (Giddens, 1987:166). This is especially so with regard to how we understand the state. Marxism, in its many guises, preoccupied with the role of the state in the economic process (exogenous and endogenous) and/or as an ‘agent of internal oppression’, lacks a comprehension of the complexities of nationalism and the nation-state. Liberal social and political theory, on the other hand, may be better equipped to deal with issues of nationalism and the nation-state, but only to the extent that the ‘nation-state system appears as the political community within which citizenship rights may be realized, not part of a global nation-state system’ (Giddens, 1987:167).

This last dimension has been left almost exclusively in the hands of scholars of international relations. This bifurcation, the traditional division of intellectual labour, tacitly accepted that...

... two quite different kinds of political life ... are assumed to be possible, within states on the one hand, and between states on the other (Walker, 1984:532ff for a criticism of this view).

Whilst the nature of the state and its activities may be, indeed should be, contested, it would nevertheless seem inappropriate to assume that different logics can apply in different domains: that somehow the notion of the state as a territorial or spatial entity is all that is required by the scholar of international relations whilst the notion of the state as a
complex of socio-political, economic and ideological forces operating in an uneasy tension with civil society can be contained within national boundaries, to be observed by the sociologist and political scientist. This view, long held in much realist thought, is under challenge not only from contemporary social and political theorists such as Giddens (1985) but also from within the international relations discipline. Robert Walker, as a scholar critical of the realist tradition argues,

it is not necessary to pursue the complex abstract issue of the relation of parts and wholes to know that the relation between the state and the international system has become an increasingly problematic aspect of international political analysis (1984:540, but see also Halliday, 1987).

From within the mainstream of the discipline Robert Keohane (1986a:23) criticises leading realist scholars such as Kenneth Waltz for being content to separate, in a manner similar to the neoclassical economist, the domestic and international domain for the purposes of theorising. Worse, Waltz actually acknowledges the need for a theory of the state in realism but feels no compunction to work towards one (Waltz, 1986:339).

This lack of curiosity and willingness to attempt to theorise, or more modestly even, conceptualise the role of the state in a more complex fashion is seen by Keohane as a central problem of realism. As he notes, a distinction between domestic and international arenas has to be methodologically flawed. The assumption of the separability of the two domains is ‘... empirically indefensible and not in accord with the canons of natural science’ (Cyert and Simon, quoted in Keohane, 1986a:23). As Keohane goes on to argue, an integrated theory of world politics - be it realist, neorealist, materialist, dependency or whatever - cannot be satisfactorily constructed at the level of unit analysis. Linkages between domestic and international environments need to be theorised (1986:24). This cannot be done with a simple ‘state-as-actor’ notion of the state. Without a more adequate conception of the state, theorising in international relations must be of limited utility.

As I obliquely indicated earlier in this chapter, the tendency to make a distinction between the international and domestic arenas, by scholars of a realist persuasion, was facilitated by the separation of political relations between states and economic relations between states. Walker
calls this a 'false abstraction' (1987:12). Yet without this distinction the notion of the 'balance of power' could not, as Ashley notes, '... be granted the status of a core concept' (1986:261).

To try to sum up the discussion in this section so far would be to suggest a series of unfortunate dichotomies: between theory in international relations on the one hand, and social and political theory of the national state on the other; between the international arena and the domestic arena as distinct policy making environments and between international politics and international economics as two distinct areas of intellectual concern. In the context of these dualisms, in international relations of the realist persuasion, the state has played the role of not only a barrier in the spatial sense, but also in the intellectual sense.

International relations as a discipline has, as a consequence of its adoption of a position on one side of these intellectual barriers remained what Walker describes as

... the most geographically inclined part of contemporary social and political thought. This is not because of its global perspective but because its central theoretical categories build upon a reading of the state as a spatial territorial exclusion ... The fact that international theory has always depended on only the sketchiest outlines of a theory of the state has ... [to date] ... mattered little: it was necessary only to be sure that the distinction between inside and outside could be maintained. It cannot (1987:22).

It is also the historically bounded nature of realism that allows it to make such a claim (Cox, 1986:214). Scholars such as Morgenthau and Waltz, claims Cox, in transforming realism from 'historically based critical theory' into 'problem solving theory' give it a universal validity not sustained by an examination of the process of change at large in the world. To the extent that the central tenets of realism pre-date the nuclear age, the internationalisation of production and capital and the revolution in information and communications technology, it is an insufficiently complicated theory of the state. In many ways it would be more appropriate for us to see the state as a conduit, conductor or membrane in the contemporary era than a spatially defined barrier. Yet as Cox notes,
...the prospect that there exists a plurality of forms of state, expressing different configurations of state/society complexes remains very largely unexplored, at least in connection with the study of international relations (1986:205).

Even the attempts to refine realism from within, by what Ashley calls the neorealists, remain unconcerned that the state might be anything other than an unproblematic or uncontested entity. Ashley notes (1986:269) how leading scholars such as Waltz, Gilpin and Keohane constrain their realist assumptions with ‘protective clauses’. States, for example, may not, says Waltz, be ‘unitary purposive actors’ or they may not, says Gilpin, have ‘interests’ or states may not be, says Keohane, ‘coherent units’ (cited in Ashley, 1986:269). But these protective clauses do not alter the central operating, state-centric assumptions of neorealism. Were such scholars to pay more attention to their ‘protective clauses’ then the state would be less of a ‘given’.

Particularly, were such scholars to move away from the fire of the superpowers as Hoffmann urges, then many of their assumptions would seem more problematic. The parsimony and neatness of realism falls away when the focus of our study is not a superpower. This is particularly the case when economic issues of openness and vulnerability are deemed to have as high, if not higher, salience as politico-security issues.

Alternatives to the (neo)realist position also have their problems. Wallersteinian-style World Systems Theory, for example, has a derivative perspective of the state more or less structurally determined by the world system (for a critique see Trimberger, 1979). As with realism, the strengths of WST are also its weaknesses. Its attempts to ‘totalise’ the world system make it difficult to ‘refute’ at the macro-level and equally difficult to apply at the micro-level. The great virtue of WST was the manner in which it exposed the weakness of purely political analysis of the international order in general and the inappropriateness of analysing the national economy in isolation from the emerging international economic order of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries in particular (see Beetham, 1984). It is this juncture that must be the starting point for reformulating a conception of the state more appropriate for the study of international relations in the contemporary era.
International relations as a discipline has not attempted to explore the linkages between the growth of the nation-state system and the emergence of the capitalist world system. We need to ponder the extent to which interstate relations are as much a function of the uneven development of the world economy as they are of the evolution of the state system (see Chase-Dunn, 1981). The attraction of WST lies in the degree to which it attempts to answer this question. That WST may be flawed is less important than that it elevates the study of capitalism, as an international system of production and exchange, to the status of a central concern in international relations it has not previously occupied. As Wallerstein notes:

Capitalism was from the beginning an affair of the world economy and not nation states... capital has never allowed its aspirations to be determined by national boundaries (1979:19).

One doesn't need to accept the Wallersteinian view of the emergence of the modern world system in its entirety to recognise the applicability of the general point, and its implications in the second half of the 20th century. Indeed, Wallerstein's definition of capitalism, seen in essentially circulationist terms or as a mode of exchange is particularly susceptible to criticism, as is most dependencia analysis (see Higgott, 1983:58-65). Any definition of capitalism that does not have the internationalisation of the production process as a central element - particularly in a period described by some analysts as that of the New International Division of Labour (NIDL) - is destined to be deficient (see Caporaso, 1987; Frobel et al, 1980 and 1978; Higgott, 1984 and Higgott et al, 1985:45-50 for a discussion of the NIDL).

In addition, World Systems Theory sends the pendulum too far in the direction of economism and away from force related factors of the state system. States are not simply subdivisions of a world economy. As international relations tells us, they have interests other than economic ones and can organise and mobilise power accordingly. The problem we face is that a realist tradition, on the one hand, and WST, on the other, tend to represent the two extremes of a politics-economics continuum. Quite clearly, the contemporary international order has been shaped by the emergence of both the nation-state and capitalism.
‘What has made the nation-state apparently irresistible as a political form from the early nineteenth century to the present day?’ asks Anthony Giddens. The answer:

Two processes ... above all ... the global consolidation of industrial capitalism and the global ascendency of the nation-state. The two are closely intertwined but it is a fundamental mistake to conflate them (1985:254).

Giddens is undoubtedly correct in pointing to the danger of conflation. But he might also have added that this has not been the major analytical problem to date. Rather more unfortunate has been a tendency towards the reification of one component at the expense of the other - be it realist reification of the role of the nation-state as actor, or the world systems theorist’s reification of the evolution of global capitalism.

What we have, as the 20th century draws to a close, is a highly complex global system in which state boundaries are clearly less of a demarcating factor in the production process than they were in the earlier phases of the 20th century. As David Beetham notes:

... it is not a question of there now being a world market which did not previously exist, it is a question of a qualitative change in its character (1984:212).

This position is argued not only by analysts of the New International Division of Labour but also by more orthodox authors such as Peter Drucker (1986). I am not suggesting that the sovereign right of states to open or close national boundaries to the forces of the international economy no longer exists, but rather that the pressures to control flows of capital or the dynamic of international production have changed. Sovereignty is still the ‘ordering principle’ for what is internal and what is external to states but it ‘... only has meaning in context of a reflexively regulated system larger than any one state’ (Giddens, 1985:281). The power of sovereignty in a system of unequal states, is thus given real meaning by mutual state recognition; but there can be little doubt that the ability of states to regulate their domestic affairs in certain issue areas - especially of an economic nature - is constrained and distributed unequally within the global system.
This argument is not an attempt to have 'two bob each way'. It is to recognise the inseparable tension that exists between international political and economic issues. As Raymond Aron amongst many has noted, increasing economic and technological interdependence does not axiomatically diminish sovereignty (1981:738-47 and Giddens, 1985:5) but the changing global division of labour in the post World War II era has undoubtedly had an effect not readily recognised in much state-centric literature of the period. Particularly, the degree to which the governability of states is influenced by exogenous factors within the international political economy (taken broadly to mean the international productive, trading and financial systems) is ignored. It is unnecessary to be a 'dependista' to recognise this situation with regard to many of the world's LDCs, nor indeed in the world's more developed states. The turnaround in the respective fortunes of the USA and Japan, as exporters/importers of capital, with ensuing implications for domestic economic management, illustrates the 'openness' and 'vulnerability' of even the most powerful states to exogenous influences.

More specifically, whilst the way in which a state such as Australia formulates economic policy in response to prevailing international economic exigencies does not suggest that the national economy has been superseded it does, nevertheless, demonstrate the degree to which autonomy of action from the structures of the international economy have been considerably eroded. One does not need to be a marxist, for example, to argue such a case. In the words of Professor Harry Gelber, perhaps one of Australia's leading realists:

New questions are arising about the very role of the nation-state and the extent to which the state continues to be a useful unit of economic - as distinct from political - account. Markets are increasingly breaking national boundaries and the need to adjust to them changes the modalities of central government controls, at least in their accustomed forms. Economies are increasingly open, floating on a sea of world pressures and multinational industrial and financial activities which cannot be precisely controlled by any national government. 'National economies' are decreasingly autonomous and the public politics of economic autonomy are decreasingly relevant to real policies -
for which the first priority must be the internationally competitive standing of resident economic activities (1986:13).

Indeed, the whole notion of adjustment as the key issue in the economic policy of most nations, from the USA (see Destler, 1986), through Japan (see Maekawa, 1987) and the rest of Asia (see Robison et al, 1987) to Australia, revolves around one key question: how do states manage and transform their *domestic* economic policies in order to best protect themselves from, on the one hand, and integrate themselves into, on the other, the international economic order? Structural adjustment is the key economic issue of the 1980s (see World Bank, 1981 through 1987) and indeed the last quarter of the 20th century and it sits at the interstices of the domestic and international arenas. Again, as a discussion of adjustment in the Australian context would show, the demands for structural adjustment render the notions of discrete international and domestic policy environments somewhat superfluous. The pursuit of national economic welfare in the international political economy raises questions for students of international relations that have long been ignored by the discipline's concentration on the search for political security in the international system of states. It is thus time for realist scholars of international relations to learn from scholars of other disciplines.

It was suggested in the preceding chapters the degree to which, at the deepest levels, international relations needs to become more of a philosophically reflective discipline. This chapter has been pitched at a less philosophical level and with a specific focus in mind - namely the state as an issue, indeed the central issue, in the study of international relations. The chapter is, however, no less inquisitive than preceding chapters simply because its brief is more discernible. The implication of the discussion so far has been an ironic one. International relations, the most state centric of all disciplines, has been the least reflective on the nature of the state. Discussion to date has attempted to establish a critique of this position; firstly, from within realism's own terms and secondly, from a broader perspective borrowing on the works of a variety of analysis of a politico-sociological nature. The discussion needs to be carried beyond that of mere critique.
Opening the Intellectual Borders

In the following pages I will try to suggest what international relations can learn - this time in positive vein - from other areas of the social sciences. The essence of such an approach must be to transcend the series of dichotomies which have governed the subject matter of international relations as a discipline. Particularly, we need to overcome the situation, described earlier, in which the state acts as an intellectual barrier to inquiry.

We must start by broadening and complicating our notion of the state. In a seminal article written nearly two decades ago, Peter Nettl saw the state as a conceptual variable with at least four dimensions; i) as a collectivity of functions and structures of generalised applicability; ii) as a socio-cultural phenomenon; iii) as a distinct sector of society capable of some autonomous action and iv) as a unit in the field of international relations (1968:562-5). To date, international relations has tended only to concern itself with the fourth function. Whilst this is, of course, its appropriate area of concentration, shortcomings have emerged, I have tried to suggest, by ignoring the nature or character of the state and its mode of behaviour as dictated by the other components to which Nettl alludes. As Giddens, in a two part proposition, notes:

i) Nation states only exist in systematic relations with other nation states ... [and] ... international relations is coeval with the origins of nation states.

ii) The internal administrative coordination of nation states from their beginnings depends upon ... reflexively monitored conditions of an international nature (1985:4).

The first proposition is one which would probably find little disagreement among scholars of international relations. The second proposition, however, in its assumption of a dialectical relationship between the internal and external arenas is less easily accepted. The reason for this, as I have tried to suggest, is because scholars of international relations have traditionally explained the nation state system just in terms of the

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existence of states as the constituent parts of that system per se. But a new form of understanding is emerging. Again, in the words of Giddens:

The modern world has been shaped through the intersection of capitalism, industrialism and the nation state system (1985:4-5) (my emphasis).

The acceptance of such a view demands a more complex view of the state than that as simply an actor in a system of states. It requires, following Nettl's general classification but in less jargonised format, that we also look at the state as the institutions, personnel and machinery of government and as an ‘... overall social system subject to that government’ (Giddens, 1985:17). In short, a more complex explanation of the international system (one that recognises other dimensions, not just the presence of nation states, as crucial) requires a more complex view of the state. The very idea of a discipline of international relations removed from what transpires within national boundaries limits the kind of questions we can ask. The forces at work in the international arena (other than those of traditional concern to students of international relations) namely capitalism and industrialism, makes the need for a more complex analysis of the state not merely an important intellectual exercise but one of direct policy relevance too.

I am not suggesting that we disregard the state-as-actor notion. It has a vital role in allowing us to understand the nature of international relations. Rather, I am suggesting that the realist view of the state, in its most parsimonious guise, often obscures issues of great, if not greater importance in explaining the behaviour of states. ‘Government’ is not synonymous with the state in a state-as-actor model. Policy making, at the risk of stating the obvious, is a process contested by political coalitions (made up of interest groups, parties, classes or whatever). Policy outcomes influence and are, in turn, influenced by international conditions. Again, in Giddens words:

... the actor-like qualities of modern states have to be understood in terms of specific characteristics of the nation state rather than being taken as a pre-given baseline for the study of international relations (1985:289).
In this context, the characteristics of nation states in the last quarter of the 20th century have been considerably modified from those in the first quarter of this century. As I have tried to suggest, particularly important has been the evolution of the New International Division of Labour (characterised by the internationalisation and mobility of both capital and production) which has complicated considerably the international system.

Such is the complicated nature of the contemporary system, in which the logic of the state system is increasingly enmeshed with that of a truly international political economy, that it is of paramount importance for the student of international relations to become well versed in the modern political theory of the state. The growth of the absolute number of states and the pivotal role that, for example, bargaining with transnational actors such as MNCs, or the process of economic development, occupies on the policy agenda nowadays ensures that no simple view of the state can prevail in all cases. When the functions of the state, qua organisation at the interface of the domestic and international political economies, are broken down into their many parts for analysis then there would clearly appear to be something of an hiatus in the realist literature of international relations.

Yet this need not be the case. Thanks largely to students of comparative political development, there is a large body of literature on the nature of the incorporation of the newly independent (in the formal sense) yet dependent (in the observable sense) state into the international system in the post World War II era. Notwithstanding some of its theoretical inadequacies, much of the dependency literature is rich in discussion on the way states operate in the international context in a manner other than portrayed within the mainstream of international relations, traditionally concerned more with the politico-strategic behaviour of super and global powers. A focus on the search for national economic welfare instead of (or as well as) politico-military security by developing or newly independent countries gives us the distance that Hoffmann calls for and which few in the mainstream of the discipline take seriously.5

International relations, operating with the nation-state as given, has never stretched itself to consider the complexity and variety of dimensions to the character of the state in the way that students of dependency, dealing with the problems of new states establishing their policy making processes, formulating interests, managing regime change
and above all, coping with the problems of development in a hostile environment need to. Because the state could not be taken as given, scholars of new states recognised the importance of conceptualising its various forms and functions. Because these new nations were 'open' and 'vulnerable' to all the vicissitudes of the international (economic) order, scholars never operated under the fiction of the international and domestic arenas as separate policy environments.

Worse still, in assuming the 'state-as-actor', scholars of international relations have, to this day, failed to take seriously the complex issue of the 'autonomy' and capacity of the state (qua organisation) as a factor in their analysis. The debate over this issue is far too complex to enter into here, save but to pose the question of how a state-as-actor model can be assumed without having given prior consideration to the degree to which the state (as the locus of decision making authority) in a specific national setting is, or is not, capable of action autonomous of its broader state (qua societal system) structures. I have searched the literature of international relations to find a discussion of the state-as-actor in the international arena sensitive to this complex issue. The exercise, alas, has reaped little harvest. There is nothing within the mainstream of the tradition that recognises the degree to which the 'state' is a 'messy concept' (Mann, 1986:112). Only when we move away from Hoffmann's fireside do we begin to find consideration given to such issues.

There are three kinds of literature to which we can, and should, turn for guidance. They equate to the kinds of distance Hoffmann would have us pursue. Briefly, the first is the theoretical domain, some of the most useful of which is Eric Nordlinger's discussion of the issue of autonomy - be it in the context of the modern democratic state (1981) or that of the developing countries (1987). Secondly, there is work specifically devoted to the dependent state in the development process (see, for example, Caporaso, 1982; Evans, 1979, 1985 and 1987 and Higgott, 1984). This literature, as I have suggested, emanates from scholars working at the borders of the international relations, political economy and political development communities. The third body of literature works similarly at the interstices of three sub-disciplines: international relations, political economy and this time comparative politics. Its area focus is not, however, the Third World but rather the small but developed, states of Europe. The exemplar work of this genre is that of Peter Katzenstein (1983, 1985a and 1985b) and Peter Gourevitch (1978 and 1986).
The importance of this work is that in focussing on smaller states, rather than superpowers, and in concentrating on issues of an economic nature - be it the baseline of development of LDCs, or the process of economic adjustment of open, developed but vulnerable, political economies to the international economic order - they treat the state with a degree of intellectual curiosity and sensitivity noticeably absent from within the mainstream of the international relations community. They look at the behaviour of states in relation to the political and economic activity that crosses borders. To assert the importance of doing so would be banal if it were not so necessary. Scholars of international relations and political science in general, and in Australia in particular, have studiously avoided such adventurous activity in the post World War II period.

Only the growing intellectual curiosity of the student of international political economy of the last decade or so has begun to rescue this avenue of inquiry - ignored until recently by all but the marxists. This has been unfortunate. Attempts to foster the study of political economy have been seen either as a radical political exercise on the one hand, or misguided intellectual pursuit on the other. The importance of international political economy is not that it represents a new paradigm - indeed it does not, given the array of competing perspectives (see Stanniland, 1985) - but rather that it breaks down the role of the state as an intellectual barrier to the questions that have been traditionally asked. As such, the traditional ‘stuff’ of international relations - the ‘high politics’ of diplomacy, war making and state making - is joined by a range of activities, traditionally the stuff of ‘low politics’, as a major focus of concern. The evolution of a more complex research programme which attempts to combine the insights of the realist tradition in international relations with the scholarly research on the state in dependent development, that growing body of research on the international economic linkages between the world’s more advanced industrial states and (pace Katzenstein, et al) research on developed but open and vulnerable political economies is long overdue in the study of Australia. It enhances our understanding of Australia’s position in the international order in a manner not possible using just the tools of a realist research agenda.
Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to establish a critique of the dominant notion of the state-as-actor that has prevailed within the mainstream of the international relations discipline in the post World War II era. Its approach has been different to that adopted in the preceding chapters of this book, especially to the extent that it has attempted firstly, to treat the realist literature on its own terms and secondly, refine the realist view of the state from an extant body of literature on the state to be found in other disciplines.

Boldly stated, the central argument of the chapter has been that - in a world characterised not only by the presence of nuclear military technology but also the internationalisation of production and capital and an information and communications revolution - the parsimonious, realist notion of the state is difficult to sustain. The complexity of the contemporary age requires that the state-as-actor model, predominant in the international relations discipline, needs (at least) broadening and deepening: broadening to take account of the economic dimensions of international relations and deepening to take account of the substantial linkages between the international and domestic arenas. Without a more ‘complicated’ theory, processes in train in the international order cannot even be adequately explained, let alone any higher form of analysis be pursued. We cannot, as things stand, and in Robert Keohane’s words, even provide ‘thick description’.

This chapter has not, it needs to be stressed, tried to suggest that somehow the end of the nation-state is nigh, or even about to be transcended in a manner that would render redundant the traditional concerns of the scholar of international relations such as crisis managing, power balancing, or the study of the institutions of diplomacy, alliances and so on. Too often such an argument has been raised to sidetrack arguments that suggest the realist view of the state is somehow inadequate.

Rather, the suggestion of this chapter has been that, as important as the aforementioned factors are, an excessive concentration on them and the role of the nation state-as-actor (invariably an undifferentiated, non-complex organisation) operating in an international arena in which politics has been hermetically sealed from economics inhibits the fullest understanding of the processes at work in that arena. The distinction
between high politics and low politics has been argued to be a fiction. Indeed, the institutional arrangements of low politics in the post World War II era (the Bretton Woods System) provided, for example, the foundations on which the post World War II American political hegemony, the stuff of high politics, was grounded. Yet to the extent that there was a contemporary international economic system, and this was in an inseparable relationship with the international system of states, it has been for too long ignored by scholars of international relations.

The failure to recognise the saliency of the economic dimension, in turn, has led to a studious avoidance by the scholar of international relations of the degree to which the distinction between the international and domestic arenas as separate policy making environments is methodologically very difficult to maintain. In this regard it also needs to be pointed out what the chapter was not arguing; to wit, that the notion of sovereignty as a central tenet of international relations was somehow outmoded. It was specifically noted that sovereignty was still the central ordering principle of what constituted the internal and external jurisdiction of states.

Rather it was argued that international relations was too spatial/territorial in its definition of the state. From this viewpoint, the state acted as an intellectual barrier to a more complex view of how the state could act as much as a conduit between two arenas as a barrier between them. Further, whilst the notion of sovereign equality of unequal states in an international system of states, in situations other than those of conquest, could be maintained by mutual recognition, this was less the case in a system broadened to include the economic dimension.

Yet the purpose of the chapter was not to replace the realist emphasis on the nation-state with an analysis (such as WST) that overemphasised the evolution of capitalism as an international force. Nor was it, pace Holsti, intended to suggest that each form of analysis was appropriate in its 'own domain'. Rather, it has been argued - in keeping with attempts to build a more integrated international political economy - that the relationships between markets and states are very rarely separable even, as is often argued, for 'heuristic purposes'. The search for national economic welfare in the international arena is, and must be, as central a concern to the student of international relations as we approach the 21st century as is the search for national security. If we are to
understand these processes in both political and economic terms we need a much more complicated conception of the state than has prevailed in international relations as a discipline to date. The traditional dichotomies of international relations - between politics and economics, between the international and the domestic arena and between international 'theory' and social and political 'theory' catering for activity within the nation-state - need to be jettisoned.

Although this paper has not directly focussed on Australia it has asserted that the need to jettison the greater simplicities of the state-centric perspective generally should also be extended to the study of Australia specifically. The purpose of the paper has been to point the Australian scholar of international relations in the direction of a massive research agenda, the components of which have, to date, occupied a position off-stage. It is time for the 'messy concept' of the state to take its position centre stage in the contemporary analysis of Australia as an actor in the international arena.

Notes

1 The notion of 'hegemon' is, of course, open to differing meanings (see Cox, 1986:251n16).

2 McMichael (1981) and Alexander (1983) look at Australia in the historical context of World Systems Theory. Brian Head (1983) in some of his work has looked at the domestic political economy with some reference to the international environment and Catley (1984) has looked at how international economic cycles affect ALP policy. There is also work on specific aspects of Australia's international economic relations such as that of students of the Australian-Japan relationship (see for example, Drysdale and Yamazawa, 1987 and Tisdell, 1985) or the bilateral economic relationship with Australia's ASEAN neighbours (see, for example, Lawe-Davies, 1981). There is, however, with the exception of Miller (1976), very little on the economic relationship with Europe and to my knowledge as yet, no single major study on the economic relationship with the United States.

3 See the general statements in Krasner (ed.) (1983), but note the critique by Susan Strange in that volume. See also some of the
recent case studies in regime analysis, notably Aggarwal (1986) and Winham (1986).

4 The literature on the state is nowadays voluminous and of varying quality. For some recent attempts to discuss its centrality and complexity see: Kazancigil (ed.) (1986); Evans, Reuschmeyer and Skocpol (eds) (1985); Carnoy 1984, McLennan, Held and Hall (eds) (1984) and Graubard (1979).

5 The literature is too voluminous to do justice to in a single footnote. The reader is referred simply to two recent excellent collections that are illustrative of this growing body of analysis of the role of the state at the interface between the domestic and international arenas: see Evan et al (eds), (1985), especially chapters by Skocpol and Evans; Ruggie (ed.) (1983). By region see, for example, Collier (ed.) (1979) on Latin America; Deyo (ed.) (1987) and Higgott and Robison (eds) (1985) on Asia; and Higgott (1985 and 1986) and Shaw (1985 and 1986) on Africa.

6 There is also a body of interesting but at times very turgid marxist literature that debates the nature of the autonomy of the modern capitalist state.

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