

Lecture 1

A First Approximation

This course is called 'International Relations Theory'. That word 'theory' can be intimidating, so I'd like to start by reassuring you. As I hinted in the introduction, there is in fact very little international relations *theory* worth bothering about, in the proper sense of the word. Indeed, it is only indolence, convention and the fact that IT has acquired universal currency as the abbreviation for 'information technology' that have stopped me from changing the title to 'International Thought'.

So here we are, saddled with a slightly inappropriate title. But we already know one important thing: though the course is *called* IR theory, it's not *about* theory – or not *just* about theory. It's about thought and, more specifically, about systematic and scientific thought. It's about analysis and abstraction or simplification. It's about what kinds of things are being studied (and the fancy word for that is 'ontology'). It's about the classification of those things (and the fancy word for that is 'taxonomy'). It's about what's going on when we claim to know things (and the fancy word for that is 'epistemology'). It's about how we set about our investigations

(and the fancy word for that is 'methodology'). It's about how we argue and persuade one another (and the fancy word for that is 'rhetoric').

Believe me: there's a fancy word for everything, and the huge literature on IR theory is bedecked with them, like a gigantic and rather vulgar Christmas tree. Worse still, familiar, quite homely words like 'other,' 'forget' or 'regime' have been invested with technical meanings by IR specialists, other social scientists and philosophers. And with the best will in the world it is hard not to resort to these technical terms once they become familiar, be they plain or fancy. This is because they make it possible to say, very briefly, what would otherwise take forever, and because (at best) they offer precision. I shall certainly not succeed in avoiding them, though I'll try to introduce each new one along the way. So all I can do is ask you to be patient when they jostle you, like over-enthusiastic puppies. Don't let them upset you. They may slobber and yap, but they probably won't bite. Pay them a little quiet attention and they'll calm down and start to do what they're told. You may even come to regard them as friends.

Now the good news is that I can give you the guts of international theory in a single lecture. In forty-five minutes flat I can give you almost all you need to know to pass a basic examination in IR Theory. You needn't come back. You can go off and row, fall in love, devote yourselves assiduously to international law or economics, or make a fortune in punting futures or formal-hall derivatives. You can follow the fine if possibly apocryphal example of Gertude Stein who, when asked to write about the meaning of life in her Harvard final examinations, responded: 'I don't have time for this; It's a sunny day; my friends are down by the river' before going off to join them. Overcome with remorse the next day she went to her professor, William James, and asked permission to re-sit. But he had already awarded her a first-class mark. 'Forget IR Theory' as one very bright Australian doctoral student once said (Roland Bleiker).

The bad news? – Well that comes in two parts. The first is that the Australian doctoral student was citing the rather quirky and difficult nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

'Forget,' as I said a moment ago, is one of those familiar words I mentioned that had acquired a technical meaning. The second bit

of bad news I had better leave to the end, otherwise you might just up and leave.

Where to start? The obvious place is the Western front in November 1918. Before the armistice there were, as far as I know, no departments of International Relations, International Studies, International Politics, War Studies or Peace Studies anywhere in the United States or the United Kingdom. (And this is perhaps the moment to make the very obvious point that the whole IR business is an Anglo-American affair first and foremost. It has from its inception been a kind of academic garnish, adorning power and, in a modest sort of way, exerting it.)

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War governments and philanthropists in the United States and Britain, determined that there should never be any repetition of war on the unprecedented scale that they had witnessed over the past four years, set up institutions designed to avert future wars. These reflected prevailing opinion on the causes of the war; they were designed as remedies. Among the leading causes, it was felt, had been the secrecy and lack of democracy surrounding foreign-policy making, arms racing and militarism, imperial rivalries, and

the formation of opposing alliance systems. Remedies, consistent with the manifesto set out by President Woodrow Wilson – his ‘Fourteen Points’ – included the further development of international law, the promotion of collective security through the League of Nations, and controls on the vanquished nations, including the requirement that they pay reparations, constraints on their acquisition of arms and the dismantling of their colonial empires.

Our chief concern is with the ways in which the lack of democratic control over foreign policy making was addressed. Here it was felt that greater public awareness and open discussion between political, business and academic elites would help ensure that decisions were taken in the national interest, and not in the interest of some narrow section of the population, be they aristocrats or financiers. It was in this spirit that university departments and research centres were set up immediately after the war. The Council on Foreign Relations in the United States and the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, better known as Chatham House, from the building that housed it (and still does), were originally intended to be a single transatlantic institution. Both existed to keep open channels of information and influence

between government and elites in both directions. University departments were established and professorial chairs endowed. The Montagu Burton Chair at the LSE – the London School of Economics and Political Science to give it its full title – was established in 1924. But the first chair in Britain was, curiously, the result of a 1919 bequest to the University of Wales by Lord David Davies (1880-1944), heir to a substantial coal fortune. This resulted in the unlikely creation in the tiny and remote seaside town of what remains one of the leading departments in the UK.

Meanwhile, in the United States, the first graduate programme was set up in 1928 at the University of Chicago. Other pioneering schools included the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, the Fletcher School at Tufts, and the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University in New York City.

Often the incumbents of these new university positions were expected not only to teach and conduct research but also actively to promote good relations between states. The Wilson chair, endowed by Davies and named for the wartime President of the United States, required that, in order to accomplish this, the

professor should spend some of his time travelling and promoting peace. Davies himself had served in the First World War. A close associate of wartime Prime Minister David Lloyd George, he represented the mid-Wales constituency of Montgomery from 1906-1929 in the House of Commons and, in 1930, produced a plan to bring an end to war by creating a multinational force able to deter aggression.

Davies laid this out in considerable detail in his book, *The Problem of the Twentieth Century: A Study of International Relationships*.

With a matchless grasp of national stereotypes he suggested entrusting the navy to Britain, artillery to the German, known to be good at technology and science, the air force to the Italians, who had the lead in futurism and modernism and could lay claim, in Leonardo da Vinci, to the inventor of both monoplane and helicopter. But Davies' masterstroke was to place the headquarters of his force – a new District of Columbia – in Palestine: a little detail to which, surely, no one could take exception. Brian Porter, a long-serving member of the Aberystwyth department, put it nicely. Reading Davies, he mused, one began to see 'the squire of Llandinam and Master of Foxhounds in a novel yet curiously familiar role: allotting tasks, sizing up the country,

planning new and exciting types of hunt to extirpate the vermin and predators of the world' (in Long and Wilson (eds.), *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis*, 61/2).

But the great hopes of the immediate post-war period faded quite rapidly. Wilson was unable to persuade Congress that the USA should join the League of Nations. By 1930 the global economy was in serious disarray with barriers to trade rising everywhere, high unemployment in many industrialised countries, and producers of foodstuffs and raw materials afflicted by falling prices. The first major breach in the peace was Japan's invasion of Chinese Manchuria in 1931, initiating a fourteen-year occupation. The outbreak of the Chaco War the following year between Bolivia and Paraguay was a much smaller affair, but a demoralising setback for America, where inter-state warfare was unusual and dispute settlement by arbitration had seemed to have made greater progress than in the old world. The 1935 invasion of Abyssinia by Mussolini's Italy, followed the next year by the German reoccupation of the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, left the Versailles settlement of 1919 in tatters. It began to seem that war in Europe

was inevitable, and states responded with rearmament programmes based on that assumption.

Against this background earlier liberal or idealist confidence in the ability of law, organization, and education to avert war first wavered and then collapsed. A new breed of commentator was in the ascendant. Political realists, as they were soon being called, regarded conflict between states as an unavoidable evil and its explosion into war an ever-present possibility. Some felt that this stemmed from human nature, which was irredeemably aggressive or deceitful or (following Lord Rochester) fearful. Others, notably Reinhold Niebuhr in the United States and Herbert Butterfield in Britain, added a religious twist to this analysis, attributing the ineradicability of conflict to the fallen condition of mankind after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Sin, rather than human nature, was the problem; divine grace, the solution. Still others, like the agnostic crypto-Marxist, Edward Hallett Carr (1892-1982), took a less gloomy and apocalyptic view, noticing that the frequency of war had been variable over time and placing the blame for the recent deterioration in inter-state relations on changes in the technology of warfare and economic globalization, which together had obliterated distance and destroyed the viability of small states,

leaving rising powers like Germany, Italy or Japan with no option but to try by all means available to match the size and resources of established imperial or continental powers such as Britain, France or the United States. In Carr we see an anticipation of what would much later, in the 1980s, be termed *structural* realism.

Indeed, writing on the eve of war, Carr had attacked the post-war idealists in his devastating 1939 polemic, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. He called them utopians – seekers after an ideal and desirable yet impossible world – and berated them for self-deception or hypocrisy. Good liberals that they were, they had assumed that a harmony of interests prevailed among states as among individuals, awaiting only open democratic policy-making and education to expose it and, in the interim, requiring only the scaffolding of international law and the League to curb the worst consequences of misperception.

Adam Smith, in the later eighteenth century, had postulated that if every individual pursued his or her interests, seemingly in conflict or competition with all the others, the outcome, counter-intuitively, would be the best possible condition of the economy as a whole. Here, more than a century later, the utopians were assuming a

similar harmony between states, each of which had an interest in peace. But this was nonsense, Carr maintained. For those states that currently lorded it over more than half the world – the *status quo* or satisfied powers as he called them – had attained their position by the use of force and had rigged the game of world politics in such a way that the only way the rising or revisionist powers could hope to catch up was by the use of force. Carr's answer, first in relation to Germany and Italy in the 1930s and later in relation to the Soviet Union after the peace in 1945, was to argue for concessions to the revisionist powers as a less damaging option than armed resistance to their inevitable rise.

Realists are generally described as pessimists, sceptical about any prospect of change in the fundamentals of international relations, and inclined to privilege the state and relations between states over social and economic relations. But they were seldom war-mongers or hawks, generally preferring security, however fragile, to a supremacy they regarded as practically unattainable. In the post-1945 USA those later dubbed classical realists, like George Kennan or Hans Morgenthau, favoured containment of the Soviet Union rather than confrontation and regarded nuclear deterrence as a way of keeping the lid on a conflict that could not be

eradicated. Deterrence was the lesser evil, to use an Augustinian phrase. Later, from the 1970s, neo-realists – most notably Kenneth Waltz (1924-) – stressed the virtues of bipolarity as the most stable possible distribution of power in an anarchic system: a system with no central authority.

Australian-born Oxford professor Hedley Bull (1932-1985), who wrote his major works at much the same time as Waltz but predeceased the older man, is often regarded as a member of a third stream of international thought variously referred to as English School, international society, rationalist or Grotian tradition (named for Hugo de Groot, a Dutch jurist of the seventeenth century). But Bull, who is often described as a pluralist because of his lingering attachment to the independent sovereignty of states and his caution regarding grandiose schemes for world government or federation, surely stood at the realist extreme of that middle group, regarding the institutions of international society – among which he included war, international law, international organization, the balance of power and great-power management – as means by which a balance could be struck and maintained between order and justice. Gradually emerging as a rival and more idealist strand within this centrist tradition were the solidarists, less attached to

separate and sovereign states and correspondingly more sympathetic to interventions grounded in universally shared values.

Returning to the realists, the difference between the neo-realists of the 1970s and '80s, like Kenneth Waltz, and their classical predecessors was that the former placed more emphasis than the latter on the ways in which the anarchic structure of the states-system shaped behaviour, norms and institutions, and less on human nature.

The difference between Waltz and Bull – neo-realist and English School pluralist – can be expressed in two ways. Waltz favoured extreme abstraction while Bull opted for a more descriptive and taxonomic approach. (I did warn that those fancy words were bound to bob up from time to time!) A simpler way of putting it is that Waltz was a dab hand at Jengo while Bull excelled at patience: the former stripping out every last brick from his tower short of that last one that would bring it crashing down; the latter slowly disclosing the conceptual materials with which a thick or comprehensive theoretical account of international relations could be constructed. Waltz came to believe that the decisive force in

world politics was the distribution of capabilities across states in an anarchic system, while Bull put his money on norms and institutions, thereby allowing more space for human agency.

The intellectual clash between idealists and realists in the 1930s is often referred to in histories of the field of International Relations as the *first* great debate. This, of course, implies at the very least a *second* great debate. And that is just what happened in the 1960s, and is generally held to have resulted in the defeat of classical realism by a younger generation of behaviouralist self-styled political *scientists*. The young Turks worked in the tradition that had been established by experimental psychologists, most of all in the United States, during the interwar period. Dismissing therapists like Sigmund Freud or Carl Jung as hopelessly unscientific, the behaviour-ists (note please the missing syllable) had pioneered observation of animal and human behaviour in laboratory settings. Both names (behaviourist and behaviouralist) arose because of their scepticism about unobservable entities like intentions, motives, dreams or the unconscious. This emphasis on what is observable places them within a much older and continuing tradition of empiricist epistemology and positivist methodology.

(My! – How those fancy words get out of hand if you lose concentration even for a moment! Again, let me explain: empiricists believe that the only reliable knowledge about the world arises from our sensory experience. They reject claims that there can be *a priori* knowledge, which is to say knowledge prior to and independent of experience. Positivism is the methodology of empiricism. It concerns itself with observable entities and assumes that language mirrors or corresponds to the world: each name to the thing named; every proposition to a corresponding fact.)

There will be more to be said about this, but for now I want only to note that this emphasis on empirical knowledge – knowledge attained through the senses – took hold in United States politics departments after 1945 and was in part a product of the struggle against totalitarian ideologies that began with the World War and continued during the Cold War that followed. There was a strong revulsion against ideology in general and in particular against the claims of Marxism to be scientific. Karl Popper, in the *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, *The Open Society* and other works, had drawn a sharp distinction between *theory proper*, from which testable hypotheses could be derived, and which stood only until falsified, and *ideology*, which shifted ground whenever threatened,

was systematically un-falsifiable, and therefore did not constitute real knowledge of the world at all. Science, to quote the title of one of Popper's books, was a process of conjecture and refutation.

It was in this spirit that the behaviouralist political scientists embarked on research projects like the long-running investigation into the causes of war that went under the title of the 'Correlates of War'. If a systematic study were made of the variables present prior to the outbreak of armed conflict, so the reasoning went, then statistical analysis of a large universe of cases might yield a robust general theory of the causes of war and enable politicians to avoid it. Regime type, alliances, arms racing, crises and other candidate variables were catalogued; wars defined and listed. It went on for years; indeed it still goes on especially in the pages of the *International Studies Quarterly*. Note, in passing, that the new method had a decidedly idealist edge to it. There was an aspiration to make the world a better place and a belief that understanding it would help achieve this. Scientific and positivist, yet also normative: – but aren't positive and normative meant to be opposites?

Statistical analysis was not the only path by which International Relations scholars sought scientific status. Others drew on game theory, a branch of mathematics applicable to strategic behaviour that had already caught on in economics, the most evidently scientific – because quantifiable – of all the social sciences. For teaching purposes Prisoners' Dilemma and Chicken were used to model the predicaments of policymakers in an anarchic world. Could one risk trusting the policy-makers of a rival state when the consequences might be disastrous? Might it not be safer to opt for a policy based on mistrust, even though this was more costly for both parties than policy based on justified mutual trust, allowing swords to be converted into ploughshares? Who would blink first in a crisis? A third import, this time from biological sciences and computing, was systems theory.

What was shared by all these attempts to make IR more scientific, aside from their contempt for the old armchair and *a priori* style of the classical realists and political theorists, was an odd blend of objectivity and engagement and a cast of mind rather more optimistic than that of the classical realists. The method was objective because it stood back and observed human affairs as it were from a distance. Yet the programme was engaged (*engagé*

as the French say) because it aspired – no less naively than any 1920s idealist – to overcome the security dilemma and eliminate warfare. It was optimistic because it assumed that the kind of accumulation and application of knowledge that had been achieved in the physical sciences could be replicated by social sciences through the deductive methods of theoretic reason.

Let me round off consideration of the second debate with the Skinner proposal for missile guidance, one of the few points in the real world where behaviourist psychology touched on the world of practical international relations. During the Second World War B. F. Skinner (1904-1990), the leading behaviourist psychologist of the mid-twentieth century, devised a guidance system for the medium-range missiles that the US military were developing. It used two pigeons, one of which had been conditioned to expect food if it pecked at the dish in front of it whenever the horizon in front of it went off to the left, while the other correspondingly pecked when the horizon went off to the right. Their pecking operated corrective controls and, between them, the two pigeons kept the missile steady and enjoyed a lavish last meal before being roasted by an ungrateful warhead. Unlike the notorious US scheme to incinerate Tokyo by releasing thousands of incendiary

bats that would nest in the eaves of its wooden buildings before their little payloads caught light, the pigeon idea actually worked when tested. (The bats, sadly, flunked one early test by setting fire to the air base at Carlsbad, New Mexico, though they remained for some time a plausible alternative to the atomic bomb.) Pigeon-guidance *worked*, but the US military rejected it on the ground that if one of their missiles failed to explode, and the pigeons were caught red-handed, the propaganda value to the enemy of the ludicrous US reliance on low-tech pigeon-power would outweigh any military advantage that might derive from the rest of the valiant kamikazi flock.

The pigeons *worked*, but Skinner's proposal neglected the responsiveness, self-consciousness, sense of humour, strategic calculation and ironic sensibility that distinguish human beings and place humankind, and the study of humankind, within the realm of practical rather than *theoretic reason*. Statistical analysis works after a fashion, but it rests on decisions about definition or coding and comparability over time that flunk similar tests. (What is war? Has it changed over time?) What's problematic about society and politics is not so much complexity (which the modellers can deal

with) as self-consciousness and intelligent feedback, which is more of a challenge.

For a while, it seemed that the behaviouralists had trounced the realists. A second line of attack was opened up that stressed the growing commercial and technological interdependence of the post-war world. Much of this sort of reasoning is now subsumed within the vast literature on globalisation. It derived in part from quantitative work in the 1950s by Karl Deutsch and his followers, who measured the intensity of international transactions (telephone calls, student exchanges, migration, trade, and the like) and drew conclusions about the progressive integration of the world, and in part from the work of functionalists who had been arguing, for decades, that more and more of the services required by the citizens of advanced industrial societies required levels of international coordination and cooperation that would finally shift allegiance from bellicose national governments to technocratic or functional international organizations. (Think only of the control of epidemic diseases, the allocation of broadcasting frequencies and bar-codes, or the management of international waterways.)

Work in this tradition crystallized in the 1970s around the concepts of 'complex interdependence' and 'regime'. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye did not so much advocate as display a model of complex interdependence, within which powerful states like the USA became constrained by the multiplicity of engagements into which they had entered, government departments developed cultures more closely attuned to their peers in other countries, and international regimes governing trade or monetary affairs took on a life of their own, no longer needing the clout of the major powers that had established them.

This was the point at which the Austro-British economist Fred Hirsch returned to Britain from the World Bank convinced of the need to steer International Studies away from its traditional moorings beside History and Law and bring it alongside Economics: something his colleagues at the University of Warwick tried to do after his untimely death in 1978, in parallel with developments elsewhere pioneered by Susan Strange, Robert Gilpin and others, offering courses in a new sub-field of International Political Economy in the Department of International Studies Hirsch had established. Not until the mid-1980s did Warwick substitute a core course on IR Theory for the original core

course in IPE around which its Master's in International Studies had been designed.

As so often, events in the real world conditioned the reception of academic work, and in the gloomy aftermath of US defeat in Vietnam, the disgrace of Nixon, the oil crises of 1973 and 1974 and the subsequent economic recession, Keohane and Nye's 1977 book, *Power and Interdependence*, was sure of an enthusiastic reception from liberals in the USA, who feared that global recession would lead, as they supposed it to have done in 1930s Germany and Italy, to the rise of extremist political forces and a consequent deterioration in good relations between states. It seemed that the world could withstand the relative decline of the USA, it seemed.

But this was not the only way to theorize the events of the 1970s, nor was it to prove the most influential. This title must go to Kenneth Waltz, whose 1979 *Theory of International Politics* remains one of the few must-read classics in the field of IR. The brilliance of Waltz's achievement rests on the way he reclaimed the high-ground of science and theory from the game theoreticians, inductivists, statisticians, and systems analysts that I

grouped under the general heading of behaviouralists while simultaneously issuing a rallying call to demoralized governing elites in Washington and shifting the ground of debate back from economic interaction to political confrontation.

Faced with a re-ignition of Cold War tension prompted by near-simultaneous crises in Poland, Iran, Central America, and Afghanistan and following a decade in which the White House had been occupied at best by lacklustre presidents and at worst by Richard Nixon, realists in the USA were delighted to learn that the character of the President was hardly worth worrying about, nor his behaviour worthy of keen scrutiny, because what selected him and determined his policies were the structures of the US political system and international politics. Suddenly structure was everything. Waltz's master-stroke against the would-be scientists of the first three post-war decades was to opt for abstraction or simplification as the defining feature of scientific method. Don't be distracted by detail. Expose the bare bones. And the bare bones were that international politics was anarchical, which made it quite different from domestic politics, which was hierarchical; that the tone of international politics was set by the distribution of power (Waltz preferred the term 'capabilities'), and that the most stable

distribution was bipolar. Gulliver need not be held down by the Lilliputian filaments of international regimes. In standing firm against a newly aggressive Soviet Union the USA was acting not only in the national interest but in the interest of global systemic stability. Moreover, the personal foibles of presidents need not inhibit the USA from fulfilling this destiny. All was set for the final phase of the Cold War and the imposition of neo-liberalism on a cowed Third World.

Sixty years have been covered; there are thirty still to go. But it is time to start to tie things up by offering a few words of caution about the strategic position of IR theory in the wider world of thought and policy. I want to say a word or two about each of two kinds of eclecticism, then offer some thoughts about orthodoxy and dissidence and a word or two – following up my introductory remarks last week – about the tensions between disciplinarity, multi-disciplinarity and trespassing, before drawing together thoughts scattered throughout this lecture about the relationship of IR theory to events, the more general climate of ideas, and evolution of a profession.

When the history of IR is told in the manner I've adopted today, as a series of phases: idealist, classical realist, behaviouralist, neo-realist, and so on, there is clearly a great deal of over-simplification.

As one approaches the present it becomes harder to simplify in this way. This is partly because it is so easy to be aware of the eclectic mix of work in International Studies going on around the world today, while forgetfulness has simplified the past. But it is also because there is, objectively, much more research and writing on IR these days than there used to be; and that in turn is because there is a commercial demand for the very sort of course on which you are embarking, to which universities have not been slow to respond. Sometimes people speak of a mainstream; sometimes of an orthodoxy. You may read claims that, when it comes down to it, realism in various forms has dominated the mainstream. But we have just seen that, even thirty years ago, within the space of three years, three books on international relations came out to which I now add a fourth – two in the USA and one in Britain – each of which enjoyed great success, but each of which represented a distinct tradition of inquiry. I refer to Hedley Bull's *Anarchical Society* (1977), Keohane and Nye's *Power and Interdependence*

(1977), Ken Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979) and (not mentioned before) Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars* (1978).

It may be easier to think of this intellectual mainstream as one in which the course of events prompts currents and eddies which, in turn, produce complexity, as in a fluid: unpredictable, but falling within certain limits. It is largely to this mainstream that power comes seeking truth, though of course power more often seeks confirmation and comfort than truth, and the mainstream is generally content to provide them. But almost any textbook or collection of essays on IR theory that you care to choose will suggest that, beyond the continuing contest between various forms of liberal institutionalism and neoclassical realism to be found in the major departments in the English-speaking world, are to be found a more disorderly collection of dissident approaches: rivulets, streams, brooks and even puddles that hope some day to flow into the Rio Grande.

I have mixed my metaphors (for neither the first nor last time!). The dissidents don't want to flow into the Rio Grande. They want to cross it. They want in – unaware that an intellectual recession may already be under way. But the post-modernists, post-structuralists,

feminists, anti-foundationalists and even the social constructivists (and these are not, of course, mutually exclusive categories) also seem sometimes to relish their dissident status, their remoteness from policy-making, their eccentricities of style. They have moved off into the wilds of Oregon in search of some new Lake Walden. It is almost as if, to quote Rebecca West on the leaders of the inter-war peace movement, 'they want to be right more than they want to do right' and to retain the orthodoxy they purport to deplore as a convenient whipping boy.

That's one sort of eclecticism: we can label it methodological or ideological eclecticism, and we need to keep a weather eye on it as we proceed with this survey of IR theory. There is also a second sort of eclecticism. I repeat what I said about multi-disciplinarity last week, but louder. Where departments or programmes called International Studies have survived, not International Relations or International Politics, it may indicate at least the vestiges of an important tradition, which is that relations between states posit a set of problems about which experts from many disciplines may have something to say, and that to try to form a new discipline of International Relations, cut off from law, economics, history, sociology and social anthropology, would be to

court disaster. A mule is the infertile offspring of a horse and a donkey. In times past mules were an indispensable source of motive power, driven each year in their tens of thousands up from the South American pampas to work and die in the mines of the *altiplano*. But they cannot reproduce.

There is an ever-present danger that International Relations will become a mule, and the mission of International Studies has been to prevent this. But the price of this vigilance is trespassing. The central issues we study – war, imperialism, trade, foreign investment, migration – are of such evident public importance that public intellectuals, thoughtful practitioners and experts from cognate and contributory disciplines feel able to pronounce on them even when their main intellectual or professional base lies elsewhere. Henry James, with his moral equivalent of war, the social anthropologist Margaret Mead, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, and in more recent times the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard who blithely claimed, back in 1992, that there had been no Gulf War, are all examples of this. So too, though a little nearer to the discipline, might be the Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington, who declared a year or so later that civilization had replaced ideology as the organizing principle of international

politics. This is often stimulating, but it leads to occasional reinvention of the wheel and it sometimes feels that IR is where old ideas go to die. None of this would happen in nuclear physics or genetics. It is bound to happen in International Studies because it is a field of public inquiry rather than a discipline with settled methods and generally accepted theories. But a life spent in close study of some technical aspect of international relations does confer some authority on a scholar; those with one foot in their original discipline and another in what we all lazily call IR, even if their commitment is to IS, have some grounds for resentment against well-publicized fly-by-nights.

Finally, I want to make quite clear that international thought does not and cannot offer a neat bundle of truths. Just about everything is contestable and contested. We have seen that the field responds to events in the world, as with the rise of political realism in the 1930s and of neo-realism in the 1980s; but we have also seen that no events entirely compel a unique interpretation.

Keohane and Nye and Ken Waltz saw the events of the 1970s in two quite different ways. At the end of the Cold War, after 1989, Waltz did not abandon his attachment to bipolarity either as fact or as ideal. Secondly, abstract or scientific thought about international

relations is extremely sensitive to the general climate of ideas. Explicitly Christian thought was very evident in debate about international relations up to the 1950s but rapidly evaporated during the following decade in the face of the behaviouralist attack on what Thomas Hobbes would have called 'incorporeal substances'. Recently it has come back again. We might ask why? Neo-Marxist ideas about international relations were quite extensively taught as part of IR syllabi in the 1960s and 1970s. They have fallen out of favour since then. Swayed by events and influenced by the general climate of ideas, international thought is finally sensitive to the interests of its exponents who, even if they resist the idea of a discipline of International Relations, need to publish in good journals, hope to be hired or secure tenure in top departments, and – in general – have careers to build.

Early in this lecture I offered some good news and some bad. One bit of bad news concerned the plethora of technical terms that students have to deal with. Even a simple word like 'forget' takes on a special meaning, forgetting being, for Nietzsche, a precondition of effective action. The second bit of bad news, I am sad to say, is that even though I have kept my promise and just possibly offered you enough to stagger through a basic

examination in IR theory in this single lecture, I have been able to do so only at the cost of uttering some half-truths. (So please don't try to pass the course on this one lecture!)

Academic study of international relations did *not* suddenly spring up in 1918 in response to the Great War. This process had already begun before 1914 and, rather than being passively responsive, played some part in shaping perceptions of and responses to the war. Liberal thinkers of the early twentieth century did *not* uniformly and naively believe in a harmony of interests between states. The first of the great debates was the fabrication of one man, E. H. Carr. The second was a purely US affair, British participation being one of the many little illusions we harbour over here, within the larger illusion of a special relationship. Moreover, it was *not* simply about method, but also about the secularisation of American public discourse. I could go on.

Teaching a subject that is so beset with misconceptions and half-truths, so implicated in power yet powerless, so self-absorbed and anxious about its intellectual status, is never easy. I hope that some of you may decide that all of this merits more than a single lecture and join me as we descend over the next seven weeks in

the struggle against Medusa, keeping a very tight hold on mirror and scythe. But if you do continue, please don't be tempted by the Gertrude Stein examination tactic. Another Harvard student tried it many years later. The question was 'What is the meaning of life?' and the answer 'God only knows!' Confident of an alpha grade, the student called on his professor a few days later. 'God passed,' he was told, 'but you flunked'.

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