

## Lecture 2

### Philosophies

I begin this lecture by looking at some of the ways in which mid-twentieth-century pioneers of academic International Relations drew on Western thought to provide their young field with an illusion of antiquity, rather like forgers replicating the varnishing techniques of the Old Masters. To do this I shall have to spend a little time going over the standard realist, idealist and international society or English School positions outlined last week, this time presenting them as timeless ideal types rather than stages in a history of the field. Next, I take a step back to look at Western thought in a different way, as the context within which past thought about the international has to be placed if it is to make good sense, and from which it cannot be wrenched without suffering serious damage to understanding. In the course of this sketch of European philosophy – my principal concern this morning – I will also be beginning the task, which continues throughout these lecture, of introducing some of the basic and conventional divisions of philosophy – logic, ethics, metaphysics, ontology, epistemology and so on – and to explain their relevance to the student of international relations.

One of these divisions is methodology, or the study of inquiry, and this is the subject of a very brief third section. If epistemology is about what we can know and how we can come to know it, and logic is about how we put that knowledge together and what we can conclude from it, then methodology examines the implications of these two branches of philosophy for real-world investigation across the whole range of inquiry from the humanities to the natural sciences. It is with the briefest of introductions to the debate about an appropriate methodology that the lecture concludes.

Turning to the first of my three concerns, the point to be clear about from the start is that I am not dealing here with the history of the discipline of International Relations, but with the contrived and artificial lineages created by those who aspired to cut International Relations free from history, law, sociology and politics as an autonomous discipline. The real history of the field is something I will have a good deal to say about over the coming weeks, most of all in lecture 6. Brian Schmidt, one of the best writers on this subject, puts it very nicely. 'While ...contemporary practitioners may wish to describe themselves as descendants of Thucydides or

Kant – he writes – a serious conceptual mistake is made when the history of the field is written in terms of the development of an epic tradition beginning with classical Greece or the Enlightenment and culminating in the work of contemporary scholars’ (Carlsnaes (ed.), *Sage Handbook of IR*, 7). He goes on to distinguish between ‘historical traditions, that is, self-constituted patterns of conventional practice through which ideas are conveyed within a recognizably established discursive framework’ and ‘analytical retrospective construction[s] ... largely defined by present criteria and concerns’ (Carlsnaes 8).

In much of the IR literature the second of these two types of tradition is waved ostentatiously in the reader’s face, serving as a cavalry screen to disguise maneuverings of the first type. E. H. Carr, for example, drew a polar distinction between realists and utopians principally in order to allow his own pro-appeasement conceptual infantry to be concentrated at the sensible position midway between two extremes. Martin Wight, a teacher at the London School of Economics who attracted a devoted following, took the view that there could never be an international theory worth comparing to political theory (‘Why There is no International Theory,’ reprinted in James Der Derian’s edited collection). He

dismissed past writings on the subject as fragmentary and unsatisfactory. But for purposes of exposition he arranged past thinkers in three columns: the realists, the rationalists and the revolutionists. It is never quite clear whether Wight thought that all three provided valid perspectives or favoured the middle way, his 'rationalism'. Many other writers have referred to the utopians or revolutionists as 'idealists'. Some include Marxists as a separate category; others put them in the 'revolutionist' camp. Kenneth Waltz, in his first book (*Man, the State and War*, 1959) distinguished those who explained war by reference to human nature from those who stressed regime type: respectively the 'Man' and the 'State' of his title. As with Carr, this was a rhetorical manoeuvre designed to pave the way for the conclusion, refined in his later *Theory of International Politics* (1978), that only a systemic explanation of war was really satisfactory.

We are in all sorts of trouble here, not only because those engaged in the business of creating the discipline so often obscured their immediate purposes behind a scaffolding of past ideas, but also because they frequently filched grand-sounding words like 'rationalism' or 'idealism' that already had well-established meanings and re-assigned them in confusing ways.

These two, for example (rationalism and idealism) are tendencies in philosophy that are not at all consistent with the rationalism or idealism of academic International Relations, a sad reflection of the casual and eclectic way in which the new field of studies developed. Meanwhile, revolutionaries are not always consistent revolutionists, and while Lenin may have thought that international relations would be utterly transformed following the final and total victory of the revolution, his analysis of international relations in his own day may be thought realist and systemic.

We can sort out some of the mess very quickly by deploying the stereotypes of realism, idealism and rationalism and their supposed founding fathers. Realists, we are told, concern themselves with relations between states, which they model on rational individuals. They take other forms of international intercourse, such as trade or migration, to be ultimately subject to the pursuit of national interest by the state. Conflict between states is endemic and unavoidable, though it may be worked through by means short of war. This has been the way throughout history and in all state-systems. Progress is illusory. This means that war itself need not be total or catastrophic because no state has permanent enemies any more than it has permanent allies and because the

state has political objectives which may well require it to moderate behaviour on the battlefield. Study of the past and the insights of past thinkers remain relevant because any world of sovereign polities is beset by much the same problems, notably the security dilemma.

All this licenses realists to draw upon a historian as remote as Thucydides, writing about the Peloponnesian wars or, in the early modern period, the Italian moralist Niccolo Machiavelli and the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. From a selective reading of these authors a few morals are drawn. The powerful will always do as they wish, and the weak must accept it. Order is to be preferred to disorder, and can be achieved only by surrendering natural rights to a supreme sovereign. Scarcity and human nature, by turns aggressive and deceitful, ensure that conflict is endemic under anarchy: that is to say, in any system lacking centralised authority. The end justifies the means. In time of war talk of ethics or law is beside the point. You do what you have to do to survive and to ensure the survival of the state.

Leaving this stereotypical realist to one side, it is easier to go first to the other extreme – the revolutionists, utopians, idealists or

liberals – before returning to the more nuanced central positions known variously as Grotian, international society, English School.

Hardly anyone calls him or herself utopian, because this implies a desire for the impossible. An exception is the contemporary pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty, who has advocated what he refers to as a utopian use of language to achieve political change. In the social world, he suggests, to speak of things being as you would wish them to be may be enough to make it so. Speech acts, such as promising, work very much like this; bullets don't. Some people do call themselves revolutionaries (seldom using the word that Martin Wight preferred: 'revolutionists'). Some are proud to be called idealists. On this side of the Atlantic, 'liberal' is not a term of abuse at all, and there is no need whatsoever for the neologism (or newly-coined word) 'liberalist'. So what's going on here is that those wishing to discredit certain versions of liberalism use the old trick of calling them by rude names and then describe them in a selective and biased way.

The stock idealist, like the stock Marxist, believes that social progress is an unstoppable if sometimes uncomfortable process driven by Providence, or class struggle or technological change.

This idealist also thinks that human nature can change, and that seemingly entrenched and natural institutions like warfare can be eliminated. Let's suppose he's a man. He may share with the realist a belief in the central importance of the state, differing only in thinking that the fundamental interests of states do not in fact conflict, and that it is only ignorance or the domination of the state by some narrow section of society that obscures this natural harmony of interests. The accountability of democratic governments to educated electorates, reinforced by a free press that voices public opinion, will expose the underlying harmony and bring an end to war. He may be more radical, recognizing the intransigence of the security dilemma, and take the view that the state is the problem and some form of world government the solution. This might be through a dispersed set of functional authorities, each responsible for its own sphere (trade, money, anti-trust, and so on) or else by the creation of a federal world state, ruling in accord with the principle of subsidiarity, by which each issue from security down to streetlamps (which of course provide security) is dealt with at the appropriate level of government.

Like the realist, the idealist may be interested in history, but almost certainly in a more restricted period of history. He is unlikely to be very interested in the workings of the ancient Greek or early-modern Italian systems of city states. He may well be interested in the evolution of the modern European state system and its global expansion. Often this will be stylised by talk of the Westphalian system, referring to the political system supposed to have been put in place by the treaties of Westphalia and Münster at the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648. The reason is that the idealist believes that history is progressive. The recent and local past is relevant to contemporary concerns because it is the history of how the system of states ceased to be viable and of the reasons why it can and must be radically changed. Whereas history for the realist is an unending sequence of repetitions, for the idealist it is a meaningful story with a happy ending. Revolution, whether peaceful or not, is possible.

Because this view of history is a modern one, and because those who hold it regard modernity as a distinct and unprecedented phase of human history, liberals (as I prefer to call them) do not tend to cast back to ancient times to support their position. Their starting point, more or less, is in the late seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries. As with the Thucydides, the Machiavelli and the Hobbes of the IR text-books, so with the Kant, the representation of complex ideas is often mere caricature. Kant, for example, is a favourite 'revolutionary' because, it is alleged, he was among those who proposed world government as a solution to inter-state warfare. But as we will see next week, his position was rather more complicated and less silly than this. At this point I should say only that I may be at odds with Brian Schmidt, whom I quoted earlier, in feeling that realism is clearly guilty of imposing a retrospective tradition on past thought, while idealism (or liberalism) is rather less so. This is a point I will develop over the next two weeks. This is because I can see a continuous liberal tradition from the late eighteenth century in intellectual and policy discourses, even in popular discourse. However I cannot detect the same order of continuity in realist thought, which seems best characterised as a twentieth-century reaction against hegemonic liberalism.

If I still hanker after a liberal tradition, in spite of Schmidt's warning, so too does Dan Deudney. In one of the best recent books on the history of international thought, Deudney has challenged the most common of the stereotypical intellectual histories that I have just

offered: the dichotomy of realism and liberalism. 'Part of Realism's appeal,' he writes, 'is its claim to embody a long line of the best Western thinking about political order and security-from-violence. But ... there are major weaknesses in Realism's construction of itself as a "tradition"' (*Bounding Power*, xii). Deudney instead presents a challenging reconstruction of Western international thought centring on 'relations among security-from-violence, material contexts, and types of government' (BP 3). In this little formula you may read hints of the central preoccupations of realism, Marxism and liberalism respectively; but for Deudney, the central concepts around which all else is organised are republicanism and federalism, and in his re-telling of past political theory the central ideas of realists and liberals, and those from whom they claim descent, come to be viewed as 'incomplete fragments' of a single republican tradition. The evident problem here is that Deudney opens himself up to Schmidt's accusation of forging a republicanism as an 'analytical retrospective construction'.

There are, in sum, many ways of skinning this particular cat, and the whole matter of the relevance of the past to students of contemporary international relations has been sketched here –

'caricatured' would be a better word – only to explain why the different schools of thought hark back to different philosophers and different periods of history when they want to legitimate their views, and why they interpret them in the often tendentious ways that they do. The substantive relevance of the past is a subject I will deal with in more detail in lecture 6. My central question there will be what is, for the student of IR, the usable or relevant past, and for what specific purposes. For the present, the central concern has been to sketch the three views, realist, revolutionist and rationalist, in crudest terms, before examining the general drift of European thought in which the various fragmentary writings that deal with the international are embedded. So it is enough for now, as we move on to examine the stereotypical rationalist and the artificially constructed rationalist tradition, to note that while the realist will opt for order in the last resort, the idealist will prefer justice, whatever the price. *Fiat justitia, pereat mundi.* (Let justice be done though the world perish.)

In the middle, then, somewhere between the rather down-in-the-mouth and fatalistic realist and the starry-eyed revolutionist, stands what Wight referred to as the 'rationalist'. And who could argue with a rationalist? The very name suggests reasonableness and

moderation. Others speak of the international society approach or the English School, meaning much the same thing.

At heart, this is the view that a system of states is not an out-and-out war of one against the others. All such systems have, as a matter of fact, been regulated not just by international law and international organization, which are relatively recent developments, but by diplomacy, the balance of power, great power management, and even war itself, which should not be regarded as a breakdown of order since it may function as a way of adjusting relative power relations to achieve a new equilibrium and even as a means of enforcing law in an anarchic world. Going back further we will find the exchange of gifts, including hostages and brides (often the same thing), and the principle of dynastic succession, to have been among the institutions common to earlier societies of states. Relations between states, then, need not be volatile or constantly violent. They are norm-governed.

Like the realist, an advocate of this middle way is likely to regard the state as central, but take a much more sanguine view than the realist of the possibilities of cooperation between states. He is unlikely to share the liberal or Marxist view of history as a

progressive force with a will of its own, but may believe that improvement is possible through changes in institutional design. Like the realist, he is likely to be interested in the history of all and any systems of states, but to be less confident of the contemporary relevance of those that relied on very different institutions and norms than those of his own day.

For Wight, the founding figure of this middle way was Grotius, the Latinised form by which the Dutch jurist Hugo de Groot (1583-1645) is best known.

Grotius, in the formulaic history of thought that I've been relating, is the figure credited with founding modern international law. This, for many members of the English School, has been the central institutional innovation of modern times. Others give the credit to Francisco de Vitoria. What's at issue here is the elimination of faith from philosophy and law. Vitoria paved the way for a secularised international law by recognizing the legal rights of non-Christian polities, but it was Grotius, so we are told, who completed the process by offering a positivist framework.

This needs explanation. What is the difference between legal naturalism and legal positivism? And that is as good a place as any to leave behind the unwitting founding fathers of the three traditions and turn to the second part of this lecture, outlining the general history of modern European thought. My aim here is to provide an over-arching narrative that will expose the tactical, selective and tendentious ways in which major philosophers have been read by those seeking to recruit them in support of the traditions or ideal-types within IR that I have been sketching for you.

In the course of this lightning tour, I will be paying particular attention to three troublesome terms – rationalist, idealist and positivist – which are used in several ways, and the use of which differs very much between philosophy and academic International Relations. In the third and concluding section of the lecture, which introduces the related seminar, I will examine some of the ambiguities of positivism in a little more detail.

Philosophers of the later European Middle Ages were almost without exception also theologians and churchmen. Perhaps the most distinguished and important of them all was St Thomas

Aquinas (c.1225–1274). The thought of St Thomas is always referred to as ‘Thomistic;’ the revival of that style of thought in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as ‘neo-Thomism’.

St. Thomas was the principal agent through whom Aristotelian thought, preserved in the libraries of Islam and Byzantium following the fall of the Western Empire, was reintroduced into the mainstream of thought in Western Europe. From our point of view the most important concepts in his vast writings are natural law, perfect community, and princely prudence. Aquinas imagines a world that is God’s creation and, for this reason, is characterised by law-like regularities discoverable by reason. As in Lord Rochester’s ‘Satyr on Mankind’, from which I read a fortnight ago, a distinction is drawn between the natural world, about which reason may develop knowledge through a deductive process of reasoning, and the world of human affairs, which is shot through with uncertainty because of the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and is therefore not amenable to strictly logical deductive or syllogistic reasoning. The problem, for you may not all be familiar with Western sacred texts, was that these first humans were allowed free run of God’s creation, forbidden only to taste the fruit of one tree, which provided knowledge of good and evil.

Leaping over a good deal of theological ground at a single bound, we may say that it is self-consciousness (that *knowledge* of good and evil which removes mankind from nature *stricto sensu*) that lies at the heart of mankind's sinful nature and means that society can only be investigated by the *quasi*-deductive methods of practical reason, taking heed of purpose, convention, deceit and other facets of human behaviour absent from the world of animal, vegetable and mineral.

The business of working from general principles of natural law to specific rules is tricky. How do we get from a rule of the general – even vacuous – form of ‘Do unto others as you would be done by,’ to something like ‘Make war only when a proper authority with right intention authorizes it, as a last resort, in response to a wrong of the sort to which the public use of lethal force is a proportionate response’. The proper authority is the sovereign, probably a prince, who has a particular status in this thought-world because he stands at the head of what we would call a sovereign state, but Aquinas would have thought of as a perfect political community: perfect not in the sense of without fault, but rather of ‘self-sufficient’ or ‘autonomous’ – a community in which it was possible to live the good life.

In exercising princely prudence – applying the broad principles of natural law to a specific situation – the prince would have regard to the three *sources* of natural law – the three ways in which it could be known. First, there were self-evident principles, too broad to be of much help. Second came the *jus gentium* or law of peoples. You could look to see what other polities generally did in such circumstances as this provided a kind of empirical indicator of natural law. Third, you could consult wise counsellors. So the decision to go to war would ideally be taken by a prince, in council, looking to law and custom to support his view that a wrong had been done of the sort that justified the use of lethal force, and having set aside all thoughts of gain or glory. But this ideal decision, as we have seen, was rooted in theories of psychology, politics and law that were in turn rooted in theology. So the question we are left with is why anyone today who is *not* a Christian should take the doctrine of the just war seriously. It is one to which we will return in lecture 8. At present my purpose is simply to give you a taste of the scholastic thought-world and the naturalist theory of law, which I will shortly contrast with the positivist view.

Scholastic thought in the manner of Aquinas continued to dominate Europe up to the sixteenth century. At this point it began to be seriously upset by a combination of events. First of all came a renewed interest in the classical world – literally a re-birth or *renaissance* – that went well beyond Aristotle and fostered the emergence of a less church-bound manner of thought, humanism, which made itself felt through new forms of expression, including the essay. Hard on the heels of humanism came geographical and cosmological discoveries that upset assumptions about the nature of God’s creation. Take only the discovery of the Americas. Since antiquity, geographers had recognized three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. For Christians these corresponded to the Trinity: God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost or Spirit. Columbus, far from discovering America, went to his grave believing he had reached Asia, because the existence of a *fourth* continent was literally in-credible, since it would suggest a world that was not made in the image of a Trinitarian God. (On this, see the Edmundo O’Gorman, *La invención de America* (1958).) Last in intellectual importance, after humanism and the discoveries, even though it was to divide Europe and be the cause of innumerable wars, came the Reformation, with its consequential splitting off of many Protestant proto-national churches from Rome.

The consequences of these developments are perhaps most clearly evident in the distance between Aquinas and two near contemporary sixteenth-century philosophers. René Descartes (1596-1650), the French mathematician and philosopher, rejected one of the cardinal principles underlying the scholastic view of the world: the notion of final cause. (Do not be confused, by the way, to find his thought referred to as 'Cartesian'. The adjective is derived not from the French but from the Latin form of Descartes' name: Renatus Cartesius.)

Part of the Thomistic understanding of the natural world had been that it was the means through which God's ultimately redemptive purpose was worked out. It was, in a word, providential. There was an end to which each and every thing tended. The idea of a cause that follows rather than precedes events is so alien to many of us as to seem nonsensical. Imagine then, that the oak tree is already in some sense 'there' in the acorn, and that you have as yet no science of genetics, and you will be somewhere near understanding the concept of a final cause.

Descartes rejected the idea of final causes or objectives (whether of God or man) as explanations of the natural world. He also argued for a dualism of mind and body. This left a natural world amenable to explanation by *mechanical* (or 'efficient') causes and opened the way to modern sciences employing methods of observation, measurement and experiment. Moreover, Descartes did much to help this process through his work as mathematician. He also left subsequent philosophers with the truly intransigent problem of how (immaterial) mind and (material) body interacted. One final aspect of Descartes' thought to be noted here is that he founded the *rationalist* tradition, which has nothing whatsoever to do with any use of the term 'rationalist' in contemporary IR literature, where we have seen it used as a synonym for the international society, English School or Grotian approach, and where – to make matters worse – it now more often refers to the application of rational choice theories to the study of politics or, more broadly, to a positivist, or what I have been calling a 'theoretic' method. (See, from just this one example, the mess that the undisciplined discipline of IR has gotten into!)

What philosophers mean when they describe Descartes as a rationalist is that he found the surest ground of knowledge in an awareness of himself as a thinking and doubting subject rather than in the evidence of the senses, which could too easily be deceived. *Cogito ergo sum*. 'I think therefore I am.' I referred last week to empiricism: the view that knowledge derived from sensory experience and, in the more extreme forms, that there is no knowledge prior to experience. Empiricism developed in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in Britain most of all, and it developed in opposition to Cartesian rationalism.

Thomas Hobbes drove further nails into the coffin of scholasticism by his materialism and his positivism. Much of his *Leviathan* (1651) is taken up with an attack on what Hobbes refers to as incorporeal substances. This would include angels, spirits and the like. Hobbes will have none of it. His world is constituted by bodies, objects, material, stuff. Again, this leads to an emphasis on mechanical or efficient causes, rather than final causes. And when it came to natural law, Hobbes was perfectly willing to admit that it existed and that we were bound by it. His problem was that the lack of any efficient enforcement mechanism. So he left natural law stranded,

as it were, and privileged positive law, that is to say the commands of sovereigns, backed by force.

But in standard IR texts Descartes is not mentioned, while Hobbes is little more than a cipher for the idea that there will be a constant condition of hostility between states under anarchy, an idea that depends perilously on the analogy between natural individuals living in a pre-political – even pre-social – condition, and far-from-natural states under conditions of anarchy. The real importance of these two philosophers to the history of thought in general, and therefore also to our understanding of international relations, lies in their demolition of scholasticism, their philosophical underpinning of modern science, and their treatment of materiality and causation. In particular, the positivist approach to law adopted by Hobbes set the scene for John Austin's (1790-1859) fully-fledged command theory of law, according to which international law is not law at all, for lack of a sovereign and effective sanctions. Hobbes did not destroy legal naturalism, but he certainly put it on the back foot and forced major revisions, including attempts at secularisation. And in setting legal naturalism and legal positivism against one another he also paved the way for the separation of

law and morality. For a legal naturalist, much legislation (aside from such conventional matters as which side of the road to drive on) consists in the discovery and codification of morality. But if you think law is simply a set of commands, then it makes no sense to ask whether or not a law is justified, and to do so is to confuse morality and the law.

Something must be said at this point about the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. A great deal of recent writing in International Relations, and in social scientific writing more generally, has been inclined to scoff at a simplistic version of the Enlightenment, which equates it with liberalism and attributes to it an excessive faith in rationality and progress. But the Enlightenment was more complicated than this. Less a movement in philosophy (like rationalism) than a change in the salience of free thought and the predominant style of expression within European culture (like humanism) the Enlightenment was for just this reason characterized by great internal variation of opinion. The Reformation of the sixteenth century had been followed by a long period of warfare in Europe, sometimes between and sometimes within states. At a time before nationalism, when many European states were best termed 'composite monarchies' – clusters of

historically distinct lordships and jurisdictions combined and re-combined according to the vagaries of dynastic marriage and succession – wars were fought between forces comprising many nationalities, some bound by feudal links to lords who became, in time of war, their officers, others belonging to mercenary bands, still others engaging in war for sport as much as material gain. The turmoil of religious and civil warfare had, toward the end of the seventeenth century, more or less burnt itself out. This did not bring an end to war in Europe, but it transformed its character for a century into, at best, a more orderly and state-regulated institution.

The philosophical relevance of this change of mood was that many of the developments that had been brewing over the past two hundred years could now be disseminated throughout an extensive European aristocracy and a growing middle class or bourgeoisie. In the sixteenth century science had been a hazardous business, as Galileo found out. To this day, many scientists who are Christians still agonise about the implications of their work for religious faith. By the eighteenth century a more relaxed atmosphere allowed for the spread of new ideas, while the rise of liberal ideas brought a solution for the Christian scientist, as religious faith began to be relegated to the private sphere while

science became very clearly a form of the public and rational discourse. The authority of the church was slipping. Indeed, the central metaphor of darkness and light implied in the term 'Enlightenment' (though rather less in its French and German cognates, '*éclaircissement*' and '*Erklärung*.') evoked a contrast between authority and reason. Reason enlightened or illuminated. Reason *clarified*. But reason is often unkind to itself, as scrutiny spills over into scepticism, solipsism or relativism. So at the very heart of the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century France were men, such as Voltaire or Diderot, who were anything but starry-eyed utopians.

Voltaire (1694-1778) was among the most vigorous critics of Roman Catholic dogmatism and is generally named among those who inspired the American and French revolutions. Yet, in *Candide*, he offered a dystopic satire – the opposite of a utopia – on the solution to the problem of evil that had been offered earlier in the century by Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716). Leibniz had anticipated secular liberal notions of Providence and Progress, though still within a theological context. God, he argued, permitted only so much evil in the world as was consistent with the exercise of free will and the development of virtues such as courage and

temperance. Any less evil, and God's scheme could not be achieved. All was for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Here, for sure, was utopianism, and Voltaire was on to it like a cat after a mouse. Meanwhile, Denis Diderot (1713-1784), one of the editors of the *Encyclopedia*, in which the major ideas of the Enlightenment found expression from 1750 onwards, proved to be a deeply subversive thinker, offering disruptions of narrative coherence and authorial voice in short fictions like 'This is not a story' or 'Jacques and his Master'.

How very different from these subtle French thinkers were the sturdy British empiricists of the later eighteenth century, willing to regard as knowledge nothing that had not been perceived by the senses. Sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste were our only means of knowing anything about the world.

The greatness of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) lay in his grand attempt to reconcile and systematize the rationalist and empiricist thought of the two preceding centuries. Knowledge of the world derived from our sensory impressions, but could only be organised, becoming knowledge rather than mere sensation, by use of notions of time and space and the so-called categories:

features which anything must have if it is to be an object of human sensory experience. So knowledge arises through the relationship between the way our minds and bodies work, and must work, and the sensory impressions we receive. But this does not allow us direct knowledge of things-in-themselves; only indirect knowledge based on how things appear to us. Our world consists in phenomena necessarily expressed in time-space because that is the way we tick. But beyond phenomena lie things-in-themselves or noumena to which we have no access.

Making a huge and not entirely justified leap from Kant's metaphysics to his moral and aesthetic philosophy, I hazard the suggestion that ideals – God, the good, beauty – are analogous to those 'things-in-themselves,' or noumena, which we know must be there, by a transcendental deduction, even though we cannot perceive them directly, because without them no sense could be made of the world and no rational action possible within it.

With this grand reconciliation of rationalism and empiricism Kant fuelled a century of grand systemic philosophy while also developing or exemplifying some of the foundations of Romanticism and liberalism: a taste for balance or tension, a

reaching toward the sublime or ideal, a regard for law, an insistence on universalism: all these things may be found in Kant, and many philosophers of the nineteenth century conceived their task to be the completion of his work. Max Müller (1823-1900), for example, regarded his study of language as a fourth critique, to add to Kant's three. But Wilhelm Dilthey was perhaps the most important of Kant's followers (as distinct from those, like Hegel and Marx, who followed Kant without being followers!). For it is primarily to Dilthey that we owe the modern formulation of the distinction made by Aristotle and Aquinas between theoretic and practical reason. The natural sciences, Dilthey argued, existed to detect law-like relationships in the world and explain them. The human sciences aspired to *understand* the life-world rather than to *explain* it. It is a distinction, in German between *Erklärung* and *Verstehen*, which forms the title of one of the best modern works on IR theory, Martin Hollis and Steve Smith's 1990 *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*.

From our point of view, the importance of Kant is twofold. I will argue next week that a continuous self-constituted liberal tradition of thought about the international is indeed in place by the late eighteenth century, and Kant an important figure within it. But the

importance of his critical philosophy *as a whole* for international relations is that it provides a model of systemic and public reasoning that foreshadows liberal attempts at constitution-making. What Muller, Dilthey and other Romantics added, following the tremendous roller-coaster of revolution and war between 1789 and 1815, was a nostalgic desire to embed abstract philosophy in history and, increasingly, in an empirical or factual rather than a conjectural or imaginary history. This may be seen as analogous to the restorations of monarchs and church that sought to rediscover and reinstate the irretrievably lost legitimacy of the old regime. It is no coincidence that the early nineteenth century also saw the revival of Thomism within the Catholic Church after two hundred years in which the best efforts of Catholic theologians had been directed to battling with challenges to faith from Descartes, Hobbes, and numerous other modern philosophers.

I will argue next week that liberalism, in the angophone world, was the dominant political tradition of the nineteenth century and that by the end of the century it was hegemonic in the wider world of European settlement. But it was, of course, very far from being the only strand of thought, nor was neo-Thomism and a revived Catholic Church its only rival. Alongside the magnificent

rationalities of Kant or the neo-Thomists ran two powerful extrapolations of a Romantic tradition not yet fully developed in Kant. The better-known line runs through Hegelian idealism, with its view of history as a dialectical process, advancing through thesis, opposing antithesis and their reconciliation in a synthesis that then forms the thesis in a further instantiation. Dissatisfied with Kant's compromise between our thinking nature or consciousness and the world of experience, Hegel had opted for the former as the ontological basis of his entire system. The dialectic then became the means by which spirit, emerging from the interplay of ideas and nature, is realised in human history. From this emerge two vital political considerations: the inexorability of history and the central role within it of nations. But in its adulation of the nation and of Napoleon, Hegelian idealism is a million miles away from Anglo-American liberalism and, hence, from IR's 'idealism'.

Marx, reacting against Hegel, impaled himself on the *materialist* horn of Kant's dilemma, but he adopted the dialectic from Hegel and shared the great idealist's insistence on a progressive history. For Marx, the dialectic provided a way of formalizing the drama of class struggle already observed by Anglophone liberals and theorised in an a-historical manner in David Ricardo's (1772-1823)

classical economics. In line of descent from Marx stands a whole thought-world that includes Lenin and the architects of the Russian revolution, the Frankfurt School and the development of critical theory through to Habermas (1929–) and, in 1960s Chile and Brazil, the *dependentistas* whose ideas constitute a theory – better an ideology – of international relations, though they are seldom referred to in the text-books.

This account would be fundamentally flawed if it did not make some mention, however inadequate, of one further pathway from the Enlightenment toward the present. We have already glanced at neo-Kantianism and Dilthey's powerful and nicely balanced distinction between explanation and understanding. We have noted the revival of Thomism, as the Catholic Church sought to undo the damage of the French revolution by privileging reason over faith. We have briefly examined the idealist and materialist strands of German thought that would fuel nationalism and revolutionary socialism respectively, while casting a sideways glance at the emergence of classical economics, the ideology of political liberalism. What we have missed is the irrationalist, anti-rationalist or radically individualist element in Romanticism that

leads by a roundabout route through Nietzsche to existentialism and post-structuralism.

Søren Kierkegaard, an eccentric Dane, responded with revulsion to Kant's evident desire for compromise: for having his cake and eating it. Against *both* cake today *and* cake tomorrow, which he regarded as impossible, he posed the need for hard choices. Not 'both-and' but 'Either-Or' (the title of one of his leading works). Rejecting formal systems and public practices of religion he opted firmly for cake tomorrow: a deeply thoughtful and considered relationship with God, quite at odds with the rationality of neo-Thomism or the grand structures of German metaphysics. From Kierkegaard the path lies open (though he would never have taken it!) to the radical rejection of systems and emphasis on individual predicament and choice that were to characterise the thought and styles of Friedrich Nietzsche at the end of the nineteenth century, the French existentialists of the mid-twentieth century, and their successors, the post-structuralist generation who provided the philosophical backing track to the events of 1968.

In sum: as with Hobbes, so with Kant, the significance of past thinkers is twofold. Isolated writings relating directly to international relations may be taken out of context and deployed in support of stock positions – realist, rationalist or revolutionist – but when they are viewed as a whole within the sweep of Western intellectual history, the significance of these thinkers is often of a quite different order.

I am a long way from the present day. A full account of western thought would pay due heed to the works of Darwin and Freud who, together with Nietzsche, made a very good start on picking apart the autonomous rational thinking subject who had established direct relations with God when Protestantism first attacked the mediating role of the Catholic priesthood in the sixteenth century and who was later to be placed at the core of philosophy and science by Descartes. If God was dead by the end of the nineteenth century, so too was man, as conceived of by eighteenth and nineteenth century liberals. So the twentieth century is best thought of as the era of the headless chicken which, famously, keeps on running seeming not to know that it's dead.

The farmyard has lately been full of them, these headless chickens. But I have time, before embarking on a transition to the third of today's topics, to trace the path of only one of them from the nineteenth into the twentieth century, and that is positivism.

We first encountered positivism as a theory of law-as-command, inchoate in Hobbes and fully-fledged in Austin's nineteenth-century publications. Contemporaneous with Austin's legal positivism, a positivist movement with an almost religious character arose in France, quickly spreading to other parts of the world, including most notably Brazil, Mexico and Poland. This form of positivism was systematized by Auguste Comte (1798-1857) in a series of publications from 1822 to his death in 1857. Comte embraced an extreme version of empiricism, entirely eschewing metaphysics. In what was perhaps the draft of modern sociology of knowledge, he argued that Europe had passed through its theological and metaphysical stages and was now entering its positive stage, in which science and technology, based entirely on observation and explanation of the world, would provide the means to social progress. It will be evident that Comte represented the antithesis of German Romanticism of the same era. It is hard to imagine a conversation between Comte and Kierkegaard.

Later, in Vienna during the early years of the twentieth century, positivism was adopted by a group of philosophers tired of the excesses of speculative philosophy and the seeming nihilism of Nietzsche. Metaphysics was literally nonsensical. Only those propositions were meaningful that corresponded to facts about the world. This is how 'positivism' acquired the sense in which is often used in IR theory these days, of extreme empiricism and of explaining the world from the outside by observation of behaviour. But there is something rather quaint about this, for Ludwig Wittgenstein, the Viennese philosopher who spent his later years Cambridge, after attempting a thorough exposition of this correspondence theory of language in his *Tractatus* (1921/22), entirely rejected positivism and developed a style of philosophy much more in the *Verstehen* or 'understanding' tradition of Dilthey. In short (and the longer version is in my book on Carr) positivism seemed a busted flush to many by the 1940s and 50s, and it was therefore something of surprise when it took off, under the name behaviouralism, in North American political science and IR during the 1960s.

This brings me neatly to the question, discussed in one of the early seminars, of whether IR is or should be a science. I need not say a great deal. You have plenty to read. Ken Waltz thinks it is a science, but he's no positivist, in spite of what many of his critics say. He is entirely comfortable with unobservable theoretical terms in a way no true positivist could be. John Gaddis reminds us that physics is not the only natural science nor economics the sole social science. But is he perhaps merely teasing the positivists? Is his definition of science too broad to be useful? John Vasquez surely *is* a positivist, as also Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. Martin Hollis and Steve Smith refer a good deal to Max Weber (1864-1920) as they exercise the delicate balance between an account of society from within (understanding) and outside (explanation). Roland Bleiker and James Der Derian, respectively, provide a breath of Nietzschean nihilism and contemporary French thought.

What I hope you will be able to see, as you read for that class, is that a debate conducted between scholars primarily concerned with contemporary international relations has echoes in it of abiding themes in Western thought that have very little to do with contemporary international relations. Behind this restricted contemporary debate about how to study international relations

stand grand oppositions between theoretic and practical reason, rival views and uses of history not all of which I have even begun to explain (teleological, conjectural, universal, synchronic, diachronic, and so forth), conflicts between law-as-discovery and law-as-command and between reason and faith.

I want to leave you with one thought, which derives from my insistence that we are engaging in International Studies, not International Politics or International Relations (though of course I am entirely relaxed about referring to our object of study as international relations or world politics). It is almost impossible to get a grip on past thought about this field without some systematic arrangement or taxonomy of past thought. It is hard to resist, when engaging in this task, those fragments of the works of past thinkers that refer explicitly to war, trade or diplomacy. But cherry-picking of this sort too easily serves merely to shore up ephemeral positions in current debates, while missing the extent to which a general acquaintance with Western thought can arm a reader (and a decision-maker) against naïve acceptance of the latest intellectual fads.

International Studies rejects IR Theory but insists on a place for philosophy and the history of thought in the theatre. When we get into the guts of the subject, then, and are wielding our scalpels on some local part of the body politic, let's keep in mind that we are dealing with part of an entire body, the integrity of which deserves respect, and that we are surgeons, not pathologists.

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