

International Relations Theory and Philosophy

Interpretive dialogues

Edited by

Cerwyn Moore and Chris Farrands



Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics

International Relations Theory and Philosophy

This book discusses the contribution of philosophers, critics and thinkers whose ideas have only recently begun to permeate international relations theory. Exploring a wide range of theorists in this unique, edited collection, the authors highlight the capacity of philosophy and political theory to reinvigorate the discipline of International Relations (IR).

Critical engagement with issues of international politics has often necessitated escaping from the narrow confines of the discipline of IR traditionally defined. This book illustrates the wealth of theorists who can help us to better appreciate underlying issues and behaviour in international politics. Covering topics such as power, sovereignty, ethics, cosmopolitanism, post-colonialism and post-structuralism, individual theorists discussed in the volume include:

- Nietzsche, Bakhtin, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer, Patočka, Gramsci and Levinas;
- Arendt, Derrida, Habermas, Deleuze, Said and Sontag.

Making an important contribution to discussions about how to study the complexities of international politics, this book will be of interest to students and researchers of international relations, politics, sociology, philosophy and political theory.

Cerwyn Moore is Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Birmingham, UK. **Chris Farrands** is Lecturer in International Relations at Nottingham Trent University, UK.

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1 Introduction

On philosophical traditions and hermeneutic global politics

Cerwyn Moore and Chris Farrands

The academic study of international relations – International Relations (IR) – captures a drama of debate, a vital conversation, as Professor C.A.W. Manning (1962) described it, perhaps with the most important consequences if those involved misunderstand each other. Sixty years after he wrote these ideas, when much of the theory that has been discussed in the field in the meantime has been forgotten, that idea that knowledge can be produced by a conversation remains alive and kicking. The context has changed, and Manning would not recognise some of the arguments. The conversation is at least as much between individuals and social groups as between states. But as one of the originators of the academic study of IR, who insisted first of all on the importance of a philosophical understanding of the subject, Manning would certainly recognise the importance of the motives behind this collection of essays. The rationale for this book derives first of all from a desire to integrate the diverse set of ideas that are broadly concerned with dialogue, with dialogic understanding, with ‘interpretive’ theory and methods in the discipline of academic IR. It aims at the same time to explore the richness of continental philosophy as a tradition of understanding that can help scholars in IR make sense of the drama unfolding before them. Many contemporary discussions in IR neglect that tradition; others may take it in a rather simpler or more formulaic way than it deserves. Recent attempts have been made to highlight the trans-disciplinary nature of the discipline of International Relations in many studies (including many discussed in this volume), drawing extensively on social studies, literature, aesthetics and gender studies as well as on philosophy. But one unfortunate by-product of this synthesising exercise has perhaps been the fragmentation and reintegration of ‘post’ theories (i.e. postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-development theory, post-feminism and so on), creating a discipline by proxy, a kind of new icon that in turn demands deconstruction. It is also significant that the discipline has gone through a number of ‘great debates’ and, whilst these have provided important contributions for the study of war and peace, the further transformation of the international system in the last twenty years has once again led to the need for adaptations in IR, both as a practical endeavour and as a critically thought through body of theoretical debate. This book is a timely re-evaluation of important elements in ‘post’ thinking as well as an exploration of how fruitful specific engagements with philosophy can be for IR.

From this rationale, the book will identify a set of questions concerned with the discipline. The primary aim, then, will be to further dialogue by introducing or building upon the work of a number of philosophers, critics and writers, whose ideas have only recently begun to permeate British, European and American IR theory more deeply. Reflecting on the current debate (among the contributors as well as the two editors), it became obvious that the ideas drawn from this series of philosophers have not, as yet, been explored together in an edited collection. Still further, a survey of the leading theoretical literature in some of the most important American, British and European journals reveals that contributions drawing on powerful influences such as Bakhtin and Deleuze, Gramsci and Gadamer, Arendt and Levinas (amongst others) are only now being considered in depth by those who research and study IR, political science and political theory. Often, scholars, understanding the inadequacy of an IR narrowly defined within traditional boundaries, recognise the importance of drawing fully on the political theory tradition which, as writers from Ashley (1981, 1984) and Walker (1993) to Connolly (2005) and Butler (2006) demonstrate, provides a more solid foundation for critical reflection on the global. In a small way, we hope the book makes a contribution to debates that draw on these writers and extend the capacity of IR to engage with philosophy and political theory. It is exactly the right moment to open the question of their value in IR. If the collection also stimulates further disagreement, we shall not be sorry, although we hope it would be constructive.

The contributors themselves are in many cases involved in contemporary debates about the shape and form of International Relations. The opportunity to involve this selection of contributors is one of the strengths of the book. The choice of topics and themes is in part a result of the availability of some outstanding scholars who are already engaged in these debates. The approach is to explore questions of epistemology, ontology and methodology through interpretive dialogues. In so doing, it is intended that the book will establish a hermeneutic intervention, born of dialogue, as a way to further debate beyond the current 'post' positivist character of IR. Mostly, the contributions here do not intend to defend the broad approach taken; instead, they seek to explore much more detailed methodological and philosophical issues that arise with respect to their chosen topic. In short, the content and theoretical scope of the book is its justification. It is also the case that much of the phenomenological tradition to which Heidegger and Gadamer contributed so much, and most of its other leading figures, share a vision of knowledge generated by dialogic exchange—dialogue, as Farrands points out in his chapter on Gadamer here, serves not only as a procedure but also as a form of epistemological check on what is claimed. Dialogue is explicitly important in the work of Arendt, Derrida, Bakhtin; it is even more important, absolutely the whole point of the discussion, in Habermas, Gadamer and Levinas. But whether or not particular philosophers argue for a dialogic conception of knowledge, the exploration of dialogue around their work is a principle concern of all the contributors to this volume.

The book is thus designed to bring together recent reflections on the development of a range of interpretive approaches to the study of international relations.

The collection presents a platform for dialogue between theorists and researchers engaged in more specific area studies, geopolitical studies, political theory or historical accounts of international politics. Finally, therefore, the book draws on a number of philosophical writers and presents a variety of theoretical ideas related, primarily, to the interpretive study of IR, whose work has sometimes been touched upon, but not fully contextualised by the dominant modes *both* of positivistic and post-positivist thought. Some branches of critical or radical thought have fetishised or exoticised particular writers, with an added currency being given to those who align themselves with, for instance, the body of work by this scholar or that theorist without fully contextualising the value or importance of other writers in the field. Our aim is to open the door more widely to some of those writers.

This may be thought to reify traditions or ‘schools’ of thought as dominant hegemonies with very concrete fixed boundaries within the discipline. The editors and contributors to this volume have very much sought to avoid this, and although the concept of ‘tradition’ is relevant to interpretive thought as a starting point for identifying relations between concepts and influence in theory, the contributions to this collection never slip into the kind of objectification of specific traditions that the writing of R.G. Collingwood or Michael Oakeshott would seem to support. To recognise that there is a sustained debate between Gramsci and the successors of the Frankfurt School, or between Heidegger and Gadamer on the one hand and Derrida and Deleuze on the other, does not require an ontology that freezes the idea of tradition uncritically.

There are many established authors who have explored, and who continue to explore, traditions within what is often labelled post-structuralism around very specific approaches and methods. The obvious examples in IR are writers drawing on the work of Foucault and on structural linguistics and discourse analysis. Our contribution does not reject Foucauldian scholarship in IR out of hand. But there is a tendency to identify post-structural research in IR primarily with Foucault, and often with specific aspects of Foucault’s work. No philosophic influence in IR better illustrates the idea of liquid modernity that Bauman has suggested, for Foucault was extraordinarily diverse in his work, and became one of the most potent critics of some of his earlier work towards the end of his life. Foucault’s contribution to IR has been valuable, but his work is perhaps too easily simplified or rendered down to a few conceptions – genealogy, governmentality, biopower, discourse, power/knowledge – which do not do justice to the sophistication of his ideas and the caution with which he expressed them. Foucault himself came to doubt the ways in which his ideas could become a formula, as the elderly Marx famously stormed out of a First International meeting in London crying ‘If that is what you call marxism, then I am not a marxist!’ Other interventions linked to the linguistic turn, to aesthetic understanding, to uses of narrative, to meetings of mind between critical theory and phenomenology, to different ways of reading the relation between theory and practice and to different ways of disrupting established approaches (including some of those derived from Foucault) have been marginalised because of the

exclusivity afforded to one particular theorisation of radical IR. Different contributors have different views of the value of Foucauldian IR, but all agree on the value of refreshing the resources of contemporary critical IR by looking also elsewhere. This is also valuable because there has always been much dialogue between the branches of philosophy represented here, much of which is rarely acknowledged in International Relations per se. Our purpose is, therefore, to open the doors of IR to this broader agenda of debate, not to reject anything.

This debate has been further stimulated by work by Roland Bleiker and Stephen Chan, and by others who do not appear in this volume, to develop approaches that have come to be labelled the 'aesthetic turn', a strategic move to think critically about aesthetics as a form of knowledge as well as an attention to art objects of different kinds as focus points for the interrogation of ethical and critical thinking about IR very broadly defined. Note that it is an explicit purpose of much of this discussion to move away from the conventional boundaries of 'what counts' as IR. And this has attracted a diversity of contributions –from Christine Sylvester (1999), Peter Mandaville (2003), Cynthia Weber (2006) and others as well as some of the contributors here. The interest generated by the aesthetic turn has done much to reinvigorate debate about exactly what research in the discipline of IR should focus upon, what its parameters are and how it can draw on debates in continental philosophy associated with hermeneutics. Similarly narrative interventions, particularly those that ably highlight how history can be employed by scholars of world politics, have provided a rich terrain for scholars at the cutting edge of the discipline, although much of this work has yet to filter into the mainstream. In both cases, however, it is important to recognise the philosophical traditions associated with these interventions, perhaps highlighting the significance of largely neglected philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur, in IR. His work is touched upon in a number of places throughout this collection, given the importance of his contribution to theories of narrative and hermeneutics. Equally it is important to recognise that continental philosophy itself also filtered eastwards, impacting on the development of social theory and aesthetics in Russia, for example.

In all this, our concern has been to look at work in the phenomenological tradition, but also that which has emerged from critical theory (taking that loose phrase to embrace both Frankfurt School and Gramscian thought). The editors (but not necessarily the contributors) share a common view of the relations between these two bodies of thought. That is that, although there are some very clear differences between them, there have also always been overlaps. From the work of Alfred Schutz (1967) in 1930 to the critical response to the Holocaust and the *evenements* of 1968, critical theorists and postmodernists, existentialists and those drawn to more activist debates on environment, feminism, sexuality and alternative visions of global order have drawn extensively on the conversation between the two bodies of ideas. These studies therefore represent a stage in the conversation between the postmodern arguments drawn from phenomenology and the 'late modernity' of critical theory, although each of the authors

has their own way through that discussion, and we have not sought to direct them in how they might take it forward.

We have to apologise for the omission of some writers we would have liked to include. Pragmatic reasons affect this too: Routledge, our publishers, have generously supported this project from the start, but they were never going to allow us an unlimited number of pages. Apart from Ricoeur, who gets a number of mentions in these chapters, we might easily have included a number of other writers. We did not include Pierre Bourdieu, although his influence reaches across all the humanities, or Giorgio Agamben, whose work is becoming a significant influence, although in a longer edition we would have counted both 'in'. Edith Stein's (1997) humanistic phenomenology would have made a compelling accompaniment to her contemporary, Arendt, offered an important critique of Heidegger and forming an interesting contrast to the parallel work of Patočka, but she too is missing. Karl Jaspers, Husserl, Bachelard and Sartre all have claims on our attention – even if they are all relatively unfashionable now – but the impact of their work is felt in this volume through their influence on others. There are many more discussions of Spivak, Rorty and Chomsky's influence in IR, and for that reason they are not represented here, but we would have certainly included them with good will if we had had more space. We offer some excuse for not including chapters on the illuminating work of Judith Butler (2006) or the ethical achievement of Martha Nussbaum (2007) in going well beyond Rawlsian liberalism in her recent work – both are still writing, and have extended their work directly into the field of IR in their important recent writing; we would encourage readers to follow this up for themselves. At the margins of these debates, Guy Debord, Bruno Latour, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan, a range of critical realist scholars and others might suggest themselves as candidates for inclusion, but they are too marginal to phenomenology and the critical tradition to earn inclusion here, even though there are plenty of other good reasons to study them. Finally, some writers – Alain Badiou (2002) is the most obvious example – have enjoyed a recent fame that may yet justify their consideration in a collection such as this in the future, but we would withhold judgment right now on their possible impact on IR. And of course, as we have noted, there is not a chapter on Foucault in the collection, although his work does filter through many of the chapters. If we have not included writers you would prefer, we can only point to limited resources and encourage the reader to engage as fully as possible with the very wide range of contributions we have been able to include.

It has been a pleasure to put this volume together. Contributors produced their work more or less to time and to a very high standard, but all the work in this edition has been read, often in multiple versions, and all has gone through several drafts. The editors thank the contributors for their patience, and the contributors, some perhaps through gritted teeth, thank the editors. Drafts of some of the papers have been circulated more widely, but all the papers have been read by both editors and often by other contributors. As a result, we have learned a lot, and we hope we have produced a much higher quality volume. The

collection has also been refereed by Routledge. This is not a question of something as mundane as 'quality control'. It is also an attempt to practise what the volume preaches in terms of the development of understanding through collective exchange of ideas and through shared critical endeavour. That said, at the moment of putting the collection together in its final form, the editors are aware of the considerable work that all the contributors have done to make this a compelling debate that is more than the sum of its parts because many of the different chapters speak effectively to each other.

Structure of the collection

The edited collection brings together experts in International Relations in order to offer an innovative contribution to the contemporary theoretical debates in IR by presenting and exploring ideas at the cutting edge of the discipline. Indeed, whilst other single-authored texts and edited collections aim to tackle related issues, concerned with 'post' international relations – post-Cold War, post-industrial, post-positivist, post-development, post-feminist and so on – this book brings together a set of dialogic contributions in order to frame the ongoing theoretical 'interpretive debate'. In this way, the collection is concerned not only with the hermeneutics, philosophical traditions and interpretive debates but, rather, it uses this set of dialogues to introduce further critical avenues of theoretical and methodological interest beyond post-positivism. At the same time, the book is not intended to be a comprehensive introduction to philosophical traditions in IR. Instead, it offers a reading of the discipline of IR and the influence of philosophical traditions, which, although they have been recognised in a number of journal articles, have, as yet, been missing from the public debates in IR.

Therefore contemporary theoretical approaches to the discipline of IR, including both disjunctures and commonalities, in interpretive International Relations furthers the disciplinary framework offering a coherent, structured and innovative collection of ideas. In this sense, therefore, the book is neither conclusive nor all encompassing; it is interpretation in process and has an internal logic based on the contingencies of interpretations. In particular, whilst the work of Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Emanuel Levinas, Antonio Gramsci or Ludwig Wittgenstein are employed by critical realists, neo-Gramscians, post-structuralists, critical theorists and social constructivists, the application of their particular theoretical ideas to IR has not been successfully presented in an edited collection widely available in English. At the same time, the collection recognises how an ongoing dialogue with British, European and American scholars, draws on contributions from essayists, cultural critics, literary theorists and contemporary sociologists such as Susan Sontag, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Jan Patočka or Gilles Deleuze.

Likewise, the epistemological and ontological debates across these philosophical and theoretical subfields of IR are currently breaking down disciplinary barriers. This collection offers an opportunity to reimagine and reread the state of

the discipline, and indeed to critique the very notion of 'discipline' here, taking hermeneutics as a point of departure, and further assessing interdisciplinary dialogues, in world literature, poetry, stories, art, texts and narratives. Therefore, *Interpretive Dialogues* also makes an original and convincing case for further trans-disciplinary and interdisciplinary dialogues, deriving primarily from comingling European philosophical debates. Just as the debate between critical theory and phenomenology has tended to break down, so too has the conventional distinction between anglo-saxon and 'continental' philosophies recently collapsed. Even if many textbooks tend to reinforce the older stereotypes of each, there has been a change in the way philosophy understands itself, which IR can do well to recognise. The collection will explore the influence of this diverse set of thinkers in a coherent way in order to highlight a contemporary interpretive framework, which is needed to contextualise derivations, transformations and acquaintances stemming from the application of interpretive philosophical ideas to the study of IR. In doing so, the collection will put forward readings of IR in order to make a broad spectrum of work available for debate and discussion, and indicate directions for future research and study. Similarly, the book will put often marginalised philosophical ideas into wider circulation so the importance of hermeneutics can be assessed, measured and applied.

Finally, to understand the evolution of a discipline it is necessary to identify questions posed through dialogues that have helped to cultivate debate and subsequently transform International Relations theory. The desire to move disciplinary approaches beyond either the great debates or beyond post-positivism provided a starting point for this collection. In essence, we have endeavoured to build and illustrate the claim that recent efforts of 'interpretive' theorists, and the debates around their work, have not only reintroduced a number of diverse methodological ideas, philosophical traditions and theoretical issues in IR. They have reimagined the framework of the discipline of International Relations. Indeed, the centrality of contemporary dialogues allows this edited collection to present itself as a stage in this disciplinary movement that can also act as a guide for future research. In so doing, the framework of the book also has an internal logic and coherence based on interpretive dialogues; in this way, the structure of the collection represents a series of forays into the material, each chapter being a separate expedition, rather than a one-way linear narrative. Thus the book should be read as a series of explorations of the main themes, albeit a series that is organised in a logical way rather than a book with a linear narrative or straightforward 'beginning-middle-end' format. Above all, the authors recognise that they are contributing to a stage in a debate rather than offering any kind of final destination, but we trust that the reader will find the stage illuminating and useful for whatever interests they bring to it themselves.

2 Nietzsche's style

On language, knowledge and power in international relations

Roland Bleiker and Mark Chou

Introduction

Style matters.¹ Certainly it mattered to Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), the German philosopher whose style has gone on to influence scholarly and public debates like few others. Leading scholars in all disciplines – such as the historical theorist Michel Foucault, the existentialist writer Albert Camus and feminist scholar Judith Butler – have all in some way been influenced by Nietzsche's work. The task of outlining the relevance of his philosophy to the study of contemporary international relations, therefore, is daunting to say the least. This task is rendered even more difficult by the fact that Nietzsche is also one of the most controversial of philosophers. His work has been employed both by the Nazis to justify racial supremacy and by those seeking to identify and oppose systems of domination. He has been widely dismissed as a misogynist but, at the same time, has strongly influenced numerous feminist thinkers (see Kofman 1972; Patton 1993).

We do not pretend to explain all these contradictions. Nor do we try to provide a comprehensive overview of Nietzsche's political philosophy (see Ansell-Pearson 1994). Our contribution is more modest and specific. Here, we highlight that one of the most important lessons to be learnt from Nietzsche lies less in what he said than in how he said it. Expressed in other words, the significance of Nietzsche is not always located within the particular political views he held, but in how he approached more fundamental questions of language, knowledge and power; questions that lie at the heart of politics. The real danger, for Nietzsche, is 'that everything depends upon the *content of the concept*' (cited in Pothen 2002: 23). Taking Nietzsche seriously is to take him both at his word and for his words. In prioritizing form over substance – or, rather, by acknowledging that form *is* substance – we follow many prominent commentators, from Thomas Mann to Giorgio Colli, who argued that to take Nietzsche literally is to be lost, for 'he said everything, and the opposite of everything' (cited in Gerhardt 1988: 236).

Nietzsche's engagement with language and writing styles goes to the heart of politics. Languages, in his view, are sets of metaphors that allow us to make sense of the world that surrounds us. But the process of creating meaning is as much guided by human conventions as it is by the objects and phenomena we are trying to understand. This is not to say that there are no facts or political real-

ities. The key, for Nietzsche, is to recognize that when we say something about the world we also inevitably say something about our conception of the world – something that is linked not to the facts and phenomena we try to comprehend but to the assumptions and conventions of knowing that we have acquired over time and that have become codified in language.

Nietzsche was particularly sceptical of the deeply entrenched modern search for universal forms of truth, whether they be based in Christian morals or scientific foundations. He believed that the search for truth always contained a will to power, a thirst for triumph, a desire to subjugate. This desire is rarely articulated or even recognized, for it is embedded in the very nature of language and knowledge.

Given the importance that Nietzsche places on language it is not surprising that he also experimented with his own writing style (Janaway 2003). His style markedly differed from his prominent philosophical contemporaries and predecessors, those like Kant and Hegel for instance. The latter two composed dense, long, highly technical and carefully structured philosophical treatises. Nietzsche's style, by contrast, was direct, temperamental and at times ironic. He wrote in inspirational bursts and eschewed philosophical jargon in favour of poetic metaphor. As both philosopher and artist, Nietzsche was 'so closely bound up with his aspirations to art that he regularly advertised (and criticized) his writings as if they were musical compositions' (Kemal *et al.* 1998: 1–2). He does, indeed, go as far as arguing that conceptualizing the world in philosophical terms is an inherently artistic endeavour. This is why Nietzsche abandoned early on the idea of writing comprehensive and linearly articulated philosophical texts. Instead, he started to write in aphoristic form, hoping, somehow, to capture the multiple and often contradictory aspects of life in ways that a straightforward text cannot do. He thus likened the process of deep thinking to taking a cold bath: 'quickly into them and quickly out again' (Nietzsche 1974: 343). The notion that one does not reach deep enough this way, he claims, is simply the superstition of those who fear cold water.

Even though we retain a more conventional linear structure in our chapter, we highlight the issue of language and writing styles, and we do so as follows. First, we begin our inquiry into Nietzsche's style by outlining in more detail the reasons why he believed questions of language are essential for understanding the nature and function of politics. We then spell out the implications of such a position for the study of international relations. We stress that the manner in which we approach, think about, conceptualize and formulate our understanding of politics has a significant impact on how it is actually practised. Language frames politics. The form of writing and speaking then becomes as important as its content. In the third and final part of the chapter we address the challenge of finding writing styles that are attuned to understanding and engaging the inevitable linkages between power and knowledge that shape our understanding of international politics.

A brief disclaimer is in order before we begin. Discussions on language have played a crucial role in twentieth century thought. We do not pretend to offer

anything resembling a comprehensive – or even a nearly adequate – portrayal of them. Almost all philosophers today claim to have made the ‘linguistic turn’, the admission that knowledge of ‘reality’ is always pre-interpreted by the language that we employ to assess and express it. We merely outline the relevance of this position – as initially articulated by Nietzsche – to the study of international relations. In doing so we also recognize that there is a range of key scholars whose analyses of world politics have been strongly shaped – either directly or indirectly – by Nietzsche’s ideas. Among them are William Connolly, Jenny Edkins, Michael Shapiro, Christopher Coker, David Campbell, Costas Constantinou, Stefan Elbe, Cynthia Weber, Karin Fierke, Tony Burke, Richard Devetak, Prem Kumar Rajaram, and R.B.J. Walker, just to name a few. While we are greatly indebted to their pioneering work we do not engage them in detail here – a task that would exceed the parameters of a brief chapter. Our purpose is limited to spelling out how the Nietzschean framework within which they operate can provide us with crucial insights into language and international relations.

On language and politics

Languages, for Nietzsche, are built upon a set of prejudices that are expressed via metaphors; selectively filtered images of objects and impressions that surround us. Languages are more than just mediums of communication. They represent the relationship between individuals and their environment.

This is why language, Nietzsche argues, can never provide us with pure, unmediated knowledge of the world. Thinking can at best grasp imperfect perceptions of things because a word is nothing but an image of a nerve stimulus expressed in sounds. It functions, to simplify his argument, as follows: a person’s intuitive perception creates an image, then a word, then patterns of words and finally entire linguistic and cultural systems. Each step in this chain of metaphors entails interpretations and distortions of various kinds. When we look at things around us, Nietzsche illustrates, we think we know something objective about them, something of ‘the thing in itself’. But what we perceive are in fact metaphors, that never capture an essence because they express the relationship between people and things (Nietzsche 1968b: 100–101).

We believe that when we speak of trees, colours, snow, and flowers, we have knowledge of the things themselves, and yet we possess only metaphors of things which in no way correspond to the original entities. Just as the musical sound appears as a figure in the sand, so the mysterious ‘X’ of the thing-in-itself appears first as a nervous stimulus, then as an image, and finally as an articulated sound.

(Nietzsche 1999: 144–145)

For Nietzsche, then, language systems are sets of prejudices, expressed via metaphors, that selectively filter images of objects and phenomena that surround us. We cannot but live in conceptual ‘prisons’ that permit us to take only very

narrow and sporadic glimpses at the outside world, glimpses that must entail, by definition, fundamental errors of judgment (Nietzsche 1983: 100).

If one accepts Nietzsche's views on language one must recognize that there cannot be authentic knowledge of the world, knowledge that is not in one way or another linked to the values of the perceiver and the language through which s/he gives meaning to the world. Nietzsche writes:

That mountain here! That cloud there! What is 'real' in that? Subtract the phantasm and every human *contribution* from it, my sober friends! If you can! If you can forget your descent, your past, your training – all of your humanity and animality. There is no 'reality' for us – not for you either, my sober friends.

(Nietzsche 1974: 57)

Nietzsche's point, of course, is not that mountains and clouds do not exist as such. Such a claim would be absurd. Mountains and clouds exist independent of our perceptions of them. And so do more tangible social and political phenomena. But the way we perceive and interpret these facts and phenomena depends on the vantage point from which we observe them.

Take, as an example, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. No one doubts what really took place. Nor are there major disputes about the key facts, such as the date and time, the coordinated hijacking of planes and the destruction of buildings, or the approximate number of people who lost their lives as a result. But the meanings of the event are far more amorphous and contingent. Indeed, what meanings we have are inevitably linked to a series of 'stories' that were told, and are being continuously retold, about how the attacks unfolded and shaped subsequent policy responses. In a highly insightful analysis about the ensuing implications, Richard Devetak (forthcoming 2009) distinguishes between four distinct interpretations of 9/11: the terrorist attack as trauma, as a world-changing event, as an act of war and as a manifestation of evil. Each of these interpretations, Devetak stresses, depends on a series of assumptions: political perceptions that are not intrinsically rooted in the event itself but strongly shape our understanding of it as well as the policy responses that ensued.

The truth of 9/11, then, is inevitably linked to how society overall has come to interpret the causes, manifestations and consequences of that event. Truth, Nietzsche says in a famous passage, is no more than

a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are

(Nietzsche 1982: 46–47)

Given that we all need language not only to communicate but also to make sense of the world, we always already speak before we open our mouths. Or,

rather, something has already spoken for us: we convey values and perceptions and preferences no matter how much we try to remain neutral and objective. ‘Wherever I found the living’, Nietzsche writes, ‘there I also heard the speech of obedience. Whatever lives, obeys’ (Nietzsche 1982: 226). Nietzsche even detects a will to power in science, an arbitrary attempt to control nature, to impose order and stability upon a chaotic world. The objective of science, then, ‘is not “to know”, but to schematise, – to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require’ (Nietzsche 1968b: 278).

As a result of his views on the nature of knowledge, Nietzsche is very sceptical – even outright hostile – to positions that try to assert some unqualified goodness, that presuppose a superior moral standpoint beyond self-interest and critical scrutiny. Nietzsche would have undoubtedly been highly critical of the good versus evil discourse that permeated the ‘War on Terror’ following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Any such response – which fails to take into account the nature and implications of political actions, as well as the moral framework they are embedded in – is highly problematic for Nietzsche. ‘Especially’, in his words,

those who call themselves ‘the good’ I found to be the most poisonous flies: they bite in all innocence, they lie in all innocence; how could they possibly be just to me? Pity teaches all who live among the good to lie. Pity surrounds all free souls with musty air. For the stupidity of the good is unfathomable.

(Nietzsche 1982: 298)

Numerous contemporary writers have expanded on Nietzsche’s suggestions that language, knowledge and power are intrinsically linked. The most prominent among them is probably Michel Foucault. He too stresses that there are no power relations that do not constitute corresponding fields of knowledge; and that there are no forms of knowledge that do not presuppose and, at the same time, constitute relations of power (Foucault 1975: 32). Foucault goes beyond language and speaks of the notion of discourse: subtle mechanisms that frame our thinking process. ‘It is within discourse’, he claims, ‘that power and knowledge articulate each other’ (Foucault 1976: 133). Discourses prescribe the limits of what can be thought of, talked about and written down in a normal and rational way. In every society the production of discourses is controlled, selected, organized and diffused by certain procedures. This process creates systems of exclusion in which one group of discourses is elevated to a hegemonic status while others are delimited, condemned into exile. Discourses give rise to social rules that decide which statements most people recognize as valid, as debatable or as undoubtedly false. They guide the selection process that ascertains which propositions from previous periods or foreign cultures are retained, imported, altered, valued and which are forgotten or neglected (Foucault 1991: 59–60; Foucault 1969, 1971). Although these boundaries change, at times gradually, abruptly at others, they maintain a certain unity

across time, a unity that dominates and transgresses individual authors, texts or social practices.

But discourses do not only render political facts and phenomena intelligible and meaningful. In so doing they also mask the ways in which they have been constituted and framed. Systems of domination gradually become accepted as convention, silently penetrating every aspect of society. They cling to the most remote corners of our mind, for 'all things that live long are gradually so saturated with reason that their emergence out of unreason thereby becomes improbable' (Nietzsche 1983: 17). Here, too, the role of language is crucial. Nietzsche once more:

This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to realize that what things *are called* is incomparably more important than what they are. The reputation, name, and appearance, the usual measure and weight of a thing, what it counts for – originally almost always wrong and arbitrary, thrown over things like a dress and altogether foreign to their nature and even to their skin – all this grows from generation unto generation, merely because people believe in it, until it gradually grows to be part of the thing and turns into its very body. What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such.

(Nietzsche 1974: 121–122)

Languages, expressed in other words, are habits. We use them every day. We use them so often that we no longer see them as social conventions. We are conditioned by this process of forgetting, a process whereby linguistically entrenched values camouflage the systems of exclusion that are operative in all speech forms. We become accustomed to our distorting metaphors until, as Nietzsche would say, we 'lie herd-like in a style obligatory for all' (Nietzsche 1982: 103).

The linguistic framing of international relations scholarship

We have already briefly outlined how language played and continues to play an essential role in constituting the terrorist attacks of 9/11 as a political event, imbuing it with meaning and thus shaping the way we know and react to it. We would like to offer a second example here, taken from one of the most insightful essays on international relations in recent history: Carol Cohn's (1987) 'Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals'.

Although written during the 1980s, and extensively rehearsed since then, Cohn's essay remains highly relevant even two decades after the end of the Cold War. She offers one of the most compelling accounts of how language and politics are intrinsically linked. Her research was based on her own experience, as a feminist, spending a year in a centre for defence technology and arms control, an institution that trains individuals – mostly men – in the art of nuclear deterrence and defence. Cohn's participant observation describes how she came to know

and interact with present and future policy makers who face the seemingly inconceivable reality of planning for the possibility of a nuclear war and, thus, massive suffering, perhaps even the annihilation of humanity. The essay conveys her sense of shock at the absurdity of this task. And she is even more shocked because the defence experts she works with seem kind, sensitive and sensible men. She likes them. And she cannot help asking herself: 'How can they do this? How can they even think this way?'

Cohn's explanation is at its most compelling when she describes how she tries to learn and communicate in the language of defence experts. This language, as Cohn immediately notices, is highly abstract and because it is abstract sanitizes war and death. It creates a safe distance from the grotesque realities of nuclear weapons. A range of acronyms, from BAMBI (ballistic missile boost intercept) to SRAM (short-range attack missile) and SLCMs (submarine-launched cruise missiles), turn the planning of nuclear war into a purely technical affair. Numerous additional metaphors, from 'clean bombs' to 'collateral damage', further allow analysts to conceptualize strategic issues without having to deal with the inevitable human and ethical aspects of their work, including the prospect of a nuclear war. The very willingness and capability to engage in such a war was, indeed, an essential component of a credible nuclear deterrence strategy during the Cold War. And such a strategy, in turn, assumed that a 'thermonuclear war' between the superpowers was winnable and, in the words of Herman Kahn (cited in Menand 2005), 'would not preclude normal and happy lives for the majority of survivors and their descendants' (see also Scarry 1985).

As absurd as the human implications of nuclear deterrence were, Cohn's engagement with the language of defence experts reveals how the surreal can become highly rational. Or perhaps the relationship is the reverse. More importantly, Cohn explores how her own thinking changed as she started to use the techno-strategic language herself. Eventually, she came to ask herself: 'How could I think this way?' (Cohn 1983: 688). Cohn also describes what happened when she brought up issues in everyday English, rather than the prevailing defence jargon: she inevitably appeared ignorant or simple-minded. The very concept of 'peace', for instance, appeared far too idealistic to have even a place in the language and conceptual universe of analysts who design and implement plans for a nuclear defence system.

Cohn's intimate descriptions of her experience learning and communicating the language of defence intellectuals provides insight into an important political dilemma, one that remains as relevant today as it was during the Cold War. On the one hand, an array of abstract metaphors have removed our understanding of defence issues further and further away from the realities of conflict, war and death. On the other hand, we have become used to these distorting metaphors so much so that the language of defence analyses has become the most accepted – and, by definition, the most credible and rational – way of assessing issues of security. The ensuing construction of commonsense provides experts – those fluent in the techno-strategic language of abstraction – not only with the knowledge but also with the moral authority to comment on issues of defence. But the

accompanying strategic mindset narrows down issues of defence to military means alone, delegitimizing virtually all other approaches to understanding and addressing issues related to war and conflict in general. We end up with no choice but to 'lie herd-like in a style obligatory to all', as Nietzsche would no doubt say.

Critique of language as political engagement

How is it possible to escape this encroaching function of language? How can one turn language from a practice of exclusion into one of inclusion? Is it enough, as Nietzsche suggests, 'to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new "things"?' (1974: 122). Of course not. Nietzsche knew this. We must be careful to avoid the pitfalls of a linguistic idealism that suggests that the world only exists because it is perceived by our mind, that objects outside this mental sphere have no qualities of their own. Cohn, too, knows that the world would not change miraculously overnight if defence intellectuals replaced the term 'collateral damage' with 'mass murder'.

The challenge consists, instead, in scrutinizing how certain languages become dominant, how they have framed our political realities and how alternate forms of thinking and speaking may reframe these realities. With this recognition emerges a new kind of activist situated, as Roland Barthes notes, 'half-way between militant and writer' (1972: 23), taking from the former the commitment to act and from the latter the knowledge that the process of writing constitutes such an act. As a result, critique of politics and society cannot be separated from what German linguists call *Sprachkritik*: the critique of language. The poet Paul Valéry captured the basic premise of such an understanding of knowledge and power best when he claimed that 'the secret of well founded thinking is based on suspicion towards language'. Some commentators, such as the linguist Fritz Mauthner, go even further and claim that critique of language is 'the most important task of thinking humanity' (Mauthner and Valéry cited in Gauger 1991: 23–24).

Let us take the usage of concepts as an example. To speak and write of international relations, or of anything for that matter, we need to employ concepts to express our ideas. Yet, concepts can never entirely capture the objects that they are trying to describe. A concept is always a violation, an imposition of a static idea upon complex, interconnected and continuously changing phenomena. Nietzsche was already aware that 'all concepts in which an entire process is semiotically concentrated elude definition: only that which has no history can be defined' (1969b: 80). What Nietzsche emphasized in a historical manner Adorno illustrates through a contemporary example. He shows how the concept of freedom comes to dictate our assessment of freedom, of how we judge one to be free or otherwise. But this concept is both less and more than the object or subject it refers to (Adorno 1992: 153). It is less because it cannot adequately assess the complexities of the individual's expectations and the contexts within

which s/he seeks freedom. It is more because it imposes a particular interpretation of freedom upon and beyond the conditions of freedom sought after at a particular time and place. Thus, Adorno argues that 'the concept of freedom always lags behind itself. As soon as it is applied empirically it ceases to be what it claims it is' (1992: 154). Here, again, we hear the echo of Nietzsche, who already claimed that liberal institutions cease to be liberal as soon as they are established, that, as a result, 'there is nothing more wicked and harmful to freedom than liberal institutions' (1969a: 133) (see also Connolly 1983: 140–178).

No concept is ever sufficient. No concept will ever do justice to the object it is trying to capture. The task then is to conceptualize thoughts such that they do not silence other voices, but coexist and interact with them. A useful analogy to draw in this regard is Nietzsche's interpretation of the birth of Greek tragedy, a phenomenon that, for him, resulted only through the coming together of the Apollonian with the Dionysian (Nietzsche 1999: 1–4). Interesting here is the attempt to conceptualize otherness and to create concepts whose very purpose is to show up other voices and our interactions with them. In more Nietzschean terms, this coming together of the Apollonian and the Dionysian – or, rather, the illumination of the Dionysian through the Apollonian – is to represent the sublime as beautiful. The Apollonian, for Nietzsche, captured beauty; transfiguring everyday objects into entities of exceptional glory with timeless appeal. It draws from and reinforces being, rationality, restraint and appearance. It is a positive foundation of existence, one synonymous with a fruitful, pleasant and ordered life. On the contrary, the Dionysian embodies the sublime, an immeasurable state wherein rapture borders on terror. There the total absence of boundaries and order collapses all that is deemed essential to our existence, even existence itself. It is a sordid state where, at the very least, our conceptions of being, rationality, restraint and appearance have neither place nor purchase.

To Nietzsche, the Dionysian is reality, the 'thing in itself'. The illusion, as such, is what is generated through the Apollonian. It is the concept. But given that reality is often too harsh a state to live in, let alone to live in any fruitful or pleasant way, illusion is not only desirable but also necessary. We all need beauty. And few of us can tolerate a life of constant pain. But nor can we forever delude ourselves with illusion, however beautiful and real that illusion may seem. In other words, human beings cannot perpetually stare at the sun nor can they forever hide behind masks. What we need, and what the Greeks had, in Nietzsche's view, are illusions whose beauty would beguile and assure us even as they disclosed what would otherwise tear us limb from limb, leaving only our souls unprotected to the vultures that prey. When the beauty of the Apollonian shows up the Dionysian, it gives to us something more, something deeper, something that is quite simply sublime. For Nietzsche, this was the birth of tragedy.²

It was a language – a worldview – that could empower self as well as others, civilization and all that was beyond it, what was familiar and what was alien, or that which exists in *our* world as to the world *itself*. And though, or perhaps because, we have lost the 'sense of the spectacle – the colour, dash, movement, music – of tragedy' we cannot now afford to lose its language (Jones 1984: 316).

Over the years, such a message has, in one form or another, found voice through a range of authors; all of whom have suggested means towards which such an end can be attained, means that will always remain attempts without ever reaching the ideal state they aspire to. We know of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, a theory of knowledge and language that tries to avoid the excluding tendencies of monological thought forms. Instead, he accepts the existence of multiple meanings, draws connections between differences and searches for possibilities to establish conceptual and linguistic dialogues among competing ideas, values, speech forms, texts, validity claims and the like (Bakhtin 1984: 79–84, 181–186, 279–282, 292–293). Or we know of Jürgen Habermas' attempts to theorize the preconditions for ideal speech situations. Communication, in his case, should be as unrestrained as possible, such that 'claims to truth and rightness can be discursively redeemed' (Habermas 1985: 94).

The process of establishing spaces for dialogue and free communication is, of course, always an aspiration, one that inevitably remains incomplete. Using critique of language as a form of political engagement is a delicate and difficult process, for an exploration into unexplored linguistic terrains can only come to fruition over a long period of time. It involves a slow process during which perceptions of reality are gradually formed, reformed, legitimized and objectivized.

Concluding remarks: on Nietzsche's style and international relations

The basic lesson we have drawn from Nietzsche is that style matters: our conduct of international relations cannot be separated from the manner in which we write and speak about it. Acknowledging an inevitable link between form and content is not to deny that facts exist in the real world. But it is to acknowledge that these facts only make sense through our practices of interpretation – and these interpretations, in turn, shape how we politically deal with the facts and phenomena that surround us.

The theory and practice of international relations has been shaped by a particular style; a style pockmarked with anarchy and power politics, where states speak in the language of national interests and realist power politics; a style where individuals reclaim their place through the liberal discourse of rights. These and other styles are rooted in convincing ideologies, sophisticated theories and proven practical applications. They are as prevalent as they are because they are powerful. And they are powerful because they are so prevalent. But they are not the only way to speak and represent the international.

The struggle for a better and fairer world can only succeed if it involves a direct engagement with the vocabulary through which we interpret and represent the international. Barthes wrote of the need for writer-activist to navigate the complex mesh of language, knowledge and power. In so doing, he or she constantly faces two opposing demands. On the one hand, s/he must defy the prevailing language in order not to get drawn into its powerful linguistic vortex. On the other hand, s/he has to articulate alternative thoughts such that they are

accessible enough to constitute viable tools in which to open up dialogical interactions. This can, of course, only be achieved if alternative knowledge can break out of intellectual obscurity, if it can reach and change the minds of the majority of people. However, a text that breaks with the established practices of communication in order to escape their linguistic power has, by definition, great difficulties in doing this. If a text is too obscure then it simply cannot communicate and be communicated. If it is too accessible, written too much in the prevailing language forms, then it may already be co-opted into existing regimes of knowledge and power.

Nietzsche was well aware of this inevitable dilemma. His favourite fictional character, Zarathustra, is constantly and agonizingly torn between engaging with people and withdrawing from them. The masses fail to comprehend his attempts to defy herd instincts and conceptualize the world in ways that are fundamentally different. “‘They do not understand me; I am not the mouth for these ears’”, he hails. “‘Must one smash their ears before they learn to listen with their eyes?’” (Nietzsche 1982: 129–130). At times he appears without hope: ‘what matters a time that “has not time” for Zarathustra? [...] why do I speak where nobody has *my* ears? It is still an hour too early for me here’ (Nietzsche 1982: 280, 284). Succumbing to the power of language, Zarathustra returns to the mountains, withdraws in the solitude of his cave. But thoughts of engaging with humanity never leave him. He repeatedly climbs down from his cave to the midst of life, regains hope that monological discourses will give way to dialogue, that the herds will understand him one day.

But *their* hour will come! And mine will come too! Hourly they are becoming smaller, poorer, more sterile – poor herbs! poor soil! and *soon* they shall stand there like dry grass and prairie – and verily, weary of themselves and languish even more than for water – for *fire*.

(Nietzsche 1982: 284)

New ways of speaking and writing about international politics will not automatically uproot old and entrenched links between language, knowledge and power. Dissident voices cannot immediately incinerate the dry grass of orthodox scholarly prairies. Their firefighters are holding off the blaze. Languages and discourses live on and appear reasonable long after their premises have turned into anachronistic relics. More inclusive ways of theorizing and living politics cannot surface overnight. There are no quick solutions, no new paradigms or miraculous political settlements that one could hope for. Changing the theory and practice of international relations is a long and never-ending process, saturated with obstacles and contradictions. Zarathustra knows that. It is in our daily practices of speaking, forgetting and remembering that slow transformative potentials are hidden and then revealed. The great events of history, he claims, ‘are not our loudest but our stillest hours. Not around the inventors of new noise, but around the inventors of new values does the world revolve; it revolves *inaudibly*’ (Nietzsche 1982: 243). But this lengthy and largely inaudible process is not to be

equated with political impotence. The struggles over the linguistic dimensions of politics are as crucial and as real as the practices of international realpolitik – which is why Nietzsche's style is as crucial today as when he first formulated his ideas.

Notes

- 1 This joint effort draws and expands upon various previous engagements with Nietzsche, most notably Mark Chou's ongoing PhD thesis research and Roland Bleiker's (1997) 'Forget IR Theory'.
- 2 For this reason, the 'tragic turn' – in its various guises – that is currently taking place in international relations scholarship should be seen as a welcome development. See, for example, Lebow 2003; Frost 2003; Rengger 2005; Lebow 2005; Brown 2007; Euben 2007; Beardsworth 2008b.

3 Deconstructing the modern subject

Method and possibility in Martin Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity

Louiza Odysseos

Introduction: Martin Heidegger's untimely thought

Martin Heidegger, widely regarded as one of the most enigmatic and influential philosophers of the twentieth century, was nevertheless a philosopher for whom the classical preoccupation with Being was paramount. Indeed, Heidegger's life-long project revolved around restating the question of 'Being' as the question of philosophy. Yet this restatement intended the 'destruction' of the ontological tradition by insisting on the difference between Being and beings, the 'ontico-ontological difference' that, Heidegger argued, had remained 'unthought' by philosophy (cf. Derrida 2002: 8).

This chapter argues that Heidegger's early engagement with the question of Being and his eventual radicalisation of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology amounted to a deconstruction of the core attributes of modern subjectivity, with resounding consequences for philosophy and social inquiry more generally. As I show below, his bringing together of ontology, phenomenology and deconstruction resulted in an analysis of human existence that one might understand as a 'hermeneutics of facticity' (cf. Heidegger 1999a). This chapter argues that it is the possibility inherent in Heidegger's early work that has challenged twentieth century philosophy and continues to inform attempts at critical, ethical and political theorising in International Relations (IR) beyond the confines of modern subjectivity.

The chapter explores, first, the 'founding' of the modern subject and the reliance of IR on subjectivist ontological commitments. It turns, second, to a discussion of Heidegger's questioning of Being and in particular his attempt to restate the question of Being as *the* question of philosophy, which led him to seek a method for accessing human existence beyond the subjectivist presuppositions of modern philosophy. Third, it provides a brief account of the unworking of the modern subject in his major work, *Being and Time* (1962).

International relations and the modern subject

While philosophy has initiated a process of self-critique since the very advent of the Enlightenment and has been preoccupied with notions of subjectivity for the

better part of the twentieth century, it appears that in the more applied fields of the human and social sciences, the modern subject has taken hold and is still generally accepted as the basis or foundation of social and political inquiry. C. Fred Alford has observed that in political theory and political science, authors will 'weaken, split, and shatter the integrity of the self, in order to render it more tractable, or more ideal' (Alford 1991: vii). The purpose of these manipulations of the self is, of course, to write social, political or international theory that fulfils certain functions and allows certain political and/or normative concerns to be realised theoretically. Because the self is considered to be little more than 'a dependent variable in this or that social theory' (Alford 1991: vii), accessing 'more subtle and complex models [of the self]' is not 'necessary to do real social science' (Alford 1991: 3, brackets added), which explains the persistence of presuppositions about the modern subject in social and political thought. There is little space here to recount these attributes, with which the critical project of philosophy and international theory have familiarised us, except in summary form.

Founding the subject

Given the collapse of divine ultimate foundations and of the cosmological order in which man had held a definite place in the seventeenth century, the modern era's need for a new ground for existence and for knowledge should come as no surprise. The demise of the schema of salvation (Clarke 1999), combined with the appropriative tendencies of modernity towards nature and the world at large (Dussel 1998), required the articulation of a new ground, no longer reliant on external or divine sources, through which man could secure himself: this is none other than man himself understood as subject (*subiectum*) (Heidegger 1991). In this endeavour, the philosophy of Rene Descartes played a fundamental role (Judovitz 1988). Descartes equated the Being of the world with substance and defined what it meant to be human by *distinction* to substance, so that human being can be best captured by its reflective capacity, the 'I think'. Cartesian thought enabled the philosophical development of modern subjectivity as the primary ground by emphatically placing the reflective subject as the final foundation of rigorous science: *cogito ergo sum*.¹

The subject's certainty appears to be part of its essence, but as critical thinking has suggested from Friedrich Nietzsche to Michel Foucault, it is better seen as self-instituted: 'the modern *cogito* ... is not so much the discovery of an evident truth as a ceaseless task constantly to be undertaken afresh' (Foucault 1974: 324). Securing man as the ground of certainty is, in other words, continuous and reiterative and has to be asserted through the subject's relations with others within its world. Such a subject is sovereign, best captured by the 'I', where this term is so much more than simply a pronoun: the 'I' exhibits not only autonomy and rationality, connected to its inherent capacity for reason and reflection, but achieves mastery over itself, other entities and the world itself in its relations of representation.

The relation of man-as-subject to existing entities and the world is one of representation: the subject relates to the world, and entities within the world, as object. To exist for a subject is 'to be an object or representation of it', reducing the relationship of human being to the world, to other entities and other human beings within the world, to one of subject and object (Carr 1995: 404–405). The 'ceaseless task' of subjectivity is intricately connected to representation not only of other entities as objects, but also of the subject to itself *as* the subject of representation, the subject which *presents* itself to itself as subject (Lacoue-Labarthe 1998: 141). This reduces relationality to representation and limits what can appear to the subject at all. Moreover, representation is also a relation of mastery. As Dalia Judovitz suggests, 'the subject signifies a new way of being human, one that has to do with the rationalization of human capabilities through their delimitation and economization in order to master the world through representation' (1988: 181). Such presuppositions regarding the modern subject reduce the spectrum of relationality to self and other, grasped as subject and its object of representation respectively, leaving no space for an understanding of the self as permeated by alterity, constituted through and through by otherness (Odysseos 2007). Heidegger's deconstruction (*Abbau*) of the modern subject, as I discuss in the third part of the chapter, amounts therefore to a heterology, a discourse about the other.

International relations' modernist ontology

IR as a social science, one whose concerns rest primarily with states rather than 'people', nevertheless relies heavily on the presuppositions of the modern sovereign subject (cf. Campbell 1998a). It might appear contentious to assert that the ontological assumptions of IR are centred on the modern subject, given the presumed divergence amongst the three traditions or paradigms of Realists, Rationalists and Revolutionists (Wight 1991: 7–24). IR as a social science, however, lies within the modernist tradition and shares this tradition's fundamental metaphysical positions about the subject as sovereign and self-sufficient. Indeed, much like the modern philosophical endeavour in which it is located, the discipline of IR becomes grounded in the human being as subject. Even though historical processes of differentiation have accustomed us to thinking of IR's paradigms as distinct and in contention with one another, these are nevertheless united by the inherent centrality they accord to the notion of the subject (Odysseos 2007: 1–27). This is not to deny that there are a number of renowned and sharp differences regarding the characteristics and features of that subject as proposed by IR's paradigms; it is to argue, however, that it is modern subjectivity that allows the traditions to articulate their political thought. Far from agreeing on the particulars, IR's paradigms put the attributes of modern subjectivity to work in radically differentiated political theories, united in their grounding on modern subjectivity.

For example, the Realist tradition, ostensibly based on Hobbes, uses the features of modern subjectivity, such as mastery and self-interest, to arrive at the

subject's self-induced vulnerability that provides the context of 'war of all against all' in an overarching ontology of danger (cf. Odysseos 2002). The subject of the state of nature, however, is at the same time the individualist subject whose capacity for reason identifies the problem arising from the natural existence of a multiplicity of wills and allows for the subject's consent to the covenant and the creation of a commonwealth. The focus on a particular subjectivist view of 'human nature', adopted by classical realism, results, in other words, in the Hobbesian social-contract that allows for the emergence of the absolute sovereign. By contrast, the Rationalist school based on Locke reinterprets much the same features of the modern subject as 'proprietary consciousness' in order to arrive at a conception of society as 'a body composed ... of independently moving individuals' that voluntarily consent to constitute themselves as a 'body' (McCumber 1999: 155).

Generally speaking, the ontological centrality of the modern subject for IR is evident in three ways. First, IR as the study of the interactions of states seen through their statesmen and diplomats (cf. Jackson 1995) engages with the modern subject in its utmost interpretation, namely, the secular, self-interested and purposive political *agent*. Second, the collective entities of IR, the most prevalent being the state, undergo a process of anthropomorphisation, so that non-human or pluralistic actors assume a number of the characteristics attributed to human being as subject, such as rationality, purposive behaviour and self-sufficiency. This is not only an occurrence in IR but is the case with social theory more generally, which takes its object of inquiry to be society conceived as the 'absolutization of subjectivity' (Harries 1978: 304, citing Martin Heidegger).

Third, the resurgence of critically disposed theorising in IR has returned disciplinary attention to, and has largely brought about an acceptance of, the study of 'individuals'. While liberal IR always entailed a metaphysical commitment to the individual subject (Richardson 1997), political realists took their unit of analysis to be the sovereign state (conceived as subject), especially following the pervasive turn to structuralism in the late 1970s (cf. Waltz 1979). As the harsh opposition between realism and liberal internationalism gave way to a certain 'neo-neo synthesis' after the discipline's 'third debate', the methodology and key assumptions of the two perspectives appear to have converged, particularly regarding agential 'rationality' and structural 'anarchy' (Waever 1996: 49). The 'neo-neo synthesis' reveals for the first time the unanimity between these two apparently 'alternative' worldviews on international politics, in which both accord a pivotal position to a rational subject, while making different assumptions about its nature.

An important example might well be Alexander Wendt's constructivist international theory, which takes as its premise the state as a 'purposive actor' and regards that in its social interactions, the state is equivalent to a subject or a self. Despite his commitment to a 'synthetic view' on structure/agency questions, Wendt suggests that 'states *really are* agents', that is, they are endowed with reason and a form of rationality conducive to purposive action (Wendt 1999: 10). He invests the state with subjectivity, directly related to the action-directed

and rational subject of modernity. Wendtian international theory, then, seeks to reinforce the view that, ‘states are also purposive actors with a sense of Self – “states are people too” – and that this affects the nature of the international system’ (Wendt 1999: 194): ‘anarchy’ becomes what states make of it (Wendt 1992). While acknowledging the value of Wendt’s in-depth ontological examination and his effort to provide a synthetic view of unit between holism and individualism (Wendt 1999: 165–184), his account, which aims to counter the hegemony of a neo-realist structuralist account, *strategically* relies on an understanding of the state as the subject of intentionality and agency, which resounds with the echo of modern subjectivity.

It is not unusual for critical analyses to display such ‘perverse’ faith to sovereign subjectivity. The denunciation of modern subjectivity on the basis of philosophical, or even ‘empirical’ evidence does not usually amount to a fundamental questioning of the ‘self’ (Williams and Gantt 1998: 253). Below, I ask how Heidegger’s own concerns with restating the question of Being as the question of philosophy led him to search for a method that sought to avoid the presuppositions of sovereign subjectivity and enable access to concrete historical experience. The next part of the chapter, therefore, turns to Heidegger’s project and elaborates his engagement with Husserlian phenomenology.

Heidegger and the question of Being

Heidegger was concerned that historical and prevalent contemporary answers precluded Being from presenting itself as continuously questionworthy. In order to interrogate the question of Being beyond its ‘traditional philosophical meanings’ (Sheehan 2001: 5), he insisted on a distinction between Being (*das Sein*) and beings (*das Seiende*), which he called the ontological difference. For Heidegger, it is the obscuring of this distinction in traditional ontology that leads to the forgetting or oblivion of Being in Western thought (Heidegger 1982: 318–330). He wished to understand why and how this ‘oblivion’ of Being had occurred and traced this to a reduction of Being to substance or presence.

Influenced by Aristotle’s prevailing doctrine of the manifold meanings of Being in Western metaphysics, traditional ontology reduced the *meaning* of Being, indeed the very idea of ‘reality’, to substance, because substance is what ‘remains continuously present throughout all change’ (Guignon 1993: 4). Aristotle divided Being into ‘a primary category of *substance*, designating natural “things” that exist in their own right’, while reducing other beings to qualitative attributes of it (Frede 1993: 44). With Aristotle’s doctrine of the categories, ‘[s]ubstances are the only entities that can exist in their own right ... while all other entities are attributes that need substances as the substrate for their existence’ (Frede 1993: 45).

Two things are important to note here: the first is that traditional ontology’s reliance on *substance* – the metaphysics of presence (Heidegger 1962: 38–40; Heidegger 1959: 61; cf. Derrida 1974) – had facilitated dichotomous ways of philosophising, leading to conclusions such as, for example, ‘either there is mind

or everything is just matter; either our ideas do represent objects or nothing exists outside the mind' (Guignon 1993: 4). These, Heidegger claimed, 'are derivative, regional ways of being for things', that are 'remote from concrete lived existence' (Guignon 1993: 4) and that complicate and often prevent access to lived experience.

The second is that Aristotle's metaphysical realism – the belief that the categories as distinctions were 'contained in the nature of things; they are *read off* nature and are not schemas read into or imposed on nature by us' (Frede 1993: 45, emphasis added) – could not be justified. Heidegger came to realise that the question of Being, and of reality, was fundamentally affected by the conditions and means by which the subject takes hold of and interprets its objects. Put plainly, objects, categories, Being itself, all depended in a significant way on the perceiving subject's capacity and particularities of understanding, rather than existing objectively in nature.² Thus, for Heidegger

[t]he 'question of being' becomes then the question of the givenness of the object to the subject ... all objects depend on the meaning that is bestowed on them by the subject, and ... they are always part of a wider network of referential totality.

(Frede 1993: 48)

The idea that categories of 'what is' are categories of the interpreting subject's *understanding* of being crucially led Heidegger to conclude that reality was framed by the subject's understanding, reflection and theorising. It became imperative for Heidegger's concern with Being, therefore, to avoid ossified presuppositions about the subject's reflective capacity and the priority accorded to reflection in the Cartesian cogito (cf. Odysseos 2007). This pushed Heidegger towards a sustained engagement with Husserl's phenomenology, whose search for a pre-theoretical attitude towards the world and reality (cf. Kisiel 1993: 25–32) he considered as philosophy's greatest possibility.

Premises of phenomenology

Phenomenology, as a method and a movement, is driven by 'the methodological demand, that one attend constantly and faithfully to the things themselves ... as they themselves show themselves rather than in terms of presupposed opinions, theories, or concepts' (Sallis 1978: 46). Phenomenology, in other words, aimed to eliminate the presuppositions amassed by existing perspectives – primarily in the natural sciences – about the world and entities within the world. Husserl, in particular, was 'deeply suspicious of attempts to apply the model of the natural or positive sciences to the understanding of human consciousness' (Kearney 1994: 16) and regarded that only by challenging the presuppositions generated by scientific inquiry could the phenomenologist access experience as pure phenomena. In this way, Husserl distinguished between man's involvement with things and the world, which he called the natural attitude, and the phenomenological attitude,

which denotes ‘the reflective point of view from which we carry out philosophical analysis of the intentions exercised in the natural attitude and the objective correlates of these intentions’ (Solokowski 1995: 349). The natural attitude tends to recognise only ‘that which is physically given’, and as such it ‘either denies the life of consciousness altogether or else “naturalises” it as a “fact” of physical reality’ (Kearney 1994: 16). Husserl, therefore, proposed the suspension of the intentions and convictions that operate in the natural attitude; such a suspension could be achieved by something he called ‘the phenomenological *epoche*’, a ‘distancing’ that allows the phenomenologist to contemplate their structure.

The movement from the natural attitude to the phenomenological attitude is brought about by a method known as the phenomenological reduction, which ‘consists in putting on one side (in brackets) all that is known, normally assumed, about the objects of perception or thought in order to *describe* and, later, analyse them as pure phenomena’ (Warnock 1970: 28; emphasis added). Bracketing-out and description are crucial for un-objectified access to experience, which theories of the natural sciences could not obtain. What, though, remains behind once the reduction has been carried out and suspension of the natural attitude has occurred? John Caputo suggests that the reduction allows the phenomenologist to move ‘from the hitherto naively accepted world of objects, values and other men, to the transcendental subjectivity which “constitutes” them’ (1978: 86). Bracketing the world in this manner shows ‘how the ordinary objective world is dependent upon the perceiving and thinking subject’: what has been thus far taken for granted as existing independent of any act of perception is ‘shown to be given both existence and intelligibility or sense’ by the transcendental Ego, a subjectivity revealed once common assumptions previously held have been ‘reduced’ or suspended (Warnock 1970: 35).

Phenomenology, therefore, aims to return to pure phenomena and, through the phenomenological reduction, access transcendental subjectivity. For Husserl, such access to both phenomena and consciousness was important because his concern was to restate the relation between knowing and the world: ‘the world is an *experience which we live* before it becomes an *object which we know* in some impersonal or detached fashion’ (Kearney 1994: 16). This was what attracted Heidegger to phenomenology: its attempt to contest at a fundamental level the subject–object dichotomy and to replace the notion of ‘substance’, which traditional ontology took to be the enduring and unchanging quality of things or entities, with the category of relation; to show, in other words, that ‘[m]an and world are first and foremost in relation; it is only subsequently, at the reflective level of logic, that we divide them into separate entities’ (Kearney 1994: 13). Despite the possibilities inherent in Husserlian phenomenology, its hitherto focus on *transcendental* subjectivity,³ nevertheless was fraught with the Cartesian temptation to reify intentionality and agency, which tends to ossify the immediacy of experience. After the First World War, therefore, Heidegger collaborated with Husserl to implement *radical* phenomenology – a critical and deconstructive hermeneutics – able to seize its own ontological self-understanding and allow it to inform ontological inquiry. Radical or hermeneutic phenomenology, then,

engages in a 'double gesture' (Critchley 2000: 101) that acknowledges the debt to Husserl but at the same time moves beyond him, 'explicating life as it presents itself to us in concrete, individual, historical existence' (Nenon 1999: 682), without falling back on the presuppositions entrenched by the 'primacy of the theoretical attitude' (Kovacs 1990: 125).

Radical phenomenology: the hermeneutics of facticity

Neither Husserl nor Heidegger believed that accessing lived experience could be achieved within the frameworks of the human and natural sciences, which investigated 'factic life'⁴ by dividing it into separate disciplines. Heidegger insisted that philosophical thinking ought to be 'more rigorous, more primordial than scientific knowing; it is more radical, more essential than the exploration of nature and life by the theorizing attitude of the sciences' (Kovacs 1990: 124–125). He, therefore, sought to take phenomenology into a new direction by focusing on the need to look at the origin, the *Ur-sprung*, of 'factic life' (Kisiel 1993: 117).⁵ Seeking a more originary or primordial exploration of lived experience, however, led Heidegger to confront the difficulties of accessing life in a 'pretheoretical' way and, even if that were possible, of articulating such factic experience once 'accessed' (Kisiel 1993: 117, 124–125). Ironically, it was Heidegger's defence of phenomenology against these sort of objections – put forward primarily by the neo-Kantian philosopher Paul Natorp (cf. Caputo 1978) – that led him away from Husserl and towards a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, best captured by the term 'hermeneutics of facticity' (Heidegger 1999a).

Could phenomenology fulfil its desire to attend to living experience as it showed itself? Natorp had argued that it was unlikely, because 'the "stream" of living experience is brought to a halt by reflection: "there is no immediate grasp (hold) of living experience"' (Kovacs 1990: 129, citing Heidegger 1987: 101). His critique involved two specific objections around the issues of accessibility and of expression. Regarding the issue of access, Natorp denied that phenomenology could achieve 'intuitive access to its chosen subject-matter' (Kisiel 1993: 48). In other words, '[h]ow is the nonobjectifiable subject matter of phenomenology to be even approached without already theoretically inflicting an objectification upon it? How are we to go along with life reflectively without de-living it?' (Kisiel 1993: 48).

Regarding the issue of expression, Natorp refuted that phenomenology would be, furthermore, able to *express* its purported access to its subject matter. As Kisiel explains,

[p]henomenology claims to merely describe what it sees. But description is circumscription into general concepts, a 'subsumption' under abstractions. The concrete immediacy to be described is thereby mediated into abstract contexts. There is no such thing as immediate description, since all expression, any attempt to put something into words, generalizes and so objectifies.

(Kisiel 1993: 48; cf. Heidegger 1999b: 101–111)

Natorp argued that reflective analysis always already transformed, or even deformed, the living experiences upon which it reflected. Specifically, in describing and analysing the perceptual object, that is, in expressing that which it accessed through the phenomenological reduction, phenomenology created theoretical concepts and thus unwittingly generalised and abstracted concrete experience. For Natorp, this amounted to a 'devastation' brought on to experience, little different from the theoretical attitude of the natural and human sciences.

Heidegger responded to Natorp's objections and, in so doing, was led away from the transcendental or pure phenomenology of Husserl towards *Verstehen*, or understanding, a school of thought largely influenced by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) (cf. Kisiel 1993: 89–93, 100–105). Heidegger cautioned against depending on and searching for 'objectifying concepts which seize life and so still its stream', and encouraged the utilisation of the kind of access that *life already has to itself*, which 'provides the possibility of finding less intrusive pre-concepts or pre-concepts which at once reach back into life's motivation and forward into its tendency' (Kisiel 1993: 48). He suggested that the need to access life without objectifying it could be achieved through,

A non-intuitive form of access ... a certain familiarity which life already has of itself and *which phenomenology needs only to repeat*. This spontaneous experience of experience, this streaming return of experiencing life upon already experienced life, is the immanent historicity of life.

(Kisiel 1993: 48)

This understanding that life already has of itself 'at once repeats and foreruns life's course' and is able to stretch 'itself unitively and indifferently along the whole of the life stream without disrupting it' (Kisiel 1993: 48). The very possibility for nonobjectifying phenomenological access, then, 'stemm[ed] directly from the very temporal intentional movement of *finding oneself experiencing experience*' (Kisiel 1993: 48–49).

It is crucial to note that in responding to the first objection of accessibility, Heidegger also provided an answer to Natorp's second critique, which had contested phenomenology's ability to *express* immediate experience. By turning to the access that life already has of itself, '[t]he problems of intuition and expression are therefore transposed into the possibility of a (1) nonreflective understanding and (2) the nonobjectifying conceptualization that it [non-reflective understanding] itself provides, that allusive universal called the formal indication' (Kisiel 1993: 49, brackets added). The method of formal indication formulates the understanding that life has of itself into concepts that merely *designate* certain terms in a formal manner to denote the phenomena under scrutiny. These terms act almost as 'placeholders', leaving the analysis and determination of the phenomena to the phenomenological bracketing-out and description, rather than acting as representative concepts that sanction their neglect. As Kisiel explains,

[w]ords like 'life,' 'lived experience,' 'I myself' drawn from daily life pose a danger of objectification in our descriptions; they cannot be taken univocally, but rather must be understood in their *formal* character as *indicative* of certain phenomena of the concrete domain.

(Kisiel 1993: 121)

Language and expression capture and distort, but at the same time are the very conditions of possibility of self- and world-disclosure (Heidegger 1962).

To sum up, Heidegger's reactions to Natorp's neo-Kantian objections showed that access and expression both have their origin in the 'immanent historicity of life in itself' (Kisiel 1993: 55, citing Heidegger 1999b: 117). Showing that the possibility of non-disruptive entry into the historicity of life emanated from an implicit understanding life has of itself, led Heidegger to the 'hermeneutic intuition' that he brought to bear on phenomenology. The hermeneutic intuition could understand 'the articulations of life itself, which accrue to the self-experience that occurs in the "dialectical" return of experiencing life to already experienced life' (Kisiel 1993: 55–56). The departure from Husserl ultimately rested on the need to conduct a form of philosophical questioning that amounted to 'the explicit grasping of a basic movement of factual life' (Heidegger 1992: 359) by that life itself, rather than being imposed on to life taken as object of study. For social inquiry more broadly this is an incisive intuition: it argues that the structure of human understanding is such, that '[a]ll of our experiences, beginning with our most direct perceptions, are from the start already expressed, indeed interpreted' (Kisiel 1993: 49; cf. Heidegger 1962: 31–32). Not only this: his 'hermeneutic breakthrough' intertwines phenomenology and ontology. Method and subject matter are revealed as united, where 'a formally indicating hermeneutics and a dynamically understood facticity belong essentially together in a close-knit unity' (Kisiel 1993: 23). When the 'perceiving subject' turns to enquire about itself as the perceptual object, ontology and phenomenology converge at 'a point where they are one and the same: a hermeneutics of facticity' (Kisiel 1993: 21). The genitive 'of' is a double genitive. At once it means that understanding, *Verstehen*, belongs to facticity; and at the same time, it shows that understanding takes facticity as its object (van Buren 1994: 94). The hermeneutics of facticity 'is simply the operation of philosophy itself that catches hold of life in its activity ... [it] is factual life caught in the act of interpreting itself' (Risser 2000: 22).

The analytics of existence: unworking the modern subject

Importantly, Heidegger's defence of phenomenology against Natorp's concerns allowed him to grasp the presupposed 'subject' in non-subjectivist terms. This can be seen, first, in the rejection of Husserl's earlier efforts 'to isolate the "transcendental Ego", the undifferentiated, pure "I" who perceives and constructs the world, but is not involved in it' (Warnock 1970: 49). As Heidegger explicitly shows some years later in his *magnum opus*, *Being and Time*, factual life (referred to as 'Dasein') is both the investigator, as well as that which is interrogated (*das*

Befragte) (Heidegger 1962: 24). In Dasein's manner of revealing 'itself to itself' we see that what 'makes possible this showing [of Dasein to itself]' is Dasein's intuitive, nonobjectifying self-understanding (Heidegger 1962: 24, brackets added). It is this understanding that enables both Dasein's (problematic, fragmented and often abstracted) understanding of Being and the very possibility of fundamental, rather, than traditional ontology.

Second, his search for a method with which to access lived experience and pose anew the question of Being for philosophy also led him towards existential analysis (*Daseinanalytik*), which substantively 'unworks' modern subjectivity (Odysseos 2007; Pippin 1997). Specifically, Heidegger's account of Dasein as Being-in-the-world diverges substantially from previous Cartesian and post-Cartesian articulations of subjectivity. Such accounts tended to posit the subject as an isolated 'I', an autonomous and self-sufficient individual. Heidegger's existential analytic begins, instead, from the premise that it is misleading to assume that the answer to the question 'who is Dasein?' is the (worldless, self-sufficient and masterful) 'I' (cf. 1991: 85–122). Heidegger's phenomenological analyses in *Being and Time* suggest, moreover, that the theoretical positing of Dasein as subject is phenomenally inadequate at the ontological level.⁶

Importantly, avoiding the assumptions of modern subjectivity, and using existential analysis to 'unwork' it, enabled Heidegger to attend to existence in its facticity and reveal it in its *heteronomy*, a term that signifies the constitutive role of otherness. In this manner Heidegger's *Being and Time* can be read as a *heterology*, a discourse about difference and the other (*to heteron*) (cf. Levinas 1969). Specifically, there are four ways in which the heteronomy of selfhood and its constitution by otherness are revealed in the focus existential analysis brings to bear on the concrete experience of everyday life, what Heidegger called 'average everydayness' (Heidegger 1962: 69).

First, Dasein initially and primarily (*zunächst und zumeist*) finds itself immersed in the world (distinguished from a 'container' view of nature). Understanding Dasein as existing primarily in the mode of 'engaged immersion' in the world helps to shift emphasis away from reflection and 'knowing' as the definitive modes of human relationality. In other words, Dasein's main relationship to other beings cannot be assumed to be one of knowing; Dasein does not initially and primarily encounter entities and the world as 'objects' of knowing and comprehension. Rather, Dasein is immersed continuously amongst things and other beings of its own character in a more fundamental and immediate way, allaying some of the fears about phenomenology's reliance on the knowing and perceiving subject (Levinas 1969: 45). More importantly, challenging the reflective relationship of comprehension and, therefore, of objectification, which the modern subject has towards other beings and the world, allowed Heidegger to bring to the fore the disclosive character of existence. His analyses illustrated how Dasein discloses the Being of other entities, while at the same time existing pre-reflectively and 'outside of itself' amongst the things and beings that constitute it.

Second, Dasein's dealings (or 'comportments') while immersed in daily work and other activities disclose a different conception of the *world* as such (Heide-

gger 1962: 18). For Heidegger existence was for the most part pre-reflective 'engaged immersion' (Žižek 1999: 15) amongst other entities (equipment, stuff or gear) available in Dasein's world of activity and work, rather than disinterested reflection, which encounters entities as objects of *theorein* (see, gaze or observe). This enabled the recasting of the 'world' as a web of involvements with other beings and relations with others: in other words, as a background of meanings against which existence makes sense of itself *pre-reflectively*. Revealing the world as a totality of meanings, references and relations also illuminated that this is a web that is not created by Dasein alone. Rather, Dasein's way of life, the meanings, norms and rules that help it go about its business in the world, are structured by others and are only *shared* and 'uniquely appropriated' (Haugeland 1989: 61) by Dasein: this is not a world of the sovereign subject's making. This dependence that Dasein has on other-created meanings and understandings indicates that Dasein's relationship to the world cannot be one of mastery and control only. Dasein, rather, has an ontological relationship to the world.

Third, Dasein is Being-in-the-world *with others*. This means that for Dasein, existence is already coexistence (Odysseos 2007: 70–78). Being-there is always Being-with, to such an extent that Dasein is indistinguishable from others: existential analysis shows how Dasein is not an 'I' but the 'one', the 'they' (*das Man*) (Heidegger 1962: 25–27). Selfhood, in other words, is coexistential in its constitution, where such an understanding of 'coexistence' is not tantamount to the uniting, composition or co-presence, of completed and autonomous subjects (Odysseos 2007: 70–94). Finally, Dasein is fundamentally attuned to the world in which it exists and its understanding of itself and other entities is affected by this attunement. Dasein's radical attunement shows it to be a being *thrown* into its world, rather than exercising mastery and control over it. The concept of thrownness is of fundamental importance in Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1962: 38) as it helps us distinguish his account of Dasein's radical embeddedness from other accounts of empathy or even intersubjectivity. At the same time, its understanding of itself as 'possibility' indicates that Dasein is also future oriented, that it projects itself towards the future. Taken together, the aspects of Dasein's fundamental attunement and situated understanding indicate that its world matters to it; in other words, Dasein is an entity better understood as *care* (Heidegger 1962: 63).

When viewed together, these analyses of existence in its 'average everydayness' contest the presuppositions of modern subjectivity – modernity's chief construct and sole foundation – and elucidate instead an account of radical embeddedness with other beings and the world, so that the self is not isolated and wordless, standing in mastery and reflection over objects. The modern subject is revealed as a chimera; what emerges, instead, is a combinative structure: 'Being-in-the-world', indicating first and foremost the coexistential heteronomy of human existence. This enables, as some recent contributions suggest, first, the *questioning* of ethics defined as ethical construction of codes, proposals about international institutions and the internationalisation of liberal ethical regimes reliant on modernist conceptions of subjectivity (Scott 1990; Odysseos 2003; Seckinelgin 2006). Second, such a questioning of subjectivity and ethics

calls for the rethinking of ethics as the operation of an ethical selfhood, itself conceived of as an attitude or disposition towards the other, which frees the other, not by granting him the modern subject position of the 'human rights-holder' or rational moral agent but by calling him to task to face his own coexistential heteronomy and groundlessness (Odysseos 2003, 2007), bearing critical witness to a modernist world politics (Seckinelgin 2006).

Beyond these brief reflections, one might go as far as to say that subsequent philosophy, as well as social and international theory, receive their impetus to further 'unwork' the modern subject, arguably the single most important philosophical endeavour of the twentieth century, from Heidegger's challenge and crucial articulations presented briefly here.

Conclusion

For a vast range of undertakings, from Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics that expose the linguistic and universal character of human understanding to Michel Foucault's discussion of the death of the subject, from Emmanuel Levinas' concern with the other to international theory's attempt to speak for an ethical, environmentally conscious selfhood (Foucault 1974; Campbell 1998a; Seckinelgin 2006, Odysseos 2007) in the context of the end of philosophy (Heidegger 1972), Heidegger still acts as the interlocutor, and his attempts to call into question the presuppositions of modern philosophy regarding its foundation still require serious engagement. His 'hermeneutics of facticity' attest to a rigorous methodological attitude towards the richness of phenomena and his uniting of phenomenology, ontology and 'destruction' shows ontological examination to be itself a *critical* activity. Normally considered a conservative, status quo-preserving mode of inquiry, Heidegger's method illustrates the ways in which ontological thinking disrupts the presuppositions about the subject and helps retrieve an account of selfhood that positively assists in the critical project of social thought and international relations.

Notes

- 1 For objections to this account of the modern subject see Bowie (1996) and Balibar (1994).
- 2 This realisation came about as Heidegger was engaging with the philosophy of Duns Scotus for his qualifying dissertation (or *Habilitationsschrift*) entitled *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* (cf. Frede 1993: 48).
- 3 While the commonly held view that Husserlian phenomenology remained too wedded to transcendental subjectivity and apodeicticity (in the sense of universal and necessary validity) as was its Cartesian precursor, new research indicates the relationship of intersubjectivity and knowledge in Husserl (see Hermberg 2006).
- 4 It is only later that Heidegger begins to utilise the term 'Dasein', which in everyday discourse means existence, in *Being and Time* (1962; cf. Odysseos 2007; Kisiel 1993).
- 5 This is not, however, unproblematic; as Kisiel argues, it is rather 'the most basic problem of phenomenology is itself, understood as a science of origin' (1993: 117).
- 6 It is important to bear in mind Heidegger's distinction between ontic and ontological levels (1962: 34).

4 Gadamer's enduring influence in international relations

Interpretation in Gadamer, Ricoeur and beyond

Chris Farrands

Before I took up a doctoral studentship in International Relations at the London School of Economics, I was working for a time as a Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths at St Pancras, just opposite the famous station in central London. My main job was to marry people in civil ceremonies. I assisted at or conducted a wide range of marriages, some jolly, some uninhibitedly exuberant, some lonely. There were large parties of happy and, on occasions, sober people. There were also two street people who married from their home in a cardboard box, on the same day as a couple in their early twenties who, both dying, had met in a hospice. There were several elderly couples, and, given that this was in the heart of multicultural London, couples from more ethnic and cultural backgrounds than I can remember. Each of the occasions meant something specific to the people involved. From observation, you might discover something about the processes involved, the material base (how much was paid for the dress, the party, the licence), the legislation that guides the process; but you would reach little understanding of the importance, the significances, the humanity of the separate occasions involved in these ceremonies to each couple. Every one had something in common; every one was different; but it was the differences that mattered. The example helps to explain why an approach to research that tries to unpack the diversity of meanings and constructions of social relations is fundamental in the study of International Relations (IR). Understanding IR is, one might recognise, first of all an attempt to make sense of inter-cultural relations where language and social practice and social meanings meet and challenge each other. It interrogates changing meanings, recognising their ambiguities, and accepts that there may be no single 'underlying truth' concealed behind them. As William Connolly (2005) has argued, we need tools to unpack the ambiguities of a plural world where there are not only many different kinds of entities (ontological pluralism), but many different kinds of knowledge (epistemological pluralism) and many different kinds of values (normative pluralism), yet where there are also right and wrong judgments and legitimate and illegitimate interpretations. It is in what Levinas referred to as the 'encounter with the Other' (see Andrea Den Boer's chapter in this volume) that the challenge of making sense of international relations in all their diversity arise. This is prior to any other theorisation and to any other way of organising knowledge.

It is for these reasons that Gadamer's hermeneutics might stand central to any attempt to work in the field (for an introduction to his work, see Gadamer 2006; Gadamer and Grondin 2006; Grondin 2003). Gadamer lays the foundations of many of the approaches that address these complexities. His work helps the researcher to understand their own position in relation to the research they do. While it may well be – as this chapter will argue – that Gadamer's work needs to be developed or supplemented by other arguments, notably from Paul Ricoeur, it provides a powerful resource for anyone approaching the field of international relations. It is also important to understand Gadamer's place in the unfolding of these arguments in order to understand the context of the recent history of IR. Gadamer's understanding of research processes also enables us to develop a more rigorous and coherent approach to interpretive research. This is important because, while there are many claims to open interpretive understanding in IR, including others discussed in this volume, it is the questions that Gadamer asks that lead the researcher to a strongly grounded methodology of research. He also lays the foundations for many of the subsequent debates and developments on which other chapters in this book build.

In arguing that Gadamer's work in hermeneutic social understanding is central to the project, which aims to take forward a non-positivist IR, I will not reject other parallel understandings discussed in this book – including those based on writers such as Wittgenstein, Levinas and Habermas. There is an important dialogue between all these contributions. But I will argue for the coherence and originality of Gadamer's analysis. Recent work on Gadamer's interpretive philosophy (Kögler 1996; Malpas *et al.* 2002; Vattimo 1997; Wright 1990) has reasserted the importance of his contribution to methodologies of human understanding. To develop this argument, the chapter looks first at the core arguments in Gadamer's work. It then explores how these are relevant to IR, suggesting that Gadamer is an indispensable source for the very idea of 'interpretive dialogue'. It considers criticisms that it shows to be unjustified, but also explores how criticisms that might be justified are responded to in the work of later writers. It also suggests that there is no necessary contradiction between a critical epistemology and a hermeneutic understanding – although it is possible for hermeneutics to reaffirm the existing traditions that it studies, this conservative inclination is not necessarily embedded in the logic of hermeneutics or in the traditions of thought from which it springs. The chapter concludes with a brief example of why Gadamer's work might have a great deal of as yet unexplored potential in understanding contemporary IR, drawing on a brief examination of some of the post-conflict writing of the Lebanese writer Emily Nasrallah.

How does Gadamer's work bear on an understanding of IR?

Gadamer's understanding of interpretation can be accessed through interrogating the core conceptions of dialogue, horizon and the fusion of horizons, truth, the role of language, reflection in research practice and the positionality of the researcher. Here, I shall explore each of these notions in turn after first of all

setting the work in the context in which it emerged, which is from a dialogue with Kant and with Nietzsche, and from the influence of Husserl, Heidegger and Jaspers. Gadamer, following Heidegger, returns to early Greek philosophy to find the roots of interpretive understanding (2001). He explores understanding first of all in pre-Socratic philosophy, and then in Plato. Socrates' dialogues provide a starting point for any understanding of dialogic truth, although it is also often true that his exchanges with others are unequal – the dice are generally loaded in a Socratic exchange (Plato 1961). Aristotle's (2004) discussion of the ambiguities of interpretation also remains a key theme in all interpretive approaches, and is an important step into later discussion of the relationship between language and interpretation.

Interpretation as a truth seeking strategy has its origins in theology. There is a strong Christian tradition of biblical interpretation that goes back to the origins of the religion, but that flourished especially in German Protestantism after the enlightenment (Gadamer 2006). This tradition is not unique; it has important parallel arguments in scriptural interpretation in Judaism, Buddhism and in the Islamic schools of law and *hadith* interpretation, including the tradition of *ijtihad* – intense interpretive dialogue on the meaning of texts and arguments – which has been important in recent re-evaluations of Islam among Western Muslims. In each of these traditions, the quest for truth involves detailed textual analysis, the quest to combine faith and reason in the search for knowledge, and the recognition of the power of intuition and belief beyond rationalism, which can be arbitrated through judgment. In the work of the nineteenth century German philosophers, Schleiermacher and Dilthey, this becomes a strategy for understanding knowledge more broadly. It is a reaction against a dominant scientific model of knowledge proposed by John Stuart Mill, Comte and the positivist tradition (Gadamer 1989: 507–510). The tradition of anti-scientific interpretive knowledge is developed in the work of Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. It has a living presence outside the philosophy schoolroom in the writings of musicians such as Robert Schumann, Richard Wagner, in discussion of romanticism in literature, architecture and painting, and in nineteenth century social criticism by Matthew Arnold and others. But it was never a mainstream view of the world in an increasingly scientific age. Instead, it is the discourse of protest against science and industrialism. It is on this tradition, already formed as a challenge to positivism and to the ideal of the possibility of exact knowledge, that Heidegger, Husserl and Gadamer build.

For Gadamer, even more than for other phenomenologists, Kant is a powerful presence. But unlike others in this broad school, Kant is not Gadamer's opponent. It is true that the more one looks at Heidegger or Levinas, the more their relationship with Kant's work appears ambiguous; but Gadamer wears a debt to Kant openly. This debt is not however to the Kant of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the champion of enlightenment deductive logic, duty and rationalism. Rather, it is the opening of the defining fabric of rationalism that Kant lays down in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Kant 2001). Here, Kant asks whether our knowledge of aesthetics is similar to other forms of rationally grounded

knowledge, the certainties of that epistemic explanation evolved through the scientific model of knowledge in Locke, Bacon and Newton, and formalised in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant wondered whether, although we cannot have full *epistemic* knowledge of aesthetics, our reaction to created works we find beautiful is more than mere opinion or subjective emotion. He resisted that answer: he seeks to ground aesthetic knowledge in more than intuition, subjectivity or emotion. Although it is also clear from the later discussion of the book that Kant was never completely sure of the territory he opened up, and he returns to rationalism eventually, he creates the grounds for a different kind of knowledge. It is only apparently an oxymoron to call this ‘non-epistemic knowledge’ (my label not Kant’s). It is pretty certain that he would not have approved of the use made of these arguments by Gadamer and other subsequent writers, but Gadamer works through this chink in the armour of rationalism to make his case. Kant suggests that the kind of knowledge that we find in our experience of the most powerful art is something that is genuine knowledge, something that involves the emotions, but that is not reducible to emotion, and that can in principle be taught and passed on as access to a heritage. Our initial intuitive and emotional responses to a work of art interact with reason and experience to constitute judgment. This form of knowledge, one must note, lies outside epistemology and scientific experience or reasoned calculation; but in Kant’s mind it is nonetheless accessible to reasoning, and it is not merely subjective. This is parallel to, but clearly not the same as, the approach outlined through Foucault’s rejection of quasi-scientific or causal explanations in his pursuit of an understanding of the sources of discursive change in the history of thought (Foucault 2007: 239).

Gadamer takes this idea as an image of knowledge beyond the art world. The very structure of his major work, *Truth and Method* (1989), mirrors that of Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. But it reaches a more securely established conclusion about the nature of knowledge. Gadamer does not abandon reason, but he is not a ‘rationalist’. Drawing on the phenomenology of Husserl as well as Heidegger (Hoy 2002), he recognises the importance of intuition and prior experience in the judgments people make. More broadly, and again drawing on earlier phenomenologists, he argues that judgments make sense within particular contexts and from a particular viewpoint. His argument claims that this knowledge is justly called true knowledge even though it is not certain or universal. This is because no absolutely certain knowledge, which holds true at all times and places, is possible. We find knowledge through a process of interpretation, which is much closer to Kant’s account of aesthetic judgment than Newton’s account of the generation of universal laws.

So a Gadamerian interpretation is based on exploration of meaning within a text (Gadamer and Grondin 2006). This requires first of all linguistic competence, an understanding of how words are used and how they assume particular meanings in social practice. It also requires that the interpreter unravels the social and political and cultural contexts within which the texts make – or made – sense (Gadamer 1989, Part 3). This demands a form of empathy, without which there can be no interpretation or understanding, but it absolutely does not require that

the interpreter accepts or approves the actions and assumptions embodied in the text. The interpreter has a special relationship with the text, and assumes thereby a responsibility to treat the text with integrity. This ethical responsibility is powerful. If we read the novels of Primo Levi, which give an indispensable access to some of the experiences of the Holocaust of which Levi himself was a survivor, we have a responsibility to think critically about the context and the core ideas and experiences he relates. We might also feel, as Levi himself strongly argued, that this work is a witnessing, a *presentation*, of events that cannot and should not be *re-presented*. If we then turn to another set of texts, such as a railway register of trains going to Auschwitz, we still have a similar duty to read critically and understand the context in which the record was created. We certainly have no responsibility to sympathise or excuse the actions of the train managers, who had a pretty good idea what they were involved in (Goldhagen 1997). A Gadamerian approach does not require us to sympathise with the authors of the text in their role in implementing the Holocaust, or any other event. We have to be simultaneously engaged in depth in the text and able to stand at a distance from it. This is the beginning of the possibility of a genuinely critical interpretive method, a critical hermeneutics (Thompson 1981; Ricoeur 1981, 1984a).

Equally, we engage with a dialogue in our minds between the whole text in its context, in the social, political, linguistic and cultural settings, and the detailed specific elements of the text, *this* metaphor, *that* use of language, *this* way of structuring what is said, *that* way of organising what the text might seek to perform (Gadamer 2006: 44–47). This is clearly not simply an account of our experience and understanding of art objects. Both Kant and Gadamer are inclined to take German poetry and German or English drama, particular Shakespeare, as the paradigmatic forms of art open to interpretive understanding, rather than painting or music. But this account of knowledge goes beyond any artistic field, and can be applied to understanding across the social realm, including of course IR. Gadamer invites us to inquire how a different form of understanding from epistemic knowledge can evolve, an alternative to scientific, realist or rationalist explanation, and then gives a persuasive answer. This might cause an IR specialist to pause, for much of the knowledge that we claim in the practice of IR is highly provisional, grounded not in 'knowledge' of a certain epistemic kind but in judgments. Whether in Cuba in 1962 or in North Korea today, are the missiles there, are they pointing at us, for what motive? How can we address complex problems in global financial management or environmental policy? At most, we might say, like a doctor diagnosing a disease, that science might help us, but the ultimate source of our diagnosis is our judgment and our experience, mediated no doubt by intensive dialogue with all those involved in the situation. To rely solely on scientific rationalism as the adjudicator of policy or response would seem crazy to a practising doctor, as it would to an experienced diplomat. The current vogue in public policy for what is sometimes called 'evidence based' policy does not undermine this. Before it can form any basis for policy, whether in arms control, health and social policy or development, the evidence does after all have to be interpreted, set in the appropriate context and

understood. At the worst, delusions of scientific understanding create a sense that policy makers can control and direct events (as they tell us they can every election time), where they can have no such happy outcomes. This gets some way from *critical* hermeneutics, and is not a point this chapter will pursue, but it is worth noting that interpretation also has a practical dimension.

In this dialogic exchange between text and interpreter, the latter is not simply a passive reader. This is not solely an archaeology of discovery of interpretations previously hidden, although that is a part of the task (Gadamer 1989: 307ff). But, as the previous discussion implies, the interpreter is also an active participant. The interpreter is discovering a set of interpretations, ‘unveiling’ truths; but they are also involved: there is an element of *construction* of interpretations here. Interpretive understanding does not leave the world as it is. It is engaged, it takes its ethical responsibilities seriously, but it also provides meanings and interpretation for debate, which it constructs on the basis of the evidence of the text and its contexts. It is part of the critique of scientific rationalism that Heidegger and Gadamer share that the observer cannot avoid being involved in interpretation, and that the interpreter must necessarily impact upon the world s/he is narrating. S/he must take responsibility for this unavoidable role. It follows that their own account of interpretive understanding (that in Heidegger is not clearly dialogic but has some elements that appear in Gadamer’s account) has a necessary constructivist element. Not least for this reason, drawing originally on Schopenhauer, Heidegger established (Heidegger 1962: 358–380), and Gadamer develops, an account of the duties of care that the interpreter holds (Gadamer and Grondin 2006; Kögler 1996: 141). This forms the basis of an ethical responsibility that is developed across phenomenology (but especially in Levinas), but which takes the particular form of a duty of vigilance for the truth (perhaps more technically vigilance *towards* the truth) in Gadamerian thought (Grondin 2003, Ch. 4).

Gadamer’s investigation of language is central to his project, even though he is moving well beyond a form of ‘interpretation as translation’ (Gadamer 2006: 29–32). In this work, he draws on that of Wittgenstein. He had not read Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (1973) when he finished the first draft of *Truth and Method*, although he was aware of part of the argument, and one of the significant shifts in the second edition (the one now generally recognised as authentic) is his more explicit absorption of arguments from the *Investigations* and from the debates in both Anglo-Saxon and continental philosophy, which sprang from its publication. In Gadamer, as with many others who draw from Wittgenstein’s work (see also the discussion of Wittgenstein by Karen Fierke in this volume), language matters because it is understood as creating and sustaining social meanings through use. The meaning of a word lies in its use, and the use is a question of social performance (Wittgenstein 1973: S43). The ways language is used by specific user communities constitutes a set of possibilities and potentialities, which an interpreter unpacks as part of the art of interpretation. The final part of Gadamer’s major work is a sustained reflection on the role of language in interpretive understanding (Gadamer 1989: 318ff).

One mistake in the reading of Gadamer's contribution to IR is to see his work as a mere appendage to that of Heidegger. However controversial we find his life and his work, Heidegger is generally thought to be the greater philosopher. But Gadamer's work has a force of its own, and is both more original and more important for social understanding than we might think if we see him merely as the faithful pupil of the more flawed but more heroic figure of Heidegger (see Hoy 2002; Grondin 2003). For one thing, Gadamer was not so faithful: he criticised not only Heidegger's flirtation with Nazism and his personal treatment of the elderly Husserl, but also aspects of his philosophy (not least in his different relation to Kant noted above). And it is Gadamer, not Heidegger, who gives a solid account of the bases of interpretative approaches to knowledge that go beyond the cryptic to explain a relationship between methodology and actual methods, something that Heidegger was inclined to avoid, but that needs unambiguous treatment if it is to form an effective basis for any research.

Gadamer on interpretation and the hermeneutic circle

Gadamer's understanding of interpretation is often explained through the concept of a 'hermeneutic circle' in which there is a continuous interplay – an implicit dialogue – between the interpretation of the whole and the interpretation of the elements of a text or object or action understood. The 'observer' is here recognised as an integral participant in this process, whose presence in the interpretation may be changing or influencing the continuous interplay in the process of understanding. This suggests that there is a kind of circularity about argument here. But the hermeneutic circle is misunderstood if it is read as if the knowledge that is created through this continuous interrogation is seen as 'circular' and therefore invalid (as in an argument in classical logic that rests on an assumption of what it is trying to demonstrate). But the circle in hermeneutics is not a repetition; it is an iteration. As in some kinds of mathematical technique, the strategy is to go through a series of manoeuvres to get increasingly close to a better approximation of the truth. It follows from this that interpretation is hard work – the first answer is never the right one, a view that Gadamer certainly held, and that Ricoeur (1974b: 30–33) reinforces.

Hermeneutics is concerned with textual interpretation. It grows out of biblical exegesis, but has long moved beyond looking only at religious texts. But what is a text? What counts here? Gadamer was largely content to focus on actions that performed speech acts – written and spoken words. But the argument can apply to other forms of expression. Later scholars (Agamben 1999; Derrida 1998; Vattimo 1997; but most fully Ricoeur 1976, 1981), drawing on Gadamer, extended the argument that it is quite explicit that a 'text' can be an action, a visual image, an advertisement, a mode of dress as much as a written or spoken utterance. This draws interpretive theory closer both to scholarship in linguistics (especially Saussure and Barthes) and to discourse analysis (in both Foucauldian and Gramscian forms). The distinctive point about Gadamer's influence on interpretation theory is the way in which it is strongly grounded. To make

interpretive analysis of non-written texts requires that they be ‘textualised’, that they are treated as texts in ways that make them intelligible. But it is also always going to be the case that there are elements, often very important elements, of visual images or of musical performance that cannot be expressed in words (if it could be said in words why say it in music?), and Stephen Chan has touched persuasively on the limitations of what can be said through or about the visual in his chapter in this volume.

Ricoeur’s development: addressing the problems in drawing on Gadamer for an approach to IR

Ricoeur takes up the challenge of how interpretive understanding might work in analysis of social understanding, and successfully addresses some of the difficulties we might identify in Gadamer’s work (Ricoeur 1974a, 1974b, 1976, 1981; see also Kaplan 2003). In summary, he does this through three important strategies. First, he draws on recent theological understanding of interpretation (see especially 1974b). Second, he uses ideas from literary theory, including both empirical linguistics and postmodern textual analysis, to develop the methods and methodology of hermeneutics (1976). Third, he builds a critical hermeneutics that is more securely focused as a critical inquiry; and if we conclude from the debate (discussed above) between Gadamer and Habermas that there is after all something in Habermas’ case that a critical hermeneutics is not possible using Gadamer’s framework, Ricoeur’s approach offers some distinctive advantages over both (Ricoeur 1981; Kaplan 2003; Thompson 1981). In particular, Thompson (1981) has decisively maintained the claim for this kind of interpretation theory to stand as a form of critical understanding in the developed form of the Frankfurt School. While in *The Conflict of Interpretations* (1974b), Ricoeur builds primarily on the analysis of religious texts to refine a set of techniques for analysis, in *The Rule of Metaphor* (1986), he draws a series of ideas from literary analysis. Taken together these develop both the specifics of interpretive inquiry and the underlying grounding for the approach. In both, Ricoeur powerfully connects hermeneutic traditions in phenomenology with broader critical theoretical and theological forms of understanding, showing how the conversation between them enriches each.

The debate on the ‘aesthetic turn’ brings the debates about Gadamer’s work, alongside Nietzsche and Ricoeur, into the forefront in IR in the early 2000s. Roland Bleiker (1997) made an important intervention in the debate on post-positivist international relations drawing on Nietzsche’s strategy of ‘forgetting’ knowledge in order to develop a critically based alternative. Pressed to develop his case in a debate with Gerald Holden, Bleiker helped to lay the foundations for an interpretive approach to IR, which focuses especially around artistic creation in different forms where it can be seen as challenging established cultural understandings of the international. But the ‘aesthetic turn’ (Bleiker 2003, 2006), although it has a direct bearing on how IR might draw on the resources of film, photography, poetry and drama to explore particular understandings, does not

need to focus on artistic creation and 'art objects' to have an important place in contemporary discussions of the subject. As Moore (2006) and others (e.g. Bleiker 2006; Edkins 2002) have shown, we can bring an interpretive approach to bear on the ways in which self-understanding of conflicts shapes responses to them. The construction of meanings in violence, and the construction of meanings through violence, forms an important contribution to the understanding of specific case studies that substantially enlarge our understanding of international relations, and which no other form of analysis could engage. As a famous British advertisement almost said for many years, hermeneutics reaches parts of the world that other analytic methods cannot touch. The approach here is always a cautious case study based one, which eschews attempts at broad generalisation, although it does not deny any possibility of learning from the individual case at all. It is also always an approach that is aware of its own ethical responsibility.

All this has importance for research strategies in IR. Gadamer's arguments suggest specific research strategies, which hold theory, methodology and research methods in close logical embrace. This is important not least because the claims of positivist inquiry are rooted partly in the view that the rigorous approach of empiricist research in IR cannot be matched by comparable rigour in interpretivist approaches. Gadamer's philosophy offers a theory and methodology that is able to strongly ground particular research projects. Its value lies also in its capacity to destabilise existing readings and interpretations. Research involves the exploration of meanings that are uncovered through textual interpretation, bearing in mind that a text may or may not be a written document – following Ricoeur we can see that a text is anything that can be textualised (especially, but not only, the essay 'What is a text?', Ricoeur 1981, 145–165). The research process that emerges from these debates is one that scholars in IR have access to through a critical reading of these debates. Following Gadamer and Ricoeur, this approach will include an attempt to develop a research programme that recognises the researcher's own role and positionality as well as the importance of the interlocking dialogues with text, context, rival interpretations and self as active researcher. How might a researcher check on the validity of the arguments and interpretations they might develop in response to a text, an event, a structure of argument or a performance? Is any and every interpretation equally valid? In what ways can interpretation speak truth to power – if at all? The means of checking on interpretations here is the search for truth within a given set of horizons where the horizon of the text meets that of the researcher in mutual interrogation, not in a given certainty. One does not need to be put out by the idea that there is always another interpretation, always another story to tell. That view is common to a range of interpretivist schools that have build on Gadamer (especially Vattimo) as well as those closer to Derrida (1998). But at the same time, there is no reason to accept any and every interpretation as equally valid. This is not a relativist project. What Kant feared at the end of *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (see above), that research based on a non-scientific research programme would slip into a pure relativism, does not arise. This is because while the research procedure mapped in Gadamer's work provides the

means to recognise a plurality of truths and forms of knowledge, it identifies valid interpretations and distinguishes them from specific falsehoods and self-interested knowledge claims. It also offers a focus on the detailed process of interpretation (which there is not space to explore further here) that enables the researcher to separate critical (emancipatory) knowledge claims from those that reproduce an established order. Narratives and narratology offer a range of possible insights (see Edkins 2006; Farrands 2001; Holden 2002; Moore 2006), all of which help us to interpret and access the international in ways that are important in themselves as well as quite distinctive from both other 'postmodern' and critical theoretical readings.

Women writers in post-conflict Lebanon: two stories by Emily Nasrallah

If there are many diverse ways of using interpretive approaches, and no single uniquely 'true' way of developing this kind of research, it is still important to take this approach to specific instances. It is helpful to think of distinctive contributions that a use of Gadamer's work can offer in the understanding of specific situations in the world; this is not merely an ivory tower exercise that has no contact with the world of individual's experience (phenomenologies' 'life world'). An interpretive approach that helps a reader to recover the story that an author is telling without co-opting it to their own power is important if interpretation is to avoid colonising the literature or the events it refers to (Gauch 2007: 81). We might adopt a number of oblique strategies to do this; some of these might enable the storyteller to speak for herself or to establish his/her own voice, but which also enable the story-teller to unveil a series of meanings that we can trace.

Post-conflict situations are difficult and problematic. We might ask whether peace is better restored through some form of 'peace and reconciliation' process as in post-apartheid South Africa and elsewhere, or through other kinds of social reconstruction. We might explore the best role of law and legal institutions, of non-governmental institutions or of particular social groups or social movements. But we might also ask how individuals and social groups come to terms with, make sense of, witness and record their experiences. In what ways do social conversations – which include literature – contribute to this so that one might understand better how, without pretending to invent a 'general law', in comparable situations lessons might be drawn or experience shared? How are these conversations understood through a gendered discussion (Afshah 2003)? In Lebanon after the civil war ended around 1990, politics has remained highly problematic and clan and social divisions have not healed very much despite the coming of an exhausted peace. In this situation, a particular authority has been attached to the ways in which Lebanese people have understood their own capacities for renewal and reflexion. This points towards the work of a group of women writers who are distinctive because they share a common background as women witnesses of conflict and its aftermaths (although they come from differ-

ent communities). There are good reasons to look particularly at the writing of Emily Nasrallah. Nasrallah is a leading figure among that group of women writers who refused to quit Beirut during the Lebanese civil war known as the 'decentrists' (for this context see Cooke 1987). Her work is directly concerned with the experience of the conflict, but she rarely writes about actual fighting. In a series of novels and short stories, she has mapped the struggles of people, mostly women, facing the difficulties of rebuilding lives and memorialising losses in the war. Her stories are oblique and carefully constructed. She explores the feelings and emotions, but also the capacity for strength and for active responses to events, on the part of her protagonists. These reveal sensitivities in the face of incomprehensible violence that begins to make sense of the impact of that violence; like a great deal of contemporary poetry, her work is open to readings at different levels and in different terms. She is very well known across the Arab world – this brief discussion is not the discovery of an 'unknown talent', although she could be much better known in the West. I will focus on two of her short stories since space is very limited.

In 'The Lost Mill' (Nasrallah 1989), Nasrallah portrays a woman searching for a lost family heritage in damaged land where the familiar landmarks have disappeared. The character (the story is written in the first person, but there is no reason to identify it with the author) has no name but is accompanied by her daughter as she treks into hills behind Beirut to find property that once belonged to her family on a site where she grew up. She stumbles around; the last twenty years has wiped out so much and her memories are inaccurate. Slowly, she is able to orient herself among the now unfamiliar landscape and in the process she is able to recall not just the site of the old mill she is looking for but also the personal relations that were built around it and the family rituals and storytellings that accompanied collective visits to the mill away from the city around harvest times. In the process, she rediscovers much about herself, her identity, her centre of gravity. The story stands also as a metaphor for the larger society, rediscovering a past amidst ruins that cannot be 'put right', but which can be found and recognised and remembered. The relationship between gender, identity, the specificity of place and the meanings that are constructed around their intersection is important to Nasrallah (and to her characters) because when they are affirmed the past can be kept firmly in the memory but in a perspective that does not encourage further bitterness or future conflict. The story captures something important to many people in Lebanon, where most live in cities but whose predecessors moved there from the countryside only two or three generations before, well within memory. It also suggests something important, although it is much too oblique to count as an overt political message, about the value of recognising the past as part of a process of reflexive adaptation to the future.

In a parallel story, 'Andromeda', again a first person narrative, Nasrallah tells of a woman walking on the beach. It is clear that she is near Beirut, and she can look north from the city towards Tripoli with the open sea on her left, the old city of Beirut behind her and the sprawling newer suburbs going up into the hills to her right. The narrator is a woman without a face (Gauch 2007: 55), but with

a recognisable voice, who persuasively invites the reader to understand her experience even as she explains it in rather oblique language. Walking perplexed and alone in the early morning, the narrator suddenly meets another woman who introduces herself as Andromeda, the saviour of an earlier city. That is, the Andromeda of the ancient Greek myths. But here Nasrallah makes a surprising and engaging leap of the imagination: Andromeda is no longer merely the victim of the dragon, sent to die as a sacrifice for her city by her father the king and rescued by Perseus. In Nasrallah's story, it is Andromeda herself who saved her city; she is the agent. She emphasises that she herself chose to act as a sacrifice and she herself confounded the creature set on her death. Neither a puppet nor a simple victim, she has recognised her own situation and acted in it. This is a powerful inversion of the traditional story, and it is not insignificant that she is drawing on a common Hellenistic tradition (which draws the whole Mediterranean together) and that is not simply the possession of Western Europeans. From Rubens to Burne-Jones and Tamara de Lempicka, Andromeda has been portrayed in Western art as a vulnerable victim waiting for a man to rescue her. Nasrallah's image is otherwise. In their meeting, the narrator and Andromeda ask how a city that is morally lost can be rebuilt. Andromeda tells how she is going from city to city with a message, but that she does not do anything herself to save them. All she does is to pass on the message, which is that if she could save her own city anyone else could do the same, that the rebuilding of a moral community is entrusted to each individual. In this project, women have a special role to play not because they share some 'natural' quality of empathy or intuition, but because of the nature of the conversations that they share and because, while responsibility also falls on men, women do not need to wait for male action to take up a challenge of social and moral reconstruction. The story has an impact even at a distance, but published in Beirut, first in a newspaper with a popular readership in 1992, it has all the greater resonance.

In conclusion

This chapter has sought to establish reasons why Gadamer's work needs to be taken seriously by anyone interested in making sense of the problems that present themselves in contemporary International Relations. I have not tried to argue that this work is without difficulties, but I have suggested that it is an indispensable element to any interpretive study. This is all the more the case if one starts with an understanding of IR as a subject that is concerned first of all with inter-cultural relations, where there are always layers of meaning and exchanges of understanding – or misunderstanding. Gadamer's work on interpretive understanding rests on a more secure foundation than that of earlier phenomenological or hermeneutic scholars. It provides a platform for the whole notion of 'interpretive dialogues' as a basis for understanding in IR. There are, it should be added, several simultaneous dialogues here. First, there is the dialogue between the interpreter and the text, each with their own contexts and each limited by their own horizons. The unveiling of meanings in the text requires

access to the traditions and contexts within which it makes sense, but any act of interpretation is also a creation of meaning, and, often, a creation of meanings in a different context from that in which an author or creator worked (whether the creation is aesthetic or not). But we do not need to accept these traditions and contexts uncritically. There is then a further layer of dialogue, the dialogue of different readings, Ricoeur's 'conflict of interpretations'. Different readings and understandings compete with each other in an open arena in which ideas and understandings are assessed against each other. There is then a third level of dialogue, between the interpreter and herself, the reflexivity grounded in a struggle for intellectual honesty that each person makes for themselves in coming to terms with the world. This reflexivity, as has been argued earlier, is not a sufficient condition for a knowledge claim – it does not of itself provide an 'epistemological warrant' for knowledge or truth; but in a world where scientific methods and empiricist assumptions stand in question, reflexivity provides one essential ingredient in an interpretive claim to truth. Gadamer's legacy to international relations, as worked out in the developments in Ricoeur (and others such as Bourdieu and Vattimo), is a strongly grounded research programme, a 'normal research programme' in Kuhn's phrase, well established enough to be a basis for research practice, but still worth critique and still capable of being critical. That critique will, of course, evolve through a series of ongoing critical interpretive dialogues.

5 Jan Patočka and global politics

Cerwyn Moore

Introduction

The Czech philosopher Jan Patočka died at the age of sixty-nine in a Prague hospital, on the 13th March 1977.¹ The then Czechoslovakian secret police had interrogated Patočka – one of the three spokesmen for the Charta 77 movement – over a period of eleven hours. It is widely believed that his treatment at the hands of the Czechoslovak authorities triggered a brain hemorrhage that ultimately led to his death. In the days immediately after he passed away, colleagues and protégés of Patočka such as Jiří Němec, and a small number of other associates, many of whom were linked to the Czechoslovakian dissident movement, made preparations to move his written work, *samizdat* publications, philosophical musings and political statements out of Central Eastern Europe.

Patočka's decision to take an active role as a spokesperson in Charta 77 placed him in a dangerous position at the forefront of the Czechoslovak dissident movement, which was itself a loose and informal community of non-conformists that had emerged following the popular anti-Soviet uprising in 1968, known as the Prague Spring (Skilling 1981). By the late 1970s the group had formed a charter, primarily concerned with the protection of civil and human rights. It drew inspiration from the fact that the Czechoslovak government had ratified the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and had signed the Helsinki Declaration, both legally binding international documents. In this way Charta 77 brought together a range of dissidents who not only challenged the Soviet-sponsored Czechoslovak government, but also called for a new 'orientation to basic human rights, to the moral dimension of political and private life' (Patočka 1989 [1977b]: 347). Indeed both the activities of Charta 77 and the role of specific writers such as Patočka are of interest to scholars of international relations insofar as they raise questions about dissidence, rupture and continental philosophy, themes that I have tackled elsewhere (Moore 2009b).²

The argument that follows here seeks to draw on Patočka's work, to meld some of his ideas into IR theory, and in so doing to enrich global politics. In this way the chapter should be read as an engagement that draws on what some writers in International Relations (IR) have labelled the 'best kept secret' of European philosophy (Jorgensen 2000). The chapter begins by situating the work

of Patočka, identifying key themes that link the social, political and cultural setting of Bohemia in the early twentieth century with emerging traditions in continental philosophy. The second part of the chapter examines two aspects of Patočkian philosophy; namely the solidarity of the shaken and care for the soul. The final part of the chapter applies both of these ideas by exploring the politics of care, and the politics of war. A final point of clarification is necessary, however, in order to locate the analysis that follows: the chapter should not be read as a detailed interrogation of Patočka's body of work because his comments on politics are fragmentary and unrefined, and because his reflections on Czechoslovak history and politics are often misunderstood.

Instead, his work acts as a point of departure that leads to a series of questions: how can we locate his approach to philosophy, especially when we consider the implications of what he calls the solidarity of the shaken and care for the soul; and can Patočkian philosophy, and for that matter work by other Central and Eastern European philosophers and political theorists, be used to contribute to studies of ethics, power and meaning in global politics?

The Bohemian legacy

It is fair to say that Patočka's work has been largely neglected in Western European philosophical circles, apart of course, from a small coterie of devoted experts based outside what was formerly known as Czechoslovakia. These experts continue to draw his work into mainstream theoretical debates concerned, for the most part, with the tension between ethics and politics (Shanks 1995; Lom 1999; Tucker 2000; Findlay 2002). Others, formerly or currently based within the Czech republic, such as Erazim Kohák, Ivan Chvatik or Martin Palouš have spent many years refining their own philosophical work, drawing explicitly on the legacy of Patočka (Kohák 1989; Chvatik 1992; Palouš 1990). Moreover some Patočkian ideas have also been touched upon in recent work on philosophy and political theory, particularly evident in the exegeses of Richard Rorty (1991). Elsewhere *Plato and Europe*, a philosophical treatise that focuses on the emergence of Europe as a civilisation, was recognised by the likes of Michel Foucault as a significant interpretation of the history of European philosophy, feeding into, and having similarities with, Foucault's work on the care of the self (Szakolczai 1994). Other French philosophers including Jacques Derrida (1996) and Paul Ricoeur drew inspiration from parts of his second major work, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1996b), which explored European history and critiqued technologisation and scientific rationalism, and which advanced a reading of responsibility tied to care for the soul. 'Heretical', for the Prague-based philosopher, had a double meaning; at once referring to his account of religion, and particularly Christianity, whilst also drawing attention to a heterodoxy of his account of philosophy. Indeed, Patočka's work was to become especially influential as it developed in tandem with political changes in Central Eastern Europe. As the Soviet control over parts of Central and Eastern Europe disintegrated, a concerted effort was made to draw on Patočka's

philosophical ideas, particularly through the policies of Václav Havel (1990, 1991, 1992). Patočka is, therefore, one of the most important Czech philosophers of the twentieth century whose work is representative of the richness of continental philosophy.

The milieu of the interwar period, and the development of phenomenology – a philosophical movement that focuses on intentionality, the way we deal with experience, and relate to phenomena – in Central Europe, informed a whole host of writers, many of whom moved Edmund Husserl's phenomenological work in new directions. For example Roman Ingarden (1972), Alfred Schutz (1974), Martin Heidegger and his students such as Hannah Arendt, all drew on phenomenological ideas. Evidently, Heidegger's work on technology and existential philosophy helped Patočka (2002) to develop a phenomenology of movement and refine his account of the philosophy of history. Similarly Arendt's analysis of practical active life, as well as her distinction between work and action, the household and the *polis*, served as a catalyst for Patočka (1996b) to develop his own reading of the philosophy of history. Their work surfaces in a number of places in the first four of his *Heretical Essays*, which focus on 'prehistory', the 'beginnings of history' and 'historical meaning', and the European heritage. Meanwhile students and colleagues of Husserl including Eugene Fink (2000), and of course Patočka himself (1985, 1996a), also developed Husserl's phenomenology in a distinctive way. As Chvatik argues, Patočka, made a subtle contribution to the phenomenological movement (Chvatik 2004a, 2004b, 2004c). In the most general sense then, his work may be used to help stake out features of a Central European philosophical movement focusing upon an intervention in the philosophy of being.

However, placing Patočkian philosophy in a particular movement is difficult due both to the changing conditions in which it evolved and the complexity of the classical philosophy that informed it. Nevertheless it may be argued that Patočka's work is essentially Czechoslovakian – following the formation of a Czechoslovak state in the immediate aftermath of the Great War. Besides this, Central European politics in the first part of the twentieth century – the philosophy of Husserl's friend and fellow Moravian, Thomas Masaryk – and the legacy of Bohemia captured in this region and era all influenced Patočka's philosophy. Erazim Kohák places Patočka's work in the tradition of other Czech and Central European philosophers such as Jan Comenius, Edmund Husserl and the first President of Czechoslovakia, Thomas Masaryk (Kohák 1989: 119). More generally, while Patočka foresaw the charges of idealism and Eurocentricism that could be laid against his work, and while questions remain about the coherence of his canon of work (Mourel 1999), broad areas of concern can be identified; they are the role of history and European identity, the plurality of phenomenology and, in the latter part of his life, Czechoslovak politics and philosophy.

More specifically, though, Patočka is representative of a group that emerged in Prague in the early 1930s. The *Cercle Philosophique de Prague pour L'entendement Humain* – which hosted talks by the likes of Husserl – included Ludwig Langrebe, Oskar Kraus, Max Brod, Emil Utitz and J.B. Kozák. At

around the same time another group based in Prague, the *Cercle linguistique de Prague*, or Prague School of Linguists, also began to establish itself after being founded by the Czech academic Vilém Mathesius. The *Cercle linguistique* included Russian émigrés and Czech literary scholars such as Jan Mukařovský, who also attended some meetings of the *Cercle Philosophique*. And much like the *Cercle Philosophique*, the group attracted intellectuals from parts of Central and Eastern Europe, benefiting from the position of Prague in Central Europe, and its newfound intellectual and political freedoms. The legacy of the *Cercle Philosophique* continued beyond the death of Husserl in 1936, the fragmentation of the *Cercle* throughout 1937 and 1938, and the closure of its publication house, *Academia*, in 1939. Thus while I recognise that Patočka was an important interpreter of Husserlian phenomenology, and developed his work within this tradition, I am arguing here that he also provided a bridge to other branches of this movement within interwar Czechoslovakia, blending aspects of post-Husserlian and post-Heideggerian philosophy in novel ways.

Furthermore Patočka resisted totalitarianism, both Nazi ideology and the Marxist-Leninism of Stalinist Russia, and this informed his work on philosophy, although his research was curbed throughout the Second World War and thereafter in the Cold War, when Marxism-Leninism became the ‘official’ philosophy of communist Eastern Europe. He worked as a librarian, translator and educator until 1965. Then, in the period between 1965 and 1970, and against the backdrop of a thaw in official dogma – or what became known as ‘socialism with a human face’ – Patočka returned to a philosophical and ontological consideration of responsibility indicating that human life is ‘inherently historical, grounded in freedom and acted in relation to being’ (Findlay 2002: 134). It was in this period that he began to refine his reading of solidarity, power and responsibility, which linked philosophy, politics and culture.

In sum, Patočkian thought is of interest in at least four ways: first, Patočka has produced much work of note, and is considered an important and influential Czech philosopher, particularly in continental circles. Second, his work provides a bridge between Husserlian and the different strands of post-Husserlian phenomenology. Third, building on these points, Patočkian philosophy emerged and transformed Tomas Masaryk’s ‘democratic’ or ‘metaphysical humanism’,³ blending post-First World War political ideas with continental philosophy. Finally his work on dissidence and solidarity inform work that challenges totalitarianism, offering a grounded, theoretically nuanced reading of responsibility and power, ethics and solidarity that drew on Czechoslovak history; albeit a vision of Czechoslovak history and politics that has caused some debate. At least some of these themes – including a reading of rupture and responsibility – can be traced in Patočka’s account of the solidarity of the shaken.

The solidarity of the shaken: rupture

One of the most important aspects of Patočkian philosophy, namely the solidarity of the shaken, seeks to shed light on the complex relationship between

ethics and politics, and indeed the moment of rupture in history, which affords a space for the reconsideration of this relationship. The Sixth of Patočka's *Heretical Essay's* provides an intriguing insight into the solidarity of the shaken, which, he argues, is often generated through the experience of war:

The means by which the state is overcome is the *solidarity of the shaken*; the solidarity of those who are capable of understanding what life and death are all about, and so what history is about. That history is the conflict of *mere life*, barren and chained by fear, with *life at the peak*, life that does not plan for the ordinary days of a future that sees clearly that everyday, its life and its 'peace', have an end.

(Patočka 1996b: 134)

The solidarity of the shaken, therefore, draws attention to rupture, to critical events, and also to alternative accounts of power that underpinned the dissident movement. But Patočka, much like Masaryk before him, argues that a form of civic responsibility and a sense of identity emerge from events in history in times of crises. Acts of courage drive, transform and reinscribe communities. The successive political crises in Czechoslovakia in 1938, 1948 and 1968 were moments of rupture, not shaped by cowardice but by a failure to act courageously.

Ivan Chvatik traces the development of the idea of the solidarity of the shaken, tying it to the experience of the intelligentsia in the Prague Spring of 1968. He notes that Patočka had not then formulated his concept of 'the solidarity of the shaken, but spoke about a solidarity able to change the world' (Chvatik 1992: 165). However, this view was too idealistic, and the failures of the Prague Spring led Patočka to reconsider how idealistic and material forces could be reconsidered as a result of self-introspection, and reactions to persecution generated through a process of 'shaking'. In a similar way, Aviezer Tucker notes that the effect of being shaken can create 'a community of shattered persons aware of the meaning of life through confrontation with death', who 'prefer meaningful life at the apex to mere life for its own sake' (1992: 118). For Tucker, the 'community of the shattered' emerges as a result of a confrontation with death, and a consideration of sacrifice, whereas for Chvatik, the solidarity of the shaken points towards rupture, which generates unity, not necessarily tied into sacrifice (Tucker 2000; Chvatik 2004a). Nonetheless both argue that a particular form of dissident community and the solidarity of the shaken are central to Patočka's philosophy.

For Patočka himself, the 'constant shaking of the naïve sense of meaningfulness is itself a new mode of meaning, a discovery of its continuity with the mysteriousness of being and what-is as a whole' (Patočka 1996b: 61). In other words, the process of shaking engenders insight into new meaning, through conversion and transformation, and through initiating dialogue. But Patočka goes further, indicating that the 'shaking of the naïve sense of certainty which governs humankind' generates a 'more profound sense of unity, revolving around politics and philosophy' (Patočka 1996b: 61). Thus encounter, shaking and rupture

create the conditions in which a political and philosophical articulation of ethics comes to the fore; thereby shedding light on the moment of transition and individual epiphany, as well as ethical transformation in communities. Together then these themes become interwoven with dissidence, which, in turn, inscribes power and informs accounts of solidarity (Bleiker 2000).

Indeed, for Patočka, the struggle for freedom leads to a 'spirit of unity in conflict' (Patočka 1996b: 41). But this struggle for freedom is not necessarily destructive, it is 'the creator of unity' (Chvatik 2004a: 59). As a result of thinking through the idea of Christianity and the relationship with solidarity, Patočka begins to sketch an alternative reading of responsibility, one that is indeed very 'unchristian'. For Chvatik, what 'Patočka stands for is a kind of non-Christian Christianity – a religion which though it does not have God, remains Christian in character' (Chvatik 2004a: 69). Still further, Patočka places emphasis on revelation, or perhaps more aptly, conversion or transformation, to describe the historical shift from Christianity to a new principle of materialism in Europe. As Chvatik argues then, Patočkian philosophy retains an awareness of religious doctrines, and could be read as 'demythologized Christianity' that is linked to an existential reading of responsibility stemming from the problemacy of the human condition (2004a). Patočka's reading of responsibility stemming from the solidarity of the shaken is, therefore, communal and yet agential, practical and yet partly spiritual, and implicitly woven into his account of the practice of politics.

With these themes of solidarity, and the discovery of new meaning through the process of 'shaking' in mind, Stephen Chan, the first in IR to draw on Patočkian philosophy in any great detail, has sought to employ his work so as to develop a sustained engagement with alternative ethical possibilities in global politics (Chan *et al.* 2001). But Chan also explores the 'move' itself – highlighting the importance of the *mêlée* as a metaphor for the exchange of, and transformation of, ethical and political ideas. The *mêlée* refers to the merger of physical armies in battle, but their actions also create the ground for new value-driven readings of community, based on the very experience of a clash (Chan *et al.* 2001: 102). This is, perhaps, another way in which Patočka's work can be deployed in global politics, both through his reading of responsibility and fierce rejection of totalitarianism, and through his engagement with politics, philosophy and culture as a way to read alternative accounts of power and solidarity.

In the context of the argument in this chapter, Patočka's account of the solidarity of the shaken presents three interrelated, and yet distinctive features. In one sense, solidarity at a local and group level is significant, because it generates a distinctive sense of power infused in dissident communities. But this foreground of community also includes an openness, and a plural reading of subjectivity shaped by the lived experience of extreme situations, of the solidarity of the shaken. Finally, the idea of solidarity and rupture come together to form a more profound sense of power, invoking dignity, compassion and responsibility, which retains a theological trace. Yet these threads also run through Patočka's account of care for the soul.

Care for the soul and the heritage of Europe

Patočka argues that a distinctive feature of Europe is the philosophical and spiritual heritage which he calls care for the soul. He notes that ‘philosophy must be at the same time care for the soul (*epimeleia tēs psuchēs*), ontology and theology – and all that in care for the *polis*’ (Patočka 1996b: 104). This motif resurfaces in *The Heretical Essays* and a series of other apartment seminars collected and published together as a single book entitled *Plato and Europe*. In these essays, care for the soul is explicitly linked to Greek philosophy. Patočka goes further, exploring how care for the soul has shaped history, and, indeed, how aspects of the Greek *polis* became embedded in European life. For Patočka, the Platonic theme of care became linked to a reading of the soul, the user of the body. According to Greek philosophers such as Plato, to be a human being is to be true to the self, and this, in turn, leads to a separation of the care of death from that of the care for the soul. Thus, for Patočka, Plato brought care for the soul to light. In Patočka’s fourth piece in *The Heretical Essays*, he argues that care for the soul is the sedimentation and legacy of ancient Greek philosophy that frames his account of ‘life in truth’ (Patočka 1996b: 81–82). He writes:

Care for the soul is the bequest of ancient Greek philosophy. Care for the soul means that truth is something not given once and for all, nor merely a matter of observing and acknowledging the observed, but a life-long inquiry, a self controlling, a self-unifying intellectual and vital practice.

(Patočka 1996b: 82)

Even though the link between care for the soul and the idea of Europe seems controversial, radical even, this theme is reiterated throughout Patočka’s other works, stressing the role of care for the soul as a reflective activity that works both through individuals and through society (Patočka 2002).⁴ Crucially though, he argues that the practice of care for the soul is not a mental activity but a specific practice, a concern with the self, drawing attention to different iterations of responsibility, solidarity and the search for truths, within the broader realm of European political history (Patočka 2002: 71–90). According to Edward Findlay, these concerns manifest themselves in Patočka’s work, in ‘which freedom is described explicitly as relating not merely to the individual but to the society’ (Findlay 1999: 408). The degree to which the individual acts to protect the freedom of the self and society – their courage and sacrifice – as well as their reading of care and compassion, of ‘life in truth’ shaped Patočka’s role in the Charta 77 movement as it came into being in the 1970s.

In *Body, Community, Language, World*, Patočka also contends that ‘existence is movement’ (1998: 144). Here Patočka is attempting to explore how phenomenology and the ‘life world’ relate to the natural world, thereby situating what is distinctively human. He then goes on to identify how lived experience is formed, produced and reinscribed. But movement is also tied into his reading of the soul. In other words, the movement ‘of the soul in its most proper sense of the word is

precisely care for the self' (Patočka 2002: 124). Thus, the soul exists, although it is not material or physical, nor is it a thing; instead it is ontological. And in 'this domain of being, the soul discovers itself, through its own movement, through thinking self definition and reflection on this defining: precisely this is care for the soul, care for oneself' (Patočka 2002: 124). Thus, care for the soul interpenetrates the history of Europe, giving rise to European identity, and thus the very idea of Europe. Since the sixteenth century, Patočka notes, the ontological aspect of care for the soul has been replaced by 'the care to *have*' which, in turn, led to the 'will to rule' (Patočka 1996b: 83).

Although Patočka was often inconsistent in his use of care for the soul, it does point towards both strong and weak readings of responsibility, and, in so doing, advances a critique of modernity (Tucker 2000). Despite this, the account of care for the soul as deployed by Patočka highlights a particular trajectory of European history; Socrates and Plato illustrated that care was a founding value of Europe as a cultural and historical entity, with the search for truth in a free community. Needless to say, both dissidence and *samizdat* linked the idea of care for the soul as a search for truth, in a particular context of resistance to totalitarian rule in Czechoslovakia, with a sense of community of the shaken, following the two world wars, and the failures of the Prague Spring. Hence the relationship between care and European identity is brought to the fore, as is the notion of an unending search for truth and responsibility; advanced as a dissident reaction to persecution by the communist Czech authorities and, more recently, as a search for solidarity in a post-Cold War setting.

Furthermore, Patočka argues, in contrast both to the critique of Christianity in Dostoyevsky and in a slightly different way to the nihilism of Nietzsche, that a crisis existed and became intertwined with humanity at the very beginning of the European era, and that was a crisis of the soul. For Patočka, 'the soul as within us which is related to that unperishing and imperishable component of the whole which makes possible truth and in truth the being not of a superman but of an authentically human being' (Patočka 1996b: 93). Care for the soul is, therefore, ontological, 'the locus of our relationship to our being' (Findlay 2002: 63) (see also, the chapter on Levinas in this collection). The soul is thus a human characteristic that transcends the material world, which acts in moments when we encounter the possibility of exerting control over our fate, when we must decide between good and evil, when truth can be recognised and realised. Linked to this account of the soul, is his reading of the shaking of history, which ruptures, shocks and jars accounts of being. From this perspective then, Patočka advances a form of ethics linked to movement, a movement in pursuit of good that has its roots in classical European philosophy and history.

Patočka argues that care for the soul is a central pillar of European, or rather Western, civilisation. The very idea of Europe is formed around the theme of care for the soul; a praxis that leaves a trace or mark, informed by reflection on life. Care for the soul captures movement, a search or journey towards humanity, which is 'capable of truth' (Kohák 1989: 117). Truth, for Patočka, reveals itself; it is, in essence, a way of living. By drawing attention to ontological questions

about one's life and one's self, and by entertaining a reading of individual, philosophical and political 'responsibility', he sets up a consideration of ethics that is not restricted by modern, Western metaphysics. Once again though, Patočka is also advocating an essential aspect or characteristic of Western or European history and, indeed, life; freedom informed by reflection. Freedom though, is not part of the natural condition in which humanity is forged, as in liberal philosophy. Instead, the function of reflection and the role of 'shaking' produce experience that is neither given nor arbitrary. But courage and sacrifice produce meaning, framed reflexively, through movement; and this movement or journey away from everydayness, offers insight into the truth about human existence. For Kohák, Patočka's latter works explored 'what is distinctive about Europe and basic to Western culture', that is, the 'conception of human life, both individual and social ... the meaning of being human, for truth, justice, goodness, beauty' (Kohák 1989: 119). For Patočka freedom gifts us with the ability to make choices, to contemplate the manifold ethical challenges of the future. In other words it pushes individuals 'into an awareness of their own historical nature, their own possibilities for freedom via the assumption of a self-reflective stance and the rejection of ideology' (Findlay 2002: 141). According to Patočka, history, and particularly Czechoslovak history, had been marked, not necessarily by cowardice, but by a lack of courage. In this way Patočka laid the ground for a reading of freedom and responsibility, which did not shirk away from difficult questions of sacrifice.

The politics of care: ethics and responsibility

Since its inception as a discipline, a range of other scholars have attempted to stake out aspects of normative IR informed by non-state readings of responsibility (Bietz 1979; Frost 1986). While some post-structural interventions did engage with the issue of responsibility (Campbell 1998b; Jabri 1998), little was done to fully explore its corollary, the politics of care.⁵ Elsewhere, however, care had been identified in the work of some feminist scholars. One such scholar, Fiona Robinson, argued that a shift had taken place, as part of the post-positivist turn, which challenged the dominance of political realism and positivist methodology, and which, in turn, had limited readings of agency as well as the contextual parameters of care in global politics. According to Robinson, one aspect of care, and more specifically care ethics, is that they are linked to 'particular relations among concrete individuals', which means it is 'profoundly contextual' (Robinson 1997: 123). The emphasis on specific contexts draws attention to alternative relations of dependence, illustrating that IR 'is already constituted through accounts of ethical possibility' (Robinson 1997: 117). In this way care is always implicit within global politics, often manifesting itself in interpersonal accounts of ethics. In effect, responsibility comes with, or is tied to, care.

However, the politics of care – both of the self and other – its relational and contextual character provide themes that run through global politics. Embedded

with it, though, is a further feature or characteristic – care is also agential. Individual acts of courage, empathy and compassion punctuate a broader civic ethos of responsibility (Patočka 1989 [1977a]: 345). Such themes underpin a host of anti-totalitarian campaigns in Central Eastern Europe, and link a host of other new social movements. For instance these themes, linked to human rights, can be traced in the woman's movement at Greenham Common, the organisation known as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, in Argentina, or the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa. Of course, in Central and Eastern Europe, Charta 77, and the Polish solidarity movement, alongside the peace movements in Western Europe provide further examples of an admixture of peoples rallied by the drive to establish an ethical, social and political space in their own countries. In all of these cases the politics of care affords space for an agential and reflexive reading of power. This account of power is linked to domination, but it is also enabling, insofar as it generates a sense of unity – echoing some of the ideas advanced by Patočka. In effect, this theme informed resistance linked to aesthetics – deployed in many forms, from murals, graffiti and music, to poetry and performance art – which together were designed to challenge the dominant modes of governmentality.⁶ But can these themes be grafted on to an alternative reading of the political? This, I argue, can be achieved through an account of a reflexive philosophy, which gives rise to the idea of life 'lived in truth'.

As I have indicated, Patočka makes use of, and adds to Heidegger's reading of care (*Sorge*) by blending this theme with classic philosophy (Heidegger 1989: 318ff). Indeed, Patočka retains a Heideggerian critique of metaphysics, but draws attention to the importance of the Socratic dialogues, as a way to tease out aspects of care (Findlay 2002: 38). The focus on the nurturing aspect of care, on care for the soul, draws attention to care as concern for or about something, and care as something that can be given. Of course, both of these aspects of care are tied to responsibility. To be responsible is to care. The rejection of a totalising metaphysics leads to a reading of freedom, of life lived in truth, shaped by care for the soul. Care manifests itself in 'one way as a complex plan of existence, in another as the plan of a new political life, and yet another as the clarification of what the soul is in itself' (Patočka 2002: 86).

The concerns with care and responsibility are at their most pronounced in Patočka's work on 'Negative Platonism', which he advanced in a series of papers and apartment seminars in the mid 1950s (1989 [1953]: 175–206). Patočka notes,

negative Platonism is that precarious position of philosophy that cannot lean on anything on earth or in heaven of which Kant spoke. It is, however, always rich because it preserves for humans one of their essential possibilities, philosophy purified of metaphysical claims ... it preserves for humans the possibility of trusting in truth that is not relative and mundane, even though it cannot be formulated positively, in terms of content.

(1989 [1953]: 204)

Furthermore, the politics of care influenced resistance to totalitarianism, and the emergence of solidarity movements in Central Eastern Europe. In particular, the bureaucratised and depersonalised life – the banality of totalitarian politics – generated a dissident movement that challenged this system, but that also critiqued the rationalism of other Western ideologies. In ‘The Power of the Powerless’, Václav Havel writes that the system itself is driven by a ‘blind *automatism*’ (Havel 1990: 30), which produces, and reproduces, totalitarian ideology. This ideology, Havel writes, produces a system in which:

the complete degradation of the individual is presented as his or her liberation; depriving people of information is called making it available; the use of power to manipulate is called the public control of power ... the repression of culture is called its development ... farcical elections become the highest form of democracy; military occupation becomes fraternal assistance.

(1990: 30)

Against the backdrop of totalitarianism, Havel argues, ‘individuals’ are forced to ‘live within a lie’ (1990: 31). Although it is difficult to identify or demarcate a Havelian doctrine, it is fair to say that Patočka’s account of ‘care for the soul’ informs Havel’s account of resistance to totalitarianism. The residual influence of ‘care for the soul’ also informed Havel’s critique of consumerism and support for democratic freedom, which came together in his reading of life ‘lived in truth’ (Havel 1992; see also, Findlay 1999). Life lived in truth, then, provides the framework for a reading of responsibility that is agential, and yet communal, insofar as it is sensitive to the features of human life – problemacy and historicity – which inform philosophy and politics in the *polis*. From this springs an account of civic responsibility, rather than a form of human rights, which embraces a different reading of power from that associated with states, either embodied in states, or with the post-structural critiques of states (Campbell 1998a; Dillon 1996).

Similarly the focus on existential disruption, on ‘the shaken’, points towards shock and revelation as a way into reading new political and ethical possibilities explicitly informed by dissidence as ‘an authoritative form of power’, which provides alternative ‘markers of certainty’ (Wydra 2007: 267). Philosophical interventions evoking Patočka’s account of ‘life in truth’, as well as other Havelian work on the resistance to totalitarianism, offer at least one way of reimagining, reconstructing even, ethical forms of political responsibility (Patočka 1985: 139–155; Havel 1991: 51–83). One reason for this is that the conditions of totalitarianism, as well as the state and ideological suppression of freedom, can actually engender a sense of community and solidarity – and an ethics of care – that in itself produces a power of the powerless.

The politics of war: the frontline experience

In the fifth of his six *Heretical Essays* entitled 'Is Technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?', Patočka advances the idea that revolutionary conflicts in the nineteenth century became known as 'wars of liberation', which themselves became co-joined in the twentieth century with a 'disintegration of old forms of *ethos*' (Patočka 1998: 113). For Patočka then, the twentieth century and the shift to a technoscientific age of rationalism in Europe did not solve the problem of ethics, or, in other words, how to 'live in a humanly authentic way, as history shows we can' (Patočka 1996b: 117). Instead Patočka argues that a consideration of 'life in truth' is more difficult 'because the matrix of its possibilities does not include the relation of humans to themselves and so also to the world as a whole and to its fundamental mystery' (Patočka 1996b: 117). In fact technological civilisation, according to Patočka, limited the twin themes of problemacity and historicity, which are essential for understanding human freedom. The ontology of the individual – the freedom of the human person – or the freedom that entails a genuine problem of the individual and generates problemacity, as well as the historicity needed to live authentically – the responsibility of understanding history – that together inform life lived in truth, are restricted in modern technological civilisations. These limitations, in turn, restrict the possibility for individuals, societies and the *polis* to live ethically.

In one sense, Patočka identifies the frontline experience within war as a key catalyst for transformation. The frontline experience produces, or at the very least prompts, a particular form of philosophical reflection for individuals, groups, societies and communities. Harking back the solidarity of the shaken, the frontline experience becomes a site of 'potential freedom' for human beings. Kohák notes that the experience of the frontline, of war, may indeed act as a force that can shock or jar individuals into generating a sense of community informed by responsibility (Kohák 1989: 134). And it is this often overlooked aspect of *polemos* that Patočka explores throughout the last of the six *Heretical Essays*, 'Wars of the Twentieth Century, and the Twentieth Century as War'. In the latter part of the essay he turns to the Heraclitian symbol of *polemos*, again echoing some of the work of Heidegger, but, as ever, arriving at a distinctly different reading of political philosophy concerned with being human. *Polemos* is used to evoke meaning, which is neither shaped by radical contingency, nor accepting of a passive account of life and politics, but is instead shaped by struggle. And it is struggle – analogous to an attempt to live life in truth, insofar as it can be beneficial but may also lead to sacrifice – that informs his account of the frontline. According to Patočka:

War can show that among the free some are capable of becoming gods, of touching the divinity of that which forms the ultimate unity and mystery of being. Those, though, are the ones that understand that *polemos* is nothing one-sided, that it does not divide but unites, that adversaries are only seemingly whole, that in reality they belong to each other in the common shaking

of the everyday, that they have thus touched that which lasts in everything and forever because it is the source of all being and is thus divine.

(Patočka 1996b: 136)

Therefore, the frontline experience is employed to challenge the bureaucratisation of society around the ideology of communism, which itself argued for the replacement of the open hostilities of the Second World War, with the Cold War – a conflict or non-violent war, if you will – used to manipulate society. But for Patočka, ‘Humankind will not attain peace by devoting and surrendering itself to the criteria of everydayness and of its promises’ (Patočka 1996b: 135). Therefore war is not only about violent military confrontation but also about the transformation of politics and society. Here Patočka returns to the solidarity of the shaken which is

the solidarity of those who understand. Understanding, though, must in the present circumstances involve not only the basic level, that of slavery and of freedom with respect to life, but also to entail an understanding of the significance of science and technology, of the Force that we are releasing.

(Patočka 1996b: 135)

According to Patočka the key event of the twentieth century – which, incidentally, also led to the foundation of the discipline of IR – was the First World War (Patočka 1996b: 128–129). The First World War was decisive, shifting the European models of modern governance from imperialism to ideology, and infusing war and politics with a pseudo-scientific rationalism. By this Patočka means that ‘wars of the twentieth century’, and more specifically the Cold War, was organised around a strategy of immobilisation, as a way to continue the confrontation between East and West.

Conclusion

The preliminary introduction to the work of Jan Patočka offered here sets up a host of alternative directions for the study of power, politics and continental philosophy, ethics and International Relations. In the first part of the chapter, I introduced the work of Jan Patočka, focusing on his account of the solidarity of the shaken and care for the soul, shedding light on power and responsibility, particularly in the context of Europe. But the reading of life lived in truth, alongside the evocation of a form of power that straddles the realms of agency and community, is, therefore, also of value in the normative turn in IR. Thereafter, I have argued that the work of Patočka and the Charta 77 movement are significant, insofar as they offer a way to engage with alternative ethical possibilities based on care and compassion, the plurality of the phenomenological family, locating Patočka as an important philosopher in his own right. The chapter then is part of a larger debate about the application of continental philosophy to the study of global politics. In this way, even though Patočka did not engage with

the issue of philosophical hermeneutics, perhaps leaving this to Hans-Georg Gadamer, he does provide an important link to other branches of phenomenology, including its ethical and interpretive form (Gadamer, Ricoeur, Levinas), and in its more philosophically orientated form (Heidegger).

Notes

- 1 I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Institute for Advanced Studies at Charles University in Prague, where the ideas advanced in this chapter were first developed, presented and reviewed in 2005. I would also like to thank Ivan Chvatik with whom I have had many conversations about Jan Patočka, and whose knowledge of Czech philosophy has shaped my own thinking about the dissident movement and my own understanding of phenomenological philosophy.
- 2 Some parts of this chapter appeared in a different format in the paper, 'Heretical Conversations with Continental Philosophy' (2009b).
- 3 For more on the relationship between Patočka and Masaryk, see Patočka's lectures on Czechoslovakia. See also Erazim Kohák's (1989) biographical introduction to Patočka's work, which includes a translation of his 1936 piece on Masaryk and Husserl's conception of spiritual crisis.
- 4 Care for the soul may overlap, obliquely, with Heidegger's ideas of 'unveiling the truth'. See, for example, Patočka, *Plato and Europe* (2002: 157–179).
- 5 The issue of care, is, however, explored in some accounts and stories of friendship in IR. See Farrands (2001).
- 6 In Czechoslovakia the manifold forms of resistance, often drawing on aesthetics, included the use of parody and satire echoing a broader concern with resistance to authoritarian forms of communism in Eastern Europe (see the chapter on Bakhtin in this collection).

6 Emmanuel Levinas, ethics and rupturing the political

Andrea den Boer

I cannot, nor would I even try to, measure in a few words the oeuvre of Emmanuel Levinas. It is so large that one can no longer glimpse its edges.... We already see innumerable signs, well beyond France and Europe, in so many words and so many languages, in all the translations, courses, seminars, conferences, etc., that the reverberations of this thought will have changed the course of philosophical reflection in our time, and of our reflection *on* philosophy, on what orders it according to ethics, according to another thought of ethics, responsibility, justice, the State, etc., according to another thought of the other, a thought that is newer than so many novelties because it is ordered according to the absolute interiority of the face of the Other.

(Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*)

Introduction

The thought of philosopher and Judaic scholar Emmanuel Levinas (1906–95) is indeed reverberating throughout much of the world, but its influence is more openly acknowledged within the humanities than the social sciences. Emmanuel Levinas is most often referred to as a philosopher of ethics or as a philosopher of the ‘other’, whose writings fit within the phenomenological tradition – yet call into question the phenomenological method – of Husserl and Heidegger. His writings are well known to those interested in French philosophy, phenomenology, Judaic studies or literary theory, but Levinas’s ideas have remained in the margins of international political thought.

Emmanuel Levinas is an important philosophical and political thinker, not just because he points us to the importance of ethics and reveals it as the site of meaning and knowledge, but because there is a moral force to his writings. Levinas provides a phenomenological analysis of the interhuman relation in which he finds the preoriginal moment of responsibility and ethics, and then moves beyond this analysis to challenge philosophy, and politics, to be more ethical, more responsible. By showing us that the state and its institutions are actually beholden to justice and morality, and hence to the ethical, Levinas causes us to rethink the meaning of the political.

Entering into a dialogue with Levinas within international politics requires that we critically examine the meaning of philosophy, politics, ethics and

Judaism within Levinas's texts, and explore the relationship between these concepts as well as the tensions within them. Recent discussions of the implications of Levinas's ideas for international relations have pointed to the problem of politicising Levinas's ethics, and to Levinas's support for the state (particularly the state of Israel), concluding that Levinas's politics are not sufficiently ethical or 'Levinasian'. Thus my aim in this chapter will be to explore these two problems through a focus on what I see as two key tensions in Levinas's writings. The first concerns the meaning of the self–other ethical encounter in the presence of others – or the move from ethics to politics – in order to ascertain whether the ethical can indeed function within the political. Can the ethical subject move from the individual to the level of the institution and the state or other community? A possible answer to this question, I will argue, can be found in Levinas's Judaic writings, wherein we also find the second tension concerning the ideal versus real state of Israel. Levinas's Talmudic texts point us to an articulation of an alternative political project, a project realised, according to Levinas, through the establishment of the state of Israel. If the actual state of Israel fails to live up to Levinas's idealised state, what are the implications for his writings on the formation of the just state? Is the 'state beyond the state' – the ideal state – only possible if Judaism is found at its core, or is a just state possible outside the teachings of the Torah? What, precisely, is the relationship between Judaism and the ethical–political project envisioned by Levinas? Understanding the relationship between the key elements within these tensions will enable us to assess the implications of Levinas's thought for political theory and politics.

Violence, politics and ethics

Emmanuel Levinas's philosophical, political and religious texts were motivated by a concern for the violence of the twentieth century, from the violence of philosophical and political thought to the violence of wars. In particular, Levinas was concerned with the violence towards the other, a violence 'found in any action in which one acts as if one were alone to act: as if the rest of the universe were there only to *receive* the action' (Levinas 1990a: 6). While acts of violence were everywhere, Levinas also found examples of morality, even 'saintliness', and through an application of the phenomenological method, attempted to explain what makes ethics possible. In contrast to acts of violence, Levinas pointed to the ethical act of awakening to the other – the moment in which the self faces the other and subjectivity arises as responsibility for the other. The other who faces is not 'representation or the presence of a facial form; it is not a given, nor something to be taken ... It signifies mortality and ethical commandment before appearing' (Levinas 1994c: 182). Thus ethics is exterior to politics and society. This relation with the other is 'preeminently non-violence, for instead of offending my freedom it calls it to responsibility and founds it' (Levinas 1969: 203).

Responding to the other, means in part, that 'one has to respond to one's right to be', to account for the way in which my existence, however unintentional, has

'been the usurpation of spaces belonging to another man whom I have already oppressed or starved, or driven out into a third world' (Levinas 1989: 82). When facing and responding to the other I am confronted with a command that issues forth as an expression: 'You shall not commit murder' (Levinas 1969: 199). This infinite resistance to murder, Levinas tells us, 'gleams in the face of the Other, in the total nudity of his defenceless eyes, in the nudity of the absolute openness of the Transcendent' (Levinas 1969: 199). Exposure to the other awakens me prior to any dialogue, an awakening to something within. The other who faces me and awakens me to this responsibility thus obligates me, according to Levinas. My response can be an acceptance or refusal of this obligation, but through this response, my subjectivity arises.

Responsibility refigures the notion of subjectivity – typically interpreted as consciousness – and gives rise to my freedom by 'arousing my goodness' (Levinas 1969: 200). 'Subjectivity is being hostage. This notion reverses the position where the presence of the ego to itself appears as the beginning or as the conclusion of philosophy' (Levinas 1981: 127). The subject is born in the exposure to the neighbour, 'in the beginninglessness of an anarchy and in the endlessness of obligation' (1981: 140). Unlike conceptions of responsibility in normative theories in international relations (IR), this responsibility does not originate in a vow or decision, nor is it made possible by a set of rules or commands; it originates in subjection to the other. International relations scholars, such as David Campbell, have suggested that this refiguring of subjectivity and responsibility helps us to respond to the problem of ethical life, to end the hatred of the other man.¹ Campbell asserts that Levinas's refiguring of subjectivity gives rise to a general ethico-political conclusion: "'we" are always already ethically situated, so making judgments about conduct depends less on what sort of rules are invoked as regulations, and more on how the interdependencies of our relations with Others are appreciated' (Campbell 1996: 131). There is indeed a trace of Levinasian thought in Campbell's assertion that when it comes to situations such as the crises in the Balkans or Kosovo that there is no way in which we can claim to be without responsibility, but the 'we' to whom this refers is problematic.

Despite claims of wanting to deterritorialise responsibility, Campbell is assigning responsibility to the state, which, even in traditional IR theory, cannot be easily substituted for the human individual. Ethics defined as exposure to the other in proximity is not something that easily translates from the interhuman to the interstate. In arguing for the notion of state responsibility, Campbell writes,

If we proceed from the basis of recognizing that the very being of a state like the United States derives from its relationship with the other, that state is thus always already engaged with the other and can feign neither ignorance about nor lack of interest in the other's fate.

(1993: 96)

Campbell asserts that the origin of the agent or subject – 'whether that agent or subject is an individual or a state – is to be found in the relationship between

Self and Other, and not in the uncovering of some autonomous sovereign ground of being removed from that relationship' (1996: 131). But it is problematic to refer to the state as the face of the other. The other in Levinas's philosophy is always the human other who can leave a trace of the infinite in me; the responsibility that arises when facing the other bears witness to the Infinite (Levinas 1981: 150). Thus, Levinas explains, 'Only an *I* can respond to the injunction of a face' (1969: 305).

The ethical relation is an exceptional relation, one that does not move easily from the self-other relation to relations with others. While much of Levinas's writings concern what makes ethics possible, that is, the awakening of responsibility that arises in the encounter with the other, he also explores the problems created by the presence of others. The 'third' disturbs the intimacy between the self and other (also referred to as the neighbour) and prevents us from becoming a self-enclosed relationship. It is at this point that the ethical moves towards the political. Levinas explains that

Ethics, as the extreme exposure and sensitivity of one subjectivity to another, becomes morality and hardens its skin as soon as we move into the political world of the impersonal 'third' – the world of government, institutions, tribunals, prisons, schools, committees, etc.

(Levinas and Kearney 1986: 29–30)

While justice can make demands of others, the ethical relation makes demands of me alone – I can speak of my responsibility for others, but cannot assign a responsibility to others.

This does not mean that we cannot expect states to act ethically, nor that the ethical does not impact the political, for Levinas has repeatedly referred to the concept of the just state, or the 'state beyond the state' (1999). The state belongs to the realm of the political, which means that its actions are determined by justice and the law. The laws necessary to bring about justice do not come from systems established within Greece, although Levinas has commented that the Greek system of justice is necessary. What he desires is a more perfect system, one that is inspired by the ethical relation. The law must not be constructed entirely within the political, therefore 'it must be an exterior command, not simply a rational law, not a categorical imperative, which is defenseless against tyranny; it must be an exterior law, a written law, armed with force against tyranny' (Levinas 1987: 17). This would be a law entered into freely, and not forced upon any individual. How is such a law to be established? Before establishing the order, do not different freedoms need to be able to understand one another, Levinas asks. 'Is there not already between one will and another a relationship of command without tyranny, which is not yet an obedience to an impersonal law, but is the indispensable condition for the institution of such a law?' (1987: 18). Once again it is the ethical relation that is the inspiration for the political – in this case it is the command of the 'Thou shalt not kill' issued in the face of the other that is the condition for establishing law in society.

Levinas's conception of the just society is founded on the principle that each man is his brother's keeper; each is responsible for the other. Thus instead of the idea that individuals are bound to one another through the state, individuals are bound to one another through a covenant, or through a law, whose origin is outside the political and therefore beyond the state. Justice is institutionalised within the state through the establishment of a legal system, but, as Richard Cohen writes,

The state is neither the creator nor the final arbiter of justice. True enough, the state maintains justice, but it does so for the sake of morality. The aim of statecraft, then, is thus neither sheer survival nor brute aggrandizement, but justice – the maximization of morality.

(Cohen 2001: 10)

The ultimate aim of politics, and of ethics, he adds, 'is a society where morality and justice do not contradict one another, where giving all to one deprives no one else' (2001: 10).

The state therefore has a role to play in instituting justice and providing for its citizens, but Levinas recognises that states will not always be just.

The state is usually better than anarchy – but not always. In some instances – fascism or totalitarianism, for example – the political order of the state may have to be challenged in the name of our ethical responsibility to the other. That is why ethics must remain the first philosophy.

(Levinas and Kearney 1986: 30)

The ethical relation, as the pre-originary moment in which the law is revealed, remains the site of critique of state practices. Levinas adds,

there is more in the family of Abraham than in the promises of the State ... It is not through the State and through the political advances of humanity that the person shall be fulfilled – which, of course, does not free the State from instituting the conditions necessary to this fulfilment. But it is the family of Abraham that sets the norms.

(1990b: 99–100)

The norms to which Levinas refers pertain to rights, but not my rights, rather the 'right of the other man' and my infinite obligation to him (Levinas 1990b: 100). These norms are outlined in the law known as the Torah.

Levinas's writings on the state trouble Campbell, however. He suggests that Levinas's discussion of the self and other are limited to relations within, not between, societies (1994: 466). It is for this reason that Campbell turns to the writings of Jacques Derrida, because, he argues, Derrida's deconstruction 'is an openness towards the other' that would unsettle the totalitarianism between

states and navigate the passage from the ethical to the political (1994: 469). This is a curious move, for two reasons. First, Campbell's claim that Levinas's ideas are totalitarian is based on a weak argument, one that I shall explore further. Second, supplementing Levinas with Derrida adds little to Levinas's analysis, particularly since Derrida's writings are heavily indebted to his reading of Levinas. Derridean deconstruction points to the responsibility for the other and to a justice that arises out of the 'heteronomic relation to others, to the faces of otherness that govern me, whose infinity I cannot thematize and whose hostage I remain' (Derrida, quoted in Campbell 1994: 471). Whereas for Derrida, however, this justice is indefinable, and therefore there is no 'ground' on which to base a decision within international ethics or politics, Levinas's understanding of the role of justice is fundamentally different. For Levinas, there are foundations upon which to make decisions; in particular, there is the law that issues forth from the face of the other that informs a further set of norms and laws as outlined in the Torah regarding individual and collective behaviour. Because Campbell has not read Levinas's Talmudic commentaries, he appears to be unaware of Levinas's writings regarding the role of the Torah and Israel's role among the nations. Levinas's discussions of the law, combined with his phenomenological analysis of the other, leads to an argument that the just state should play in international politics. Thus Levinas's writings are not solely confined to the problem of totalitarianism within the state, but also between states – the just state, or the 'state beyond the state in the state' is to set the example and act as the judge of other states.

The state of Israel and the state beyond the state

Campbell doubts that Levinas's writings and views on the state of Israel can aid us in establishing a just politics. In fact, he believes that the opposite is true, that Levinas's philosophy no longer rings true when it comes to Israel and its politics. Campbell does not base this opinion on widespread reading of Levinas's Judaic texts; this view is based primarily on his reading of Levinas's response to an event in 1982. On 14 September 1982, a bomb exploded in East Beirut, killing the President of Lebanon and twenty-six others. The Israelis responded by occupying West Beirut, in order, they said, to prevent any incidents in the camps. However, the Israeli Defence Forces apparently did nothing when Phalangists entered the camps over a two-day period, killing several hundred people in Sabra and Chatila camps. Following the incident, Levinas was interviewed for Paris radio.

When asked whether the Israelis were innocent or responsible, Levinas replied with an answer straight out of his philosophical/religious teachings – that because the Jews are concerned with the other, they are always responsible (Levinas 1989: 290). This question was followed by another: 'Emmanuel Levinas, you are the philosopher of the "other". Isn't history, isn't politics the very site of the encounter with the "other", and for the Israeli, isn't the "other" above all the Palestinian?' (1989: 294). Levinas replied,

My definition of the other is completely different. The other is the neighbour, who is not necessarily kin, but who can be. And in that sense, if you're for the other, you're for the neighbour. But if your neighbour attacks another neighbour or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least then we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust.

(1989: 294)

Campbell claims that Levinas's response is inconsistent with his philosophical teaching, that it shows that 'the notion of the "other" is restricted to the neighbour in such a way as to keep the Palestinians outside of the reach of those to whom the "I" is responsible' (1994: 466). Levinas's response was in fact consistent with his philosophical teachings. To ask 'Who is the other?' is to invite concretisation of the human other, which then strips the other of his alterity. Thus the interviewer's question was not in fact one to which Levinas could reply in the affirmative. To suggest that the Palestinian is 'other' for the 'Israeli' is to make the mistake of associating the other with a set of attributes that are somehow different from those of the self. That is to say that thinking of the Palestinian as 'other' to the Jew is to think in terms of opposition and difference – it is to think that the Jew and Palestinian are other because of their religious and cultural differences, and because of their opposition over the land of Israel/Palestine. This is not Levinas's project – *alterity is not difference* – hence his statement that 'My definition of the other is completely different.' The other is the other being whom I encounter in such a way that the other is nude, stripped of all context, and because of this nudity, I am awakened to my responsibility for him. As Levinas reminds us, 'The approach is not the thematization of any relation but that very relation which resists thematization inasmuch as it is an-archic. To thematize it is already to lose it and to depart from the absolute passivity of self' (1996: 92–93). To be other, to make an entry as the face, the other's presence consists in divesting himself of the form that manifests him. He does not disclose the world in his exposure to the self. The face is not a representation, which would denounce the alterity of the other and possibly lead to violence.

While I disagree that Levinas's response suggests that state borders limit responsibility, Campbell is right to suggest that Israel is afforded special status in Levinas's writings. The ethical relation is intended to rupture politics in two ways, by instituting justice and by inspiring the formation of the just community, even the just state – the state of Israel. Israel has three distinct meanings in Levinas's writings. In his Talmudic commentaries, Levinas explains that 'Israel' refers to a people who have accepted their unlimited responsibility towards the other and who live the law, thus Israel includes 'all the just of the nations' (1994: 30). Thus in the first instance, Israel refers to a righteous people, and not to a state. But Levinas also writes of the state of Israel as an idealised state that establishes an order that is built upon responsibilities for others and that has regard

for the weak. Other writings point to the actual state of Israel and its role among the nations.

Israel, which is synonymous with Zionism, is to be established on the teachings of the self's responsibility for the other. Levinas explains,

for me this is not merely a political doctrine. Nor is it a state like the others, rife with conflict and subject to the requirements of the moment. Is not the ultimate finality of Zionism to create upon Israeli soil the concrete conditions for political invention, and to make or remake a state in which prophetic morality shall be incarnate, along with its message of peace?

(2001: 197–198)

The state that is capable of going beyond the state is a state that is open to that which is beyond – to the otherwise than being, or the Infinite. It is a state that is open to that fixed reference point from which the Law comes – a state that is open to a justice that is not subsumed by the state. Yet the actual state of Israel falls short of this 'political invention', or ideal state. 'But', Levinas asks,

who can ignore all that is lacking in this spiritualization, given the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians or Israel and the Arabs? One can and must think – at times in agreement with the most lucid thinkers from the opposite camp – that it is time to take the heat out of such adversity.

(1994a: xv)

Israel 'has been entirely reduced to political categories ... Fact became separate from the Ideal' (Levinas 1990a: 222).

Although Levinas's philosophy and Judaic writings contain elements of utopianism, he also recognises that even if one state were able to live up to the ideal of the 'state beyond the state', it would still be confronted with the reality of states whose ethics are constructed differently. Thus there are limits to the way in which the ethical can impact the political:

there is also an ethical limit to this ethically necessary political existence. But what is this limit? Perhaps what is happening today in Israel marks the place where ethics and politics will come into confrontation and where their limits will be sought.

(Levinas 1989: 293)

There are limits to every attempt to make the political more ethical. There are obvious limits to an ethics that arises out of transcendence and operates at the level of the interhuman on a one-on-one basis, for there is no guarantee that the self will respond ethically to the call of another. Nor is there a guarantee that the ethical can interrupt the political or that the institutions that arise out of the ethical – particularly the justice system – will operate ethically within the state nor enable the state to act ethically towards those outside its borders. Levinas

suggests that the limits of the ethical cannot be determined solely by those engaged in a philosophical study of ethics – these limits are best explored through lived experience.

The meaning of the just state is discussed most clearly in Levinas's Talmudic reading entitled 'Beyond the State in the State', in which Levinas suggests that humanity is waiting for a better form of political rule, one not subject to tyranny. He asks,

Is it not thus, in this refusal of the politics of pure tyranny, that the outlines of democracy take form, that is to say, a State open to what is better, always on the alert, always renovating, always in the process of returning to the free persons who delegated to it their freedom subject to reason without losing their freedom?

(1999: 96)

Here the just state is equated with democracy, which is praised for its awareness of its weaknesses and its attempts to overcome them. Democratic rule is thus superior to rule by a king, unless that king is able to exact justice for his people through obedience to the Torah. Political invention moves beyond simple democracy to a state whose laws originate in the anarchical ethical encounter.

In Levinas's view, Judaism is not ambivalent about other nations, it is deeply concerned with the morality and ethics of other nations: Israel is to set the example of responsibility towards individuals within its state and without because it alone possesses the Torah, it alone has the wherewithal to establish a universal society and just state. Does Levinas expect that Zionism can be a national or cultural model for others? Yes. Is the Torah in Levinas's texts, as Adam Newton claims, reduced to a set of utopian teachings that ignore the particularisms and tribalisms contained therein (Newton 2001)? When Levinas approaches the Talmud, he brings to it all of his experiences and interests, he brings to it a desire to understand the interhuman relation and finds that man is he who is responsible for his neighbour. That is, he finds what he has set out to find. If Levinas characterises the Torah as a law that teaches fraternity for mankind and ignores laws that suggest a hierarchy or other laws that may contradict his agenda, would this affect his overall project? If one reads his philosophy alone, then the answer is no, since his philosophy only points to the abstract notion of justice and law, a law whose source is beyond politics, a law reflected in the 'Thou shalt not kill'. Reading his philosophy alone, however, we would be unaware that Levinas believes that a just politics can be established if it is based on the law of the Torah. This is his most basic requirement when he refers to the just state or state beyond the state, to a society that is universal and particular at the same time, or to his 'alternative political order' – Levinas's alternative political project is a political order based on the Torah. The laws that comprise the Torah go far beyond the 'Thou shalt not kill', far beyond even the seven universal laws referred to as the Noahide laws. The Torah comprises the more than 600 laws given to those present at Sinai, as well as all of the later laws

encoded in the Talmud. An examination of the laws, according to Levinas, would reveal that at its most basic, the laws concern man's relation with his fellow man. Levinas's claim is that the law was in fact given to all individuals and is therefore universal, but is it a law that could be universally accepted in today's context?

Accepting the laws of the Torah does not require any particular dogmatic belief, according to Levinas (1994b: 189). The Torah, connected as it is to concrete examples described by the sages, allows for modern interpretation because its principles point to 'intellectual structures that are absolute in thought' (Levinas 1990a: 68). These laws do not require any particular dogmatic belief because they appeal to reason, although to a 'reason beyond reason' that is not opinion or faith, but rational truth, according to Levinas. This form of reason is not subject to social custom or 'truths' that change over time. Levinas teaches that the Torah contains this 'beyond reason' because

it outlines the irreducible category of a teaching which leads beyond philosophy towards personal presence, towards the personal which perhaps can appear in its originary purity only through this text. A form of knowledge which leads to a relation to a person, to a relation which is no longer a form of knowledge.

(1994a: 32)

Yet many may disagree that a Jewish law could be universally applicable, for, as Adam Newton argues, Levinas's ideas of Israel converges around

a set of privileged modalities that, irrespective of their utopian or messianic bent, manifestly fail to address an enormous number of the world's nations as either historically or presently constituted, which in no way would regard religious or political Zionism as a national, cultural model.

(Newton 2001: 89)

The role of the Torah in Levinas's thought requires further examination and discussion.

In juxtaposition with the ideal state of Levinas's texts we find the political state, which invests us with freedom but then immediately violates it: 'The State which realizes its essence in works slips toward tyranny and thus attests my absence from those works, which across the economic necessities return to me as alien' (Levinas 1969: 176). In juxtaposition with a subjectivity that speaks in the ethical, the subject may be poorly heard – even without a right to speak – in the political (1969: 253). There is a tyranny in the universal, in the impersonal, which Levinas argues is unavoidable within the political. It is because of this tyranny, this totalising tendency of politics, that the ethical is necessary. The ideal state may be one in which a law outside the political is able to inform justice, but in the absence of this ideal there are still opportunities for individual ethical action to rupture the political. Levinas insists on 'the irreplaceable

function of the I in a world of peace' (1996: 24). Anwar el Sadat's arrival in Israel in 1977, which initiated a peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, was such a rupturing because 'peace had come by a path which led higher and came from further away than political roads, whatever their part may have been in the itinerary of this peace' (Levinas 1994a: 189).

Concluding thoughts

Emmanuel Levinas's writings are significant to students of politics because they teach us of the importance of ethics, of the primacy of ethics within the political. Twentieth century politics as played out in two world wars and the Cold War point to the problems of a morality subsumed within the political. For Levinas, there are two ways in which the ethical operates within the political: the first concerns the possibility of the face-to-face relation between individuals, and the second concerns the role of justice and the law. An ethical politics is one in which the face-to-face relation is a possibility, in which individuals are not reduced to members of a collective but in which they retain their unicity. The face-to-face relation means that I retain my responsibility for the other despite the institution of justice and in this way the ethical can function even when justice is absent, or when the system of justice is unjust.

Levinas's writings further point to a political invention, one in which the ethical ruptures the political and establishes the just state, a state founded on the infinite responsibility for the other. Political theorists, and scholars of international politics, have not fully explored the meaning of the political invention articulated by Levinas.² Simon Critchley, for example, refers to political invention in Levinas, which for him is a redefining of subjectivity and politics:

Politics itself can here be thought of as *the art of response to the singular demand of the other*, a demand that arises in a particular context – although the infinite demand cannot simply be reduced to its context – and calls for political invention, for creation.

(Critchley 1999: 276)

For Critchley, political invention means an 'articulation of democracy to come', a democracy that is non-foundational and non-arbitrary, in which rules are invented with each decision (1999: 277). Reading Levinas in this way fails to fully address the foundation suggested for political action, because doing so requires a careful reading of Levinas's Judaic writings and examining 'the vexed question of Levinas's Zionism – to which Levinas's ethics leads' (Critchley 1999: 278).

Levinas does refer to the need to establish norms and principles of justice, such as democracy, human rights and laws between nations. He further refers to the need to 'welcome the stranger', engage in peaceful relations with others, give aid to developing nations and question the view of international politics as one of a war of all against all. These principles are important, but they are not the

heart of Levinas's project, a project that instead points to an alternative political order, one that is based on principles of responsibility and the law. Is an alternative political order, such as that suggested by Levinas in his discussions of the state beyond a state or universal society, possible? That is, is it possible for the face-to-face relation, responsibility and justice to operate as described by Levinas? If the state of Israel is the concretisation of the just state with the Torah at its core, then answering in the affirmative would be extremely difficult, for the state of Israel has not set the example in terms of welcoming the stranger (the criteria of humanness, according to Levinas) or extending peace to its neighbours. The ideal state, a state founded on the constant study of the Torah, is meant to be a state that resists violence.

Levinas's discussion of the state beyond the state, or of a politics beyond politics is eschatological. But for Levinas, messianic eschatology is not a doctrine of the last things, so it is not to be confused with what often passes as eschatology in the Christian tradition. 'It is not the last judgment that is decisive, but the judgment of all the instants in time, when the living are judged' (Levinas 1969: 23). Levinas looks at the instant to determine meaning for beings, not to history, nor to the future. Eschatology in Levinas is a disturbance or interruption of the present reminiscent of the way in which he insists that the ethical must rupture the political. The ethical relation, in which I become responsible for the other, is a moment of the messianic and Levinas is waiting for a time when the 'eschatology of messianic peace will have come to superpose itself upon the ontology of war' (Levinas 1969: 22). Although such a society is not possible at the present, this is no reason to stop striving for it here and now. Levinas explains that 'Of peace there can be only an eschatology' (1969: 24), yet he also states that we are ethically obligated to struggle for a perfect world of peace (Levinas and Kearney 1986: 31). There are acts in which the political is ruptured, Levinas suggests, there are moments that are not purely political.

Notes

- 1 Various IR scholars have turned to the writings of Emmanuel Levinas to articulate a post-structural conception of the ethical, including, for example, David Campbell (1993, 1994, 1996), Michael Dillon (1996), Jim George (1995), Daniel Warner (1996), Iver B. Neumann (1996), James Der Derian (1997), Michael J. Shapiro (1997) and Mathias Albert (1996).
- 2 The role of Levinas's Judaic texts in the development of his philosophical ideas has not been fully addressed by IR scholars, and this has contributed to multiple misreadings of Levinas's thought. In a recent article arguing for a reappraisal of Levinas, Jacob Schiff rejects the idea that Levinas is a partisan of Israel, stating, quite unbelievably, that 'he seems to move closer in tone here to radical critics of Israel who compare that state to Nazi Germany' (2008: 46). Levinas's writings on the state of Israel fluctuate between praise and condemnation, but, more importantly, Schiff fails to recognise the role that Israel as the ideal state, as a political invention, plays in Levinas's political philosophy.

7 Walking corpses

Arendt on the limits and possibilities of cosmopolitan politics

Patricia Owens

[T]he 'national state', having lost its very foundations, leads the life of a walking corpse, whose spurious existence is artificially prolonged by repeated injections of imperialist expansion.

(Arendt 1994: 143)

But in the last analysis, one is a member of a world community by the sheer fact of being human; this is one's 'cosmopolitan existence.' When one judges and when one acts in political matters, one is supposed to take one's bearings from the idea, not the actuality, of being a world citizen.

(Arendt 1982: 75–76)

Introduction

Hannah Arendt's (1906–75) name has emerged at the forefront of contemporary writing on one of the newest – and oldest – questions in the history of political thought, the possibility of cosmopolitan political forms. This is not surprising since she was one of the leading thinkers among a postwar generation of Jewish intellectuals who developed the ideas and post-nationalist émigré sensibility that would deeply shape some important contemporary strands of modern cosmopolitan theory. The picture Arendt painted in her major and minor works of 'an undetermined infinity of forms of human living-together' (1966: 443) has been claimed by diverse and presumably competing approaches. The various cosmopolitan political forms and sensibilities allegedly found in her work include the 'anarchic' (Herzog 2004), 'pluralist' (Axtmann 2006), 'republican' (Rensmann 2007), 'rugged' (Fine 2000), 'Jewish' (Sznajder 2007), 'virtue' (Smith 2007), discourse ethical (Benhabib 2004; Benhabib *et al.* 2006) and 'agonistic' (Honig 2006).

Paradoxically, there are others, no less creative in their reading, who suggest a picture of Arendt's work that is far less productive, implying that she had little, if anything, to say to contemporary cosmopolitan concerns. We have been informed that Arendt was uninterested in institutions and laws more cosmopolitan in intent than traditional interstate law among states of sovereign equality and that she affirms 'the nation-state as a stable container of being and rights' (Burke 2008: 518). It appears to some that she was unable to theorise cosmopol-

itan 'rights' and this 'limits the conceptualisation of contemporary world politics' one may develop from her work (Beardsworth 2008a: 510). It even appears possible to derive a 'statist anti-cosmopolitanism' from her writing since it does not fit neatly into the received wisdom about humanitarian intervention (or the virtues of Jürgen Habermas) within certain schools of 'critical' international thought (Devetak 2007).

Apparently conflicting interpretations of Hannah Arendt are nothing new. But what explains this particular and most recent divergence regarding the treatment of Arendt and cosmopolitan political forms? The views of the second grouping can be quickly dispensed with since they are largely based on readings (sometimes misreadings) of secondary sources, rather than what Arendt actually had to say on the relevant subjects. But the divergence cannot simply be down to the limitations of scholarship or that Arendt's writing defies easy categorisation. Another reason must be that she never clearly and systematically set out her thoughts in this area and when she did briefly address such issues it was not in her major works, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *The Human Condition* and *On Revolution*. Arendt's most direct writing on a worldwide federated structure and related subjects is found in two biographical sketches of her teacher and mentor, Karl Jaspers, 'the only successor Kant has ever had' (1968a: 74), which appear in *Men in Dark Times*, remarks towards the end of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1968c) on the need for a permanent international criminal court, an interview where she sketched 'a new concept of the state' reprinted in *Crises of the Republic* (1969), the posthumously published *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (1982) and a handful of short essays on European integration collected and posthumously published in *Essays in Understanding* (1994).

The fragmentary character of Arendt's writing on these themes (when combined with the more general idiosyncrasies of her political thought) has contributed much to the creative appropriations described above, a method of inspired (mis)reading of which she herself was not immune but that encourages some of her readers to find in her work what they have wanted to see. The fact is that Arendt rarely used the term 'cosmopolitan'. On the occasion that she did she spoke of 'cosmopolitan existence', not cosmopolitanism. This matters because while she was clear on the political value of humanity as such, the practical rule of the idea should be understood only as a 'yardstick' to guide political thought and action. World citizenship should not be imagined, to borrow her words from a different context, as 'an achievable, producible end within the world' (2005: 3). As Arendt put it in her Kant lectures, 'one is supposed to take one's bearings from the idea, not the actuality, of being a world citizen' (1982: 76). Nowhere is this sentiment contradicted in her major works of political theory. Undoubtedly, Arendt should remain as a central figure in the conversation about the theory and practice of post-national politics. But when taken as a whole, her writing suggests that the national state is not the only 'walking corpse' requiring 'injections of imperialist expansion' (1994: 143).

The goal of this short chapter is to briefly set out and analyse Hannah Arendt's writing on the limits and possibilities of cosmopolitan politics.

Apparently incompatible readings of Arendt are above all a product of her own deep ambivalence towards all forms of political universalism and an abiding fear of the dangers of imperial expansion when the problem of political founding, its relativity and historical contingency, is circumvented, as it is in much contemporary cosmopolitan thought. In a preface to her first major book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt argued that

human dignity needs a new guarantee which can be found only in a new political principle, in a new law on earth, whose validity this time must comprehend the whole of humanity while its power must remain strictly limited, rooted in and controlled by newly defined territorial entities.

(1966: ix)

In later work she began to articulate a vision for post-national politics and forms of political founding that are potentially worldwide in scope; namely a democratic–republican model of interlinked polities. It is not ‘cosmopolitan nationalism’ that best captures Arendt’s position (c.f. Sznajder 2007), but cosmopolitan humanity in diversity. This cosmopolitan politics, if that is what we may call it, is anti-universalist and is without naivety regarding the propensity of all ‘isms’, including cosmopolitanism, to generate its own violence. She was well aware that the shrinkage of the globe had occurred to such an extent that ‘each man is as much an inhabitant of the earth as he is an inhabitant of his country’ (1958: 250). But Arendt also believed that the reality of this new order, the historical sociological conditions that make possible the resurgence of cosmopolitan political thought, ‘is far from being the consolation or recompense for all past history as Kant hoped it to be’ (1968a: 93).

The original ‘post-national political form’

Hannah Arendt’s historical and conceptual writing speaks directly to one of the central and still unresolved problems facing those wishing to theorise post-national political forms: whether cosmopolitanism is too tainted by its association with European imperialism and Euro-centric political categories to offer much that is useful and responsible under current global political conditions. ‘Europe, as Kant foresaw, has prescribed its laws to all other continents’ (Arendt 1968a: 82). Arendt’s analysis of nineteenth century imperial expansion, her response to one of its products, European totalitarianism, and her claim that Cold War ideological and military expansions were clearly also imperial in character all suggest a lack of naivety when it comes to the political reality of this legacy. As *The Origins of Totalitarianism* powerfully showed, the transcendence of national state structures can easily degenerate into ideological and imperial political forms unless initiated by simultaneous acts of political foundation, properly understood.

During the nineteenth century, imperial regimes were imposed on populations ‘without the foundation of a body politic’ (Arendt 1966: 135). The stabilising

forces of laws and territorial boundaries were swept away; no authentic political action was possible, only ideological expansion and the all-powerful stream of exploitative economic processes. By the early twentieth century, the ideological claims of Europe's pan-nationalisms (especially the pan-German and pan-Slav movements) emerged as similarly hostile to existing political structures and borders, a dangerous form of identity politics without limits. Gravely flawed, but nonetheless relatively stable civic-political boundaries and associations disappeared across Europe in the name of expansion and ethnic and racial self-assertion. One of the most important insights of *Origins* was her linking of the racist ideologies and experiments in race politics in both overseas Empire and 'continental imperialism' in Europe. Later, writing on post-1945 European politics, Arendt (1994) also foresaw the dangers in the emergence of a homogeneous pan-European identity as the ideological and imperial justification for economic and then political integration. In each of these historical cases, Arendt pitted imperial expansion against the authentic foundation of a body politic.

And yet just as Europe's political innovation of the nation state had been planted in the 'four corners of the earth' it had become obsolete. Nationalism may have been useful in the specific context of the nineteenth century but in the twentieth century, Arendt argued, it 'could no longer either guarantee the true sovereignty of the people within [the nation-state] or establish a just relationship among different peoples beyond the national borders' (1978: 141). At the same time, the political existence of 'mankind', Arendt argued, was primarily a product not of the 'dreams of the humanists', but of two technical developments – the existence of the atom bomb, which threatened all life on earth, and the revolution in communications (1968a: 87). In other words, the 'means of communication and violence' are at the root of any cosmopolitan existence. Arendt did not abandon politics to the nation state. But, what if anything, might limit the imperial character of post-national political forms?

The central political issue, for Arendt, was one of appropriate foundation, that is, 'the setting of a new beginning' and of 'lawgiving' (1970: 31). One could read Arendt's entire theory of politics as an effort to work out the possibility of non-violent, non-imperial, non-ideological political founding. She attempted to theorise the originaive act of a new political power and to institutionally extend it, to develop a framework that allowed newness and stability. Within such a framework, a form of non-imperial post-national politics was possible that may even be worldwide in scope. Arendt once described the political realm as 'the inherently anarchic conglomeration of human beings in the conditions of life on earth' (1968a: 149). To retain its essentially anarchic character, its non-imperial and non-ideological potential, the political realm required constant founding and refounding. Arendt's sense of our cosmopolitan existence involves a certain way of 'being in the world' that enables both movement in anarchy and the stability of worldliness, motion and a system of laws. She correlated legal and political forms and identities with different modes of territorial movements, which Herzog wonderfully describes as Arendt's anarchic cosmopolitanism (2004: 20). To understand how this might be so, it is necessary to account for Arendt's

distinctive understanding of political action, new beginnings, laws and territorial boundaries. Taken together they make it possible to conceive a non-imperial but nonetheless worldwide federated structure.

A worldwide federated structure

When Arendt referred to politics as such or the public realm, she was not referring to politics in the everyday sense of government and party politics. In her non-Weberian, non-Schmittian framework, the meaning of politics is not domination over others or a fight over the control of violence; it is the freedom to appear among, speak to and act in concert with plural equals. Wrestling control of violence is pre-political, perhaps necessary for liberation and the beginning of politics, but it is not the essence of politics itself. Domination of others (or rulership of some *over* others), while the norm and not the exception in the history of human affairs, is also an essentially non-political form of human interaction. To view domination and power over others as the essence of politics is to think only of political power operating through a continuum of violence (as it is in the sovereign model of power). Chief among the flaws of such a model is the failure to adequately distinguish between politics and war (Owens 2007).

In contrast to almost the entire tradition of Western political thought, Arendt claimed to be able to observe and theorise the activities of plural individuals speaking and acting, creating a common world between them, in a manner that is not essentially violent (though it could and frequently did occur in times of war) – and she took this to be the distinctly political activity. The political freedom that is possible in Arendt's account is non-sovereign and implies no-rule. She attempted to 'shake the state concept and its sovereignty' (1969: 231). 'Where men wish to be sovereign ...', she argued, 'they must submit to the oppression of the will ... If men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce' (1968b: 164–165). Political action, properly understood, requires a plurality of diverse actors and speakers. Through speech and action these men and women form a 'space in-between' them. This space in-between is the public realm, or public 'world' and it 'varies with each group of people' (1958: 182). Freedom itself is the ability to act with plural others to bring something new into the world, such as a new political space.

There is an important relationship between Arendt's ideas about new beginnings and the question of political founding. 'The same linkage between being free and beginning something' (2005: 126) is evident in her writing on the French, American and Hungarian Revolutions, as well as to the founding of the ancient republic of Rome. The ontological foundation of this capacity to begin anew is captured in St Augustine's concept of natality, the possibility of a new beginning is 'guaranteed by each new birth' (Arendt 1966: 479). The biological fact of human birth, that we enter the world as newcomers and begin a new world through birth, means that humans are 'a being whose essence is beginning' (1994: 321). Arendt tried to show throughout her writing that the capacity for new beginnings could become political in the extraordinary

events of founding and refounding new republics as well as the more embryonic and frequent founding moments of civil disobedience and uprisings against oppressive authority. These new beginnings are all examples of free political action.

When left unchecked, it was the nature of political action to be boundless, to overrun existing rules, to bring about the new and unexpected. There is nothing intrinsic to political action that is stabilising and limiting. Political action can occur directly between people unmediated by material things, linking them into a web of relationships. This is what makes political action boundless and unpredictable. In her words,

each relationship established by action ends up in a web of ties and relationships in which it triggers new links, changes the constellation of existing relationships, and thus always reaches out even further, setting much more into interconnected motion than ... could ever have [been] foreseen.

(Arendt 2005: 186–187)

Action possesses a quality of unpredictability, changeability and contingency. We can never be sure of the consequences of our acts, dependent as they are on the actions and opinions of so many plural others.

The legitimate purpose of law, then, is to offer some stability and form to political words and actions that could otherwise seem so fleeting and transient. ‘The stability of the laws’, Arendt wrote,

corresponds to the constant motion of all human affairs, a motion which can never end as long as men are born and die. The laws hedge in each new beginning and at the same time assure its freedom of movement, the potentiality of something entirely new and unpredictable.

(1966: 465)

Laws not only establish boundaries, wall-like structures, between political communities or a system of rules to obey or be punished. They can provide a ‘framework within which people move and act’ (2007a: 724). Here Arendt is drawing on and extending Montesquieu’s writing on forms of government and their corollary animating principles, modes of action and underlying ‘spirit’. She praised him for viewing the law as ‘the stabilizing factor of something which by itself is alive and moving without necessarily developing into a prescribed direction of either doom or progress’ (2007a: 724). We might say that the doom differently depicted by Schmitt (1996) and Foucault (1995), as well as the progress celebrated by Kant and Habermas are both rejected.

The political functions of territorial boundaries and law are analogised in Arendt’s political theory suggesting the limits and possibilities of an alternative non-sovereign cosmopolitan politics. There is an important element of territorial boundedness to Arendt’s politics suggesting the importance both of movement and ‘worldly’ stability, which ‘protect and make possible the physical identity of

a people' (1958: 191). Territorial boundaries provide the main limits to political action. The 'rights and duties' of citizenship, Arendt argued, 'must be defined and limited, not only by those of his fellow citizens, but also by the boundaries of a territory' (1968a: 81). Such boundaries work against the potential tyranny of world government. And yet, the 'limitations of law are never entirely reliable safeguards against action from within the body politic, just as the boundaries of the territory are never entirely reliable safeguards against action from without' (1958: 191). There are no fixed structures or permanent territorial limitations. The political space will have a territorial limit, but its shape, which 'varies with each group of people' (1958: 182), cannot be predetermined. The political form is always potentially global but never actually is. Such an order 'would rest on "elementary republics" in such a way that its own central power [would] not deprive the constituent bodies of their original power to constitute' (1970: 271).

As already indicated, the public, political world is understood as literally the space for politics. It is this worldly space, 'this in-between', that is the appropriate subject of cosmopolitan thought, not individuals as such. In other words, for Arendt, 'politics is not so much about human beings as it is about the world that comes into being between them and endured beyond them' (2005: 175). As a related point, Arendt was not particularly interested in the *moral* idea of cosmopolitan citizenship as it is conceptualised in much 'critical' international thought – a way to give individuals *qua* individuals the status of world citizenship (Linklater 2007: Chapter 7). What Jürgen Habermas, Andrew Linklater and others do not fully accept is that 'the world and the people who inhabit it are not the same' (Arendt 1968a: 4). Likewise, the security of brotherhood and the compassion of humanitarianism have no place in Arendt's political theory. As she put it, 'humanism should be sober and cool rather than sentimental; that humanity is exemplified not in fraternity but in friendship; that friendship is not intimately personal but makes political demands and preserves reference to the world' (1968a: 25; Smith 2007). This position overlaps with (but is distinct from) realism and republicanism to the extent that it is based on a conception of politics that is non-individualistic; the political actor is always part of a group (although they are never defined primarily in terms of 'group-ness') (Rensmann 2007). How this might be so is captured in Arendt's much-cited phrase 'the right to have rights'.

The first 'right' implies a claim to membership of a political world and associated right to speak and act with plural equals in that political space. It 'means to live in a framework where one is judged by one's actions and opinions and a right to belong to some kind of organized community' (Arendt 1966: 296–297). This first right is indeed universal but is nonetheless a huge departure from Kant's belief in the metaphysical properties of humanity and where 'the present state of each species [is] the *telos* inherent in all previous development' (1968a: 92). Arendt's alternative is politically and historically grounded. That is to say, the political is always limited by a concrete political space and yet, inspired by Karl Jaspers' philosophy of mankind,

it forever remains in reference to the world and the people in it, not because it is bound to any existing space. In fact, the opposite is the case, because [Jaspers'] deepest aim is to 'create a space' in which the *humanitas* of man can appear.

(1968a: 79)

Each of us has a right to be treated as a member of humanity and our humanity is most fully realised through caring for the public world.

The second reference to 'rights' (in 'the right to have rights') is to those already possessed by members of a distinct political community. By definition, these are the non-universal rights necessary for democratic self-determination. This is not, as Arendt explicitly states, in the Hegelian sense in which

to be a member of historical mankind meant to be a Greek and not a barbarian in the fifth century B.C., a Roman citizen and not a Greek in the first centuries of our era, to be a Christian and not a Jew in the Middle Ages.

(1968a: 92)

Or, we might add, a citizen of the European Union and an undocumented immigrant today. Nonetheless, Seyla Benhabib criticises Arendt's stance since it still depends on the 'historical arbitrariness of republican acts of founding whose ark of equality will always include some and exclude others' (Benhabib 2004: 66). But the incontrovertible reality, as Benhabib is also aware, is that the organisation of politics, human-made laws and conventions, simply *is* historically contingent.

Arendt's critics are correct in that she does not provide the theoretical resources for global citizenship or the philosophical foundations for universalistic cosmopolitan norms of discourse ethics. She would oppose any attempt to institutionalise world citizenship. 'Nobody can be a citizen of the world as he is a citizen of his country' (1968a: 81). But this element of Arendt's writing is a virtue, not a sin. Being a global citizen and a citizen of the world are not the same. The contradiction between cosmopolitan justice and democratic self-determination with its implied territorial and membership limits is irresolvable – and should always be considered so. As Arendt put it in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,

humanity, which for the eighteenth century, in Kantian terminology, was no more than a regulative idea, has today become an inescapable fact. This new situation, in which 'humanity' has in effect assumed the role formerly ascribed to nature or history, would mean in this context that the right to have rights, or the right of every individual to belong to humanity, should be guaranteed by humanity itself. It is by no means clear that this is possible ... For it is quite conceivable, and even within the realm of practical political possibilities, that one fine day a highly organized and mechanized humanity will conclude quite democratically – namely by majority decision – that for humanity as a whole it would be better to liquidate certain parts thereof.

(1966: 298–299)

Arendt immediately identified the problem with the principle of humanity itself as some sort of guarantor of citizenship rights in an imperial world. The problem was that any

supranational authority would either be ineffective or be monopolized by the nation that happens to be the strongest, and so would lead to world government ... the most frightful tyranny conceivable, since from its global police force there would be no escape – until it finally fell apart.

(1969: 230)

Arendt's realism and her opposition to the abolishment of separately commanded standing armies meant that she could not envision such a world. The end of all such armies implies the existence of a political power, a sovereign power with a monopoly on 'legitimate' violence. This 'is not only a forbidding nightmare of tyranny', Arendt warned, 'it would be the end of all political life as we know it' (1968a: 81).

It is no surprise that Arendt's writing is far less prescriptive than much recent cosmopolitan political theory. Her humanism is the basis for taking one's bearing from the idea of world citizenship, not its actuality. She did not set out an institutional design for the future. Political theory or more specifically 'the philosophy of mankind' 'cannot prescribe any particular political action' (1968a: 93, 90–91). And yet the theoretical discussion in this short chapter should not obscure the fact that Arendt was always writing in response to concrete political facts and events. Foremost among these was the encounter with totalitarianism and the implications for Jewish politics and identity. Arendt came to oppose the creation of a Jewish, rather than a binational, state in Israel (2007b). However, she always maintained that her Jewishness was one of the 'indisputable factual data' of her life. She shared in the 'honor and glory' of the armed uprisings by bands of Jewish guerrillas in the Warsaw ghetto during the Second World War (2007b: 199–201). Indeed, that Arendt endorsed the political principle of Jews resisting *as Jews* sheds further light on her relation to cosmopolitan politics, its limits and possibilities.

Since during the war she was being attacked in these very terms, Arendt had asked herself, 'What can I specifically do as a Jew?' (1994: 12). As she put it, 'you cannot say, "Excuse me, I am not a Jew; I am a human being". That is silly.' In such circumstances, to defend oneself not as a Jew but as a world citizen, to seek to escape the reality of one's position in favour of a vague abstraction, would have been 'nothing but a grotesque and dangerous evasion of reality' (1968a: 18). This is not to say that the political principle underpinning resistance to gross criminal conduct is the name that we must give the crime. The mass extermination of Jews during the Second World War was a crime against humanity 'committed on the body of the Jewish people'. Arendt supported the establishment of an international criminal court to punish crimes against humanity; 'the idea of humanity ... constitutes the sole regulating idea of international law' (1966: 157). But, unlike Habermas and others, she did not expect any authentic post-national

political founding to emerge from such an institution. The reason, of course, is that 'the same conflict between sovereign or ostensible sovereign governments can only be played out there all over again' (Arendt 1969: 230).

The effort to wipe out an entire people not only from a given territory but also from the face of the earth is a crime against the order of mankind (Arendt 1968c: 257; Fine 2000). It is to exclude a group of people from membership in humanity itself. To restore such membership is the only criteria for a necessary war (Owens 2008). This is not simply a question of enforcing cosmopolitan law, or, indeed, using action against genocide as a means to the end of creating world citizenship, as Habermas might have it. Rather the distinctive grounds for action against genocide derive from Arendt's concept of plurality, 'the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world' (1958: 7), which is the necessary condition for all politics. Just as politics is not possible without plurality, it is in the 'genuine equal plurality of peoples in whose complete multitude alone mankind can be realized' (1966: 167). Genocide depends on the denial of the humanity of those who are killed. It also makes the full realisation of humanity in diversity impossible.

Contrast this with the manner of liberal and Habermasian support for so-called 'humanitarian' war. They have relied on the 'humanitarian' use of force by Western states as 'an "anticipation" of an effective law of world citizenship – as a step along the path from classical international law to what Kant envisioned as the "status of world citizen"' (Habermas 2004: 3). Once again, this is to answer the problem of political founding with violence. Arendt was more 'critical' than this (c.f. Devetak 2007). She understood that the expansion of post-national political formations could be as imperial as the classical empire building of nation states. It would appear that the notion of cosmopolitan world citizenship, like the nation states of an earlier era, can still only be 'artificially prolonged by repeated injections of imperialist expansion' (1994: 143).

Conclusion

Hannah Arendt did not completely separate herself from the Kantian legacy of strengthened institutionalisation of laws above and below the nation state. She was certainly suspicious of the agenda of universalising liberal rights and any related Kantian metaphysics. As she put it, 'one can be a world citizen only within the framework of Kant's categories', categories and a conception of citizenship that she ultimately rejected (1968a: 92). But unlike some followers of Foucault, she did not abandon the effort to theorise legitimate law as rooted in power (as she understood the term) nor, unlike Schmitt and some of his followers, did she conceive all rights as reducible to the power, interest and ideology of imperial states. While Arendt would have agreed that the wholesale juridification of politics is an impossibility given the nature of the political itself, this is not because law does nothing to resolve some irreducible antagonism between political entities in a world that recognises no one sovereign. Under certain limited conditions, the law is neither sovereign nor disciplining.

Arendt's position is distinctive from both Schmitt and Foucault but also from the liberal and Habermasian conceptions of human rights and international law. It is not dependent on the existence of pre-given interests or identities and is a great distance from liberal visions of the rest of the world catching up with European modernity and values; Arendt 'never believed in liberalism' (1979: 334). Habermas's quasi-liberal agenda (2001) is to institutionalise moral norms, regulate international institutions and extend legal jurisdiction, that is, world citizenship, to the entire globe. To date, however, liberal and Habermasian cosmopolitanisms have inadequately addressed the issue of political founding. Liberals sidestep the problem by conceiving their task as one of devising institutions and laws to regulate power and universalise already existing liberal rights. That is, they imagine a new order 'to be designed in such a way that it would fit and step into the shoes of the old absolute that derived' from sovereign state power (Arendt 1970: 31). They retreat (or leap forward) to institutional design and expansion of liberal rights but are still unable to conceive the transcendence of nation-state politics and identities in a non-ideological and non-imperialist manner. Unlike liberalism's top-down emphasis on the need for *supra*-national authority, Arendt held that a legitimate order must be a horizontally founded 'international authority' (1969: 231). What she means is inter-republic or at least inter-polity authority. 'Politically', she wrote, 'the new fragile unity ... can be guaranteed only within a framework of universal mutual agreements, which eventually would lead to a worldwide federated structure' (1968a: 93).

8 Wittgenstein and international relations theory

K.M. Fierke

Introduction

In 1959, Bertrand Russell wrote, ‘During the period since 1914 three philosophers have successively dominated the British philosophical world, first that of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, second that of the Logical Positivists, and third that of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*’ (Hacker 1996: 1).¹ Russell’s remark locates Wittgenstein’s influence in a specific time and place; however, the influence of Wittgenstein’s ‘linguistic turn’ is much more far reaching.

Wittgenstein’s early work, in the *Tractatus*, informed the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle. While logical positivism per se is no longer in fashion, the picture theory of language continues to underpin assumptions about hypothesis testing within the social sciences. At the other end of the spectrum, Wittgenstein’s U-turn in the *Philosophical Investigations* (1958) gave impetus to the postmodern critique of the autonomous rational agent (Honneth 1995). In the middle of this spectrum, his argument that language use is action has influenced social theory more broadly (e.g. Austin 1963; Searle 1969; Berger and Luckmann 1967).

The two phases of Wittgenstein’s exploration of language, from the *Tractatus* to the *Philosophical Investigations*, have, via the avenues mentioned above, influenced all of the major streams of thinking within International Relations (IR). This influence has been indirect and is not often acknowledged,² given the allergy to questions of language in IR. This allergy is reflected in realist assumptions that diplomats often lie and thus language can’t be trusted. It is expressed in the assumption that the observations and the categories of the scientist, rather than the language of the subjects of analysis, are what matters. The allergy was perhaps most evident in the distancing of ‘conventional’ constructivists from post-structuralists, who were assumed to deal ‘merely’ with language. It may also be a reflection of the pre-occupation with theory and materiality in IR.

There remains a reluctance to embrace fully the significance of the challenge posed by Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Yet, the transition in his thought from a picture theory to a more constitutive notion of language is precisely the transition that has been underway within IR debates for the last twenty years, from the unquestioned assumption, best articulated by Waltz (1979), that theory

mirrors the logic of the international system across time, to the ‘constructivist turn’, and the greater attention to cultural difference, meaning, context and processes of constitution and change (Fierke 2002).

Wittgenstein’s argument was primarily about the nature of language. One important theme is the tendency to become blinded by our language use and the need to look at this use from a different angle, in order to see more clearly how it constitutes human action and meaning. While useful for a critique of theory, and the assumptions contained within it, or for the analysis of meaning in use, this perspective is not particularly useful for – nor, arguably, compatible with – the formulation of second-order theory. Wittgenstein argued that there is neither a need to deduce nor to explain because, far from being hidden, everything is open to view in our language (Wittgenstein 1973 [1958]: para. 126). That which is most important to us is hidden only because of its simplicity and familiarity – we cannot see it because it is constantly before our eyes (1973: para. 129).

In what follows, I examine the application and potential contribution of Wittgenstein’s thought to IR. In the first part of the chapter, I explore the explanation/understanding dichotomy as contrasted with Wittgenstein’s imperative to analyse meaning in use. In the second, I explore his potential contribution to the field.

Application

Wittgenstein cannot be ‘applied’ in the way you would, for instance, apply realist or institutionalist theory. The latter are explanatory models. Wittgenstein, in his later work, provided a critique of the picture theory of language, which is often assumed in explanatory theories. Hypothesis testing rests on a picture theory of language and the idea that we can compare scientific categories with the world to see whether they correspond.

Wittgenstein’s critique of Freud’s theory of the unconscious highlights this point.³ Freud was trying to provide an explanation for the most private and subjective of thoughts, that is, those arising within the unconscious. Freud used the metaphor of two rooms (the conscious and unconscious) with a doorkeeper standing between them who exercises control over the movement of ideas from the first to the second and decides whether or not to grant passage. This suggests a place for storing and maintaining mental objects that is inaccessible to perception but present in a way that can be felt by effect. Within Freud’s model, an action such as laughter has a cause (e.g. the desire to slander someone) and this cause is hidden from the person who laughs, that is, it is outside consciousness. Many of us would freely use an explanation of this kind, given that these words have become a part of our everyday language. But this is distinct from the actual existence of an unconscious against which this claim could be empirically tested. It is unclear how a test would be conducted, given the source is, by definition, hidden.

Wittgenstein revealed that, far from discovering a new region of the soul, Freud had instead developed a new conceptual language. Freud’s theory pro-

vided one way, among others, of representing the laughter. Wittgenstein shifted attention away from something hidden and repressed to the different ways in which the laugh might be given meaning, either by an agent or an observer. His critique focused on Freud's assumption that he was creating a scientific theory when he was merely constructing a conceptual apparatus for describing a certain type of experience.

Wittgenstein argued the need for greater clarity about our use of words. This requires looking more closely at our own grammar and language games and what they assume, rather than creating new conceptual vocabularies. Because this language is overly familiar, because it constitutes our identities and our social world, we often cannot see it clearly. We are often 'bewitched' by our own assumptions. Freud recognized that his patients were often captive of their own assumptions, and that speaking provided a way to see these meanings in a new light; he was, however, unable to see the extent to which he was himself bewitched by his own theoretical categories.

Understanding

Wittgenstein's thought is more often categorized as 'understanding' rather than explanation. In contrast to the scientific goal of establishing causality, the hermeneutic goal is to understand what is 'inside the head' of actors. The latter is identified with Weber's concept of *Verstehen*, which emphasizes action and the subjective meaning individuals attach to it (Hollis and Smith 1990: 71–72). But there is a distinction between Weber's *Verstehen* and Wittgenstein's focus on language, that is crucial.

In one respect, the difference between Weberian understanding and Wittgenstein's discussion of meaning in use is merely one of emphasis. Weber's analysis focuses 'in the mind'. Wittgenstein by contrast explores the prior dependence of meaning, and thus understanding, on an intersubjective language. This was most evident in his argument that there is no such thing as a private language. A language requires rules that by definition are replicable, that is, their status as rules, the ability to consistently identify, for instance, a table, and distinguish it from a chair, precedes any individual and is reproduced by individuals within a social world. The expression of emotion, no less than the identification of chairs and tables, relies on customs, rules and institutions that precede the individual. Neither the mental processes of individuals nor objects in the world exist independent of this *a priori* language, which we are socialized into as we learn to use language and thus become social beings.

Hollis and Smith (1990) combine *verstehen* with a Wittgensteinian notion of rules. The latter becomes the necessary backdrop for understanding the *subjective* perspective of individuals. This is a perfectly reasonable combination. If one's goal is to understand why Kasparov made one move or another in chess, it is necessary to understand the rules by which he plays. But, arguably, in a field like international relations, understanding the social rules themselves, and changes within them, across time or space, is an equally, if not more promising,

avenue to explore. Intersubjective rules provide a useful point of departure for exploring a realm where the intentions of individuals are rarely decisive, where the rules of international law, from sovereignty to human rights, are constitutive of international practice, and where power rests not only on material capability, but political legitimacy and value.

Meaning in use

Wittgenstein's critique pointed to the bewitching nature of our language. Rather than seeking an external cause or trying to look inside the minds of individuals, the focus shifts squarely to the question of meaning in use. Rather than 'applying' theory, the analyst, more like an anthropologist, sets out to uncover that which is so directly before our eyes that we cannot see it, that is, the rules that govern language and thus our social world.

It is useful to think about this in relation to a more concrete example. The 2003 invasion of Iraq can be approached from these three angles. First, we can look for a cause of the war. Many possible causes of the invasion have been identified, from oil to a desire to complete unfinished business from the first Bush administration. A cause is a mono-logical relationship in which one subject or object impacts on another. Cause is a relationship that works with rocks, meteors and other objects that don't talk. It is far more problematic in dealing with human beings who generate meaning, who speak and who are capable of giving an account of their actions.

Second, we can ask a question about the motive for the war. We are immediately confronted with the question of whose motive, and the assumption that this motive is more or less hidden and that we can know the intentions of some key individual or group. In this respect, the motive is assumed to be hidden inside the mind of George Bush or Dick Cheney, or in the 'groupthink' of a governmental advisory group, rather than articulated in language or public debate.

The third position highlights meaning in use or, more specifically, the reasons given for the Iraq invasion. Many have pointed to a hidden agenda for invading Iraq that preceded 11 September 2001, but this agenda was only made possible by the events of this date, the public meaning given to these events and the connection made in the public mind between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda or the dangers of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In this respect, a focus on the reasons for action provides a much clearer empirical connection (present in public texts) between an argument about the need for the invasion and majority acceptance of the decision (at least initially within the US), which provided the legitimacy to move ahead and, in this respect, made the invasion possible.

A causal argument, e.g., the US invaded Iraq to gain control of its oil reserves, rests on a larger assumption that states act in order to advance their material interests. A motives argument tries to get inside the head of George Bush or other key players. A 'reasons' argument points to the dynamics by which public support was mobilized, thus making the invasion possible. The reasons in this case clearly did not rest on empirical grounds, insofar as Saddam

had neither WMD nor a connection to Al-Qaeda. But the reasons themselves, and their effects, are empirically available to us in arguments repeated on both sides of the Atlantic and within the United Nations about the need for some kind of action, if not an actual invasion. In this respect, the main task is the analysis of meaning in use rather than searching for a hidden cause or motive.

We are bewitched by the notion that causality, which often assumes a hidden relationship, outside language, is more determinative of outcomes, than the public and political meanings by which possibilities for action are debated and options are imbued with legitimacy. From a Wittgensteinian perspective, the notion of hidden cause is no less bewitching when based on realist theory than Freudian. In both cases, the framework provides a conceptual language for making sense of a phenomenon rather than providing a mirror of material reality. Insofar as the explanation relates to a material reality, we have no basis for determining the validity of conclusions based on one conceptual apparatus over another (see, for instance, Kegley 1997). By contrast, there is nothing hidden in the reasons given for an action; the intention is revealed in a shared and public language.

The intention to invade was embedded in the decision to invade Iraq and in the act of invading. The reason for the invasion of Iraq, given by foreign policy elites, was the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's WMD. Whether these actors believed the intelligence or manufactured it, this 'reason' made the invasion possible. The reason was the means for persuading the US public, and US soldiers, that this was a legitimate act by their government. The reason was strengthened by the link made in political discourse between Saddam and the attackers on 9/11. The premise that Saddam had WMD, although based on inaccurate data, established a justification for the invasion. These reasons built on the rules of international law. The reasons were publicly accessible in political language. They constituted an action and a 'reality', that is, the invasion.

Causality is a mono-logical relationship. Giving reasons always takes place within a dialogue. To give a reason is to open a space for the other to be engaged and respond. As a two-way relationship this interaction is not merely a question of who has the greater material power; it is dependent on some degree of common language (the other must be able to understand what is being said and what constitutes a reason), which incorporates standards of legitimacy (that is, what will suffice as a good reason). Not unlike the therapeutic dialogue, it also holds open the prospect of being led out of the endless trap that language sets up (Hacker 1996: 236). Despite America's military power, the exposure of the faulty evidence and thus the weakness of the reasons given for the invasion, has led to questions about the legality of the war, and of the credibility of the Bush and Blair administrations.

Contribution

Wittgenstein's thought shifts away from a search for causes or motives to an analysis of meaning in use. This final part of the chapter is an attempt to flesh out more clearly what this means and what it potentially contributes to

International Relations. Just as his two works influenced the major streams of thinking about language, both positivist and post-positivist, his thought represents a challenge to the entire methodological spectrum of IR.

The post-positivist Third Debate presented a challenge to the methodological underpinnings of much IR theory, and not least the assumption that theory mirrors the world. Post-positivists revealed the extent to which mainstream theories are bound up in the world and power relations within it. The mainstream reaction was primarily defensive, and conflated questions of language and language use with post-structuralism. Viewing the progression of Wittgenstein's thought in its entirety provides a less defensive point of departure for looking at some of the assumptions that inform mainstream theory generation. Most important is the rather obvious – and crucial – point that international relations is a 'social' endeavour. Language is the central feature of our sociality and therefore on some level must be taken seriously.

Rules

While constructivists have focused on meaning, rules, normativity and the social dimensions of international relations, questions of language were sidelined with the development of 'conventional' constructivism (Fierke 2006b). In these debates, conventional constructivists focused on social ontology, in contrast to the materialist ontology of the mainstream, and epistemology was largely left off the agenda. More traditional IR theorists and constructivists claimed there were no real epistemological differences between them (Katzenstein *et al.* 1998).

From a post-Wittgensteinian perspective, this distinction is misplaced. Once one embraces a notion of rule-like action, the distinction between being in the world (ontology) and knowledge of the world (epistemology) collapses. Wittgenstein's use of the game metaphor illustrates why this distinction cannot be maintained.⁴ The ontology of the knight cannot be separated from the meaning and identity of this piece within the game of chess. One might argue that the knight's ontology is a function of its composition out of wood or metal. But the latter would not then distinguish this object, or its use, from a thousand other products made with wood or metal. The ontology of chess cannot be separated from our knowledge of the rules of this game. Likewise, it is not very meaningful to say that human ontology, for instance, based on human nature, can be separated from historically and culturally specific identities and actions within which this nature is given meaning and expressed. Here a different distinction is useful, between 'forms of life', that is, patterns of activity visible across cultures, such as religion, war, diplomacy, marriage, sports, etc., and the culturally specific language games that constitute particular practices.⁵ As he states, 'Here the term "language game" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life' (Wittgenstein 1973: para. 23; see also para. 241).

Islam and Christianity are both religions (a form of life) but they are informed by culturally specific practices (attending a Mosque vs a church, following

Mohammed vs worshipping Christ, praying while facing Meccah vs taking communion). These are all language games in two respects: like a game, they represent a set of interrelated practices that rest on socially accepted rules, which are often assumed rather than consciously applied. In this respect, the rules are like habits, insofar as we often forget, through repeatedly following them, that they rest on rules (Wittgenstein 1973: paras 206, 219). The rules *constitute* a practice that is replicated in the acts of multiple participants, who may never know one another, and they *regulate* action insofar as deviations from the rules may be sanctioned. As in chess, there are rules by which we recognize a knight and know how to move with it (two space forward, one to the side). There are also rules that regulate or define what it means to cheat. The two types of rules cannot be totally separated. It would be cheating to move diagonally with a knight, precisely because these rules constitute a different move for the knight. Neither the objects, nor the particular moves by which we 'go on' in playing a game, can be separated from particular uses of language.

Diplomacy is a form of life, expressed in historically and culturally specific language games. While rudimentary forms of diplomatic interaction can be found in ancient history, diplomacy as we know it evolved in the European context, was structured by an array of shared understandings and assumptions, a common language (French) and an etiquette. The fundamental constitutive rule of diplomacy is sovereignty, which was codified in the Treaty of Westphalia. This constitutive rule looks somewhat different if one moves from the highpoint of diplomacy, captured in Calhann's diplomacy game, 1901, to more contemporary forms of diplomacy, where, against the background of globalization, sovereignty may be shared by states, as in the European Union, or may be much more vulnerable to influences outside the state. There are rules of practice, such as the balance of power, which in many historical periods – but not all – were first and foremost about preserving sovereignty. There are various customary rules, growing out of accepted practices by states, which have over time been codified in international law. There are further moral rules, which place limits on human practices of war and destruction. A Wittgensteinian approach to forms of life and language games highlights the extent to which war across cultures is a rule-bound practice (Guelff and Roberts 2000: page 3; Fierke 2005). It rests on traditions and customs that both constitute and regulate this practice.

It is tempting to focus on the more obvious regulatory role of rules, as expressed, for instance, in international law. Realists, in the debate with idealists or liberals, argue that international law is ineffective, given the absence of a formal authority at the international level to enforce these laws. They thus focus on the effectiveness of regulative rules. While most states do follow the many layers of international law, most of the time, realists have fixated on those moments of *realpolitik* when major powers have placed their own interests above those of international law.

Wittgenstein's game analogy provides a deeper cut into the relationship between constitutive and regulative rules. For instance, sovereignty has been the constitutive rule of international relations. Sovereign players have manoeuvred

within multiple overlapping games. Balance of power is a particular kind of game, which is no less constituted by the sovereignty rule than international law, even though its rule-like nature rests more in shared assumptions and practices than codified law. Its regulative rules are dictated by the ultimate objective of preserving sovereignty. Cheating is less the issue – indeed, as in Calhammer’s game, lying and cheating are among the rules – than the ultimate loss of identity if one fails in this objective. Logically, if balance of power is the practice most centrally related to preservation of the constitutive rule of sovereignty, its primacy as a rule would and perhaps even should, within this game, have precedence over other regulative rules of international law.

Realists would refer to rules of this kind as laws, that is, laws discovered in the natural order of things rather than codified in positive law. They are thus more an expression of universality and less of the culturally or historically specific. We can look back to Thucydides and identify a similar logic or form of life, but there is an important loss of clarity in focusing on the universality of the balance of power. The situation described by Thucydides was similar to the bipolar logic of the Cold War, but this logic shares only a family resemblance, given the centrality of nuclear weapons in the latter. It departs in more fundamental ways from that of the classical European balance of power, where the ‘courtship’ between the European partners, and changing alliances, based in part on marriage, relied on a different set of rules from the Cold War stalemate defined by fixed alliances. The Wittgenstinian imperative is that we ‘look and see’ how the rules are expressed in any one historical context. Far from universal law, there is merely a family resemblance between the different logics by which it has been played.

Rules and interpretations

In the first part of the chapter, reasons for action were contrasted with causes. Wittgenstinian rules and language games rely on a further contrast between a rule and interpretation. Recent disciplinary debates have distinguished those who focus on explanation, which starts with the discovery of patterns or ‘laws’ of international relations, on the one hand, and those who highlight the multiplicity of possible interpretations in any one situation (see Adler 1996). This dichotomy highlights a difference between truth in nature and the relativity of interpretation – the absence of any ultimate truth – that from the perspective of the former precludes the latter from the realm of science.

Wittgenstein’s argument about the distinction between an interpretation and a rule is more nuanced. The world neither exists as a static totality, which can be mirrored in language, nor is it pure interpretation. There are no ultimate grounds. When we hit rock bottom this is simply what we do and what we do is built on a history of practices, rules and shared understandings. Given the lack of ultimate foundations in the realm of human activity, we cannot talk about law-like behaviour, i.e. driven by human nature or some other universal, but we can talk about rule-guided action, informed by human traditions, customs and practices. Thus,

there are patterns to be identified, but these patterns are less a function of universal laws than contextually specific rules. A rule differs from an interpretation. As Wittgenstein states:

there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not an interpretation*, but which is exhibited in what we call 'obeying a rule' or 'going against it' in actual cases. Hence there is an inclination to say every action according to the rule is an interpretation. But we ought to restrict the term interpretation to the substitution of one expression of the rule for another.

(1973: para. 201)

We would not say that the classical European powers relied on a different *interpretation* of the balance of power from the Cold War superpowers. For the former to maintain an alliance on ideological grounds, even when this was contrary to sovereign interest, would be as much a case of 'going against' the rules, in that context, as would be a decision by Poland, during the Cold War, to join NATO. Indeed, in the run-up to the First World War, when such fixed alliances were formed, the outcome was a breakdown of the game itself, resulting in war. Likewise, one could speculate – although it did not happen – that a decision by Poland in 1953 or 1975 to join NATO would have led to a breakdown of the deterrence game. Any of these acts may have initially relied on a different interpretation of the possibilities of the context, but they nonetheless are examples of going against its dominant rules.

In the realm of international law, the distinction between rule and interpretation seems more problematic. Much international law, like law more generally, rests on rules that must be interpreted in relation to a given context. Thus, in the Iraq case, the debate focused on the interpretation of Security Council Resolution 1441 and whether its vague language justified or did not justify the use of force by the US and UK. However, while rules of law often do require interpretation, they can also *constitute* action insofar as different sides of this debate draw on *different* aspects of law to argue for or against one course of action or another. Thus, action towards Iraq was less a result of the interpretation of a particular law than that of situating the action within a particular legal framework and following a rule within it. Laws develop over time, often in response to particular problems. The body of law, whether national or international, thus looks more like a tapestry of overlapping rules, some of which may contradict one another, rather than a straightforward blueprint that prescribes right and wrong action (Fierke 2005).

One example from US domestic law, which clearly illustrates the point, relates to the Civil Rights movement in the US in the late 1950s and 1960s. Southern segregation rested on local laws, which dictated that African Americans should not ride in the front of buses, sit at lunch counters or use other facilities for whites only. These laws were in conflict with the US Constitution, which defined all men (*sic*) as equal. When black activists sat at lunch counters for whites only or sat in the front of the bus, as Rosa Parks did, they were acting on

the basis of the rule that all Americans are equal, and, *at one and the same time*, going against the rule that black Americans should be segregated into different and unequal spaces. This was not a case of interpreting the rule of segregation but rather of 'acting as if' the rule of equality were in place.

In a case of humanitarian intervention, there may be a conflict between international laws relating to sovereignty and those relating to human rights. Different actors may argue for an appropriate course of action on the basis of a different and conflicting framework of rules. In this case, it is less an interpretation of the human rights or sovereignty rule per se that is important, than how either framework constitutes agency, or the possibility and legitimacy of action. Or, to reverse this relationship, in the case of Iraq, humanitarian reasons for war replaced the pre-invasion justification based on the threat of WMD as it became obvious that no weapons were to be found. This new language game had an important role in lending legitimacy to the invasion at a time when the original reasons, which constituted the invasion itself, had been undermined. A conception of multiple and interfacing language games provides a framework for thinking about how different structures constitute the possibility of action or agency, as one rule is substituted for another.

Going against the rules

In moving from a notion of hidden laws to rule-like patterns, the notion of universal foundations for our action dissolves. Scholars, theologians or political practitioners, in whatever culture, often resist this move because the reference to foundations plays an important role in legitimizing practice. Knowledge that one is acting in line with God's will or the logic of the universe provides an important basis for arguing the rightness or justness of an action. Post-structuralists and critical theorists have argued that references to natural necessity only reinforce the powers that be, and silence alternative voices. They have sought to unsettle those rules that have become reified, such that they appear to be a part of the natural order. In so doing, they have emphasized interpretation, that is, what appears to be reality 'as it is' represents one possible world, while marginalizing alternative possibilities.

While these analyses are all post-Wittgensteinian, the later Wittgenstein's argument about language does not in itself say anything about power and appears to be more descriptive than critical. This is one reason why it seems so ill equipped to tackle the issues raised by international politics. At the same time, as a methodological approach, it is implicitly critical, insofar as it demonstrates the power of language, its social underpinning and its ability to constrain and bewitch. The transition from a picture theory of language to an emphasis on the analysis of meaning in use requires that we abandon those assumptions that hold us captive, including the dichotomy between an external world and the mental processes of individuals, and a distinction between ontology and epistemology.

The question is whether there is any added value to an analytic focus on Wittgensteinian language games and rules, given other critical approaches that are

more explicit in theorizing the mechanisms of power. I would argue that the added value is that it keeps us squarely focused on the working of language, both in the world and in our theories. Most of the critical genres have been criticized for the obtuse nature of the theory and for the difficulty of saying anything about the world or worlds of international relations (Wynn Jones 1999) or for being too focused on the practice of critique at the expense of actual analysis. They have also tended to get caught up in debates about the priority of ontology or epistemology. A shift to the analysis of meaning in use, and to the exploration of expressions of following a rule and 'going against it' in concrete cases, provides a somewhat different point of departure. Like more traditional approaches, a notion of patterns is maintained, although these patterns are historically or culturally specific rather than universal, and social rather than purely material. They provide less a basis for generalization than the possibility of tracing change or identifying difference. Like the critical approaches, rules presume multiple possibilities. Yet, unlike those who emphasize interpretation, a focus on rules points not merely to the act of critique but the analysis of agency and the emergence of alternatives against the background of a dominant reified order. The focus on rules is an imperative to 'look and see' how language is put to use in different contexts, and to examine concrete cases of following the rules and going against them.

This critical potential was illustrated by Václav Havel in his example of the greengrocer who had a slogan in his window stating 'Workers of the World, Unite!' The greengrocer never thought about the meaning of the slogan. Hanging the sign was just a normal act in the context of communist Czechoslovakia. But in doing so he participated in reproducing that order, as did all of his neighbours. Once he stopped to consider what he really thought, and whether he believed the claim, he became dangerous. Once he stopped putting up the slogan he broke the rules of the game by exposing it as a game. He became reflexive about the reasons for his action. It is this potential for reflexivity that opens a way out of our captivity to both the theories and accepted practices that reinforce existing patterns of international power. It opens a space for 'acting as if' a different game were in place.

Conclusion

This chapter has developed three claims. First, the influence of Wittgenstein's thought on IR is far-reaching, although this influence has been indirect and the challenge has not been fully embraced. Second, Wittgenstein's challenge is less one of applying theory than gaining greater clarity about our use of language. On the one hand, theorists need to be more reflexive about what they are doing when they claim to explain. Theory provides less a picture of the world than a conceptual apparatus for making sense of it. In this respect, theory is more constitutive of world/s than a mirror of it. On the other hand, understanding is less about gaining a window into the hidden motives or intentions of individuals than acquiring an overview of the world in which they act as social beings. In this

respect, intentions are embedded in action or, insofar as actions are socially constituted on the basis of reasons, they depend on a shared language and legitimacy. In both cases, the Wittgenstinian imperative is to 'look and see' (Wittgenstein 1973: para. 66), that is, to focus on the analysis of meaning in use, in order to be more reflexive about that use and the assumptions that underpin it.

Third, Wittgenstein's approach helps us look at the world from a different angle. Many IR theory debates have constructed either/or dichotomies, that is, either an external world or the thoughts of individuals, either epistemology or ontology, either 'reality' or interpretation. Because language use is rule like, it rests on replicable patterns that are different from mere interpretation; because these patterns are not static or singular, but multiple and interfacing, they do not merely structure, but present the possibility of agency. Rules are not constructed by individuals but have a social basis in customs, institutions and uses. The ability to make sense of social action, to imbue it with legitimacy, rests on this history. However, this history looks less like a linear progression than an ancient city in which the architecture spans many centuries, where constructions from multiple eras, with winding alleys and pathways can be discovered (Wittgenstein 1973: 18). Wittgenstein's philosophy of language returns us to the fundamentally social element of human life and of any construction within it. It focuses our attention on the dialogical processes by which this life has been constructed over time. It asks that these dialogical processes, in context, be the focus of our analysis. In this respect, it may be something of a misnomer to refer to Wittgenstein and IR theory, as the two are in many respects at odds. The imperative is to approach this theory, and the worlds of international relations, from a new angle.

Notes

- 1 Having said this, Wittgenstein, one of the philosophical giants of the last century, would never have made his way through the British Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), with a lifetime's work expressed primarily in two short volumes.
- 2 Exceptions include Onuf (1989), Kratochwil (1989), Hollis and Smith (1990), Fierke (1996, 1998, 2002), Fierke and Wiener (1999), Fierke and Nicholson (2001) and Lang *et al.* (2006).
- 3 For a more indepth discussion of this critique, see Fierke (2006a). See also Bourveresse (1995) and Heaton (2000).
- 4 Although it should be noted that he does not himself use the language of ontology and epistemology.
- 5 Wittgenstein himself is not quite so clear in making this distinction, but I do so for analytic reasons. See Wittgenstein 1973 [1958]. Based on his argument, any clear boundary between these two may be impossible as distinctions between forms of life are also drawn in language.

9 Bakhtin

From substance to process

Xavier Guillaume

Introduction

The work of Mikhail M. Bakhtin¹ has become important in different forms of social understanding, but it is also elusive, so much so that it is hard to characterize any one approach as Bakhtinian. There are indeed several ways in which we might trace his influence in international relations in particular, without there being any one authentic ‘Bakhtinian approach’. At best what can be achieved is a sound, issue specific transposition of some of his ideas; this is the point of departure for this chapter. The chapter itself will focus on ways of applying Bakhtin’s work because it can be used to analyse self and other relations (Guillaume 2002a, 2006, 2007; Neumann 1996). Nonetheless, Bakhtin’s potential is not limited to the identity/alterity nexus, nor to the field of literary studies from which it emerged. Instead, as some writers have argued, his work can inform how, epistemologically, the field of international relations is shaped and how it works (Guillaume 2002b; Neumann 2003), and how it can engage both with world literature and poetics (Holden 2003; Moore 2009a).

Indeed, as the many edited volumes dedicated to his work illustrate (Bell and Gardiner 1998; Hitchcock 1998; Mandelker 1995), Bakhtin has been a major influence and source for the development of new approaches in a range of disciplines. Unfortunately, like all thinkers deemed to transform a field of study, Bakhtin has also become something of an intellectual (and fashionable) icon – a cliché even – in the field of the humanities and the social sciences (Emerson 1997: 3). IR scholars, however, have largely neglected Bakhtinian scholarship or, with a few exceptions, have offered rather cursory treatments of his work (Holden 2003). This chapter will not be dedicated to an evaluation of IR scholarship and its (mis)appropriation of Bakhtin. Rather, it will highlight, translate and adapt *elements* of Bakhtin’s work into the field of International Relations. As we will see, identifying and adapting Bakhtin’s conception of transactions (Dewey and Bentley 1991 [1949]: 101–102), relations between identity and alterity, or what can be summarized as dialogism, helps us develop a processual account of the identity/alterity nexus. The word dialogism itself is problematic in Bakhtin’s work and a source of discussion among Bakhtin’s scholars. Indeed, the word scarcely appears in his work. Nonetheless I adopt the term here to enrich one

specific aspect of Bakhtin's contribution, the *problématique* of the identity/alterity nexus. Following Mustafa Emirbayer,

the very terms or units involved in a transaction derive their meaning, significance, and identity from the (changing) functional roles they play within that transaction. The later, seen as a dynamic, unfolding process, becomes the primary unit of analysis rather than the constituent elements themselves. (1997: 287)

More specifically, I will concentrate here on three aspects of Bakhtin's work which might contribute to process-based approaches to the international. First, through his conception of dialogue, I will ground a distinction between two dimensions of what can be understood as 'dialogue': a normative dimension and a sociological dimension. This distinction is important because IR theorists that draw on the idea of dialogue often conflate these two dimensions, thus limiting the sociological dimension of the identity/alterity nexus. Second, I will address how one can consider identity as a dialogical process. This development is important because it opens up the field of IR to phenomena, related to the identity/alterity nexus, that would otherwise be difficult to discern, due, in part, to the territorialized conception of identity found in IR theory. Finally, I will argue the case that processual approaches to the international are engaged with the political. Indeed, a common criticism of such approaches is that they lack a sense of the political, of the 'expression of a particular structure of power relations' (Mouffe 2005: 18). Here I will draw on Bakhtin's notion of the *chronotope* to underline how one can approach the study of constellations of power relations by delimiting hegemonic and counter-hegemonic representational positions, positions that represent both domination and resistance.

The different conceptions of dialogue

To start, I would like to distinguish between what one could term *dialogic* approaches and *dialogical* approaches to the 'international'. Dialogic approaches refer to the idea of dialogue as an exchange between interlocutors and concentrates on the normative problem of reciprocity and recognition. In contrast, dialogical approaches focus on the characterization of the processes, the trans-actions at the heart of any forms of identity formation, performance or transformation, whatever normative qualifications this form might take (Guillaume 2002a, 2007; Nielsen 2002: 35, 214 note 11). At first glance, while it seems that the former logically includes the latter, this is not necessarily the case. As Charles Taylor notes, when discussing the notion of dialogue in Bakhtin: 'we need relationships to fulfil, but not to define, ourselves' (1994: 33). This draws attention to the dialogic dimension of dialogue, rather than a dialogical approach, which sees relations in conjunction with contexts and expressions as necessary for defining ourselves (Guillaume 2002a). This distinction is at the heart of Bakhtin's conception of dialogue. In 'The Problem of Speech Genre', he states:

The expression of an utterance always *responds* to a greater or lesser degree, that is, it expresses the speaker's attitude toward others' utterances and not just his attitude toward the object of his utterance. ... However monological the utterance may be ... however much it may concentrate on its own object, it cannot but be, in some measure, a response to what has already been said about the given topic, on the given issue, even though this responsiveness may not have assumed a clear-cut external expression. ... *The utterance is filled with dialogic[al] overtones, and they must be taken into account in order to understand fully the style of the utterance.* After all, our thought itself ... is born and shaped in the *process of interaction and struggle with others' thought*, and this cannot but be reflected in the forms that verbally express our thought as well. ... The interrelations between inserted others' speech and the rest of the speech (one's own) ... are analogous (but, of course, not identical) to relations among rejoinders in dialogue.

(Bakhtin 1986 [1952–53]: 92, author's emphasis)

Within IR, Bakhtin's notion of dialogue is primarily understood in its dialogic form (most notably in the work of Der Derian (1993) and Neumann (1996)). The relation established between a self and difference is one in which to be a potential total and finite self is to be a being 'unable *not* to participate in the event of co-being' (Nikulin 1998: 395–396, author's emphasis). It is therefore impossible to conceive a finite being as a totality outside the normative dynamics of the relations linking it to difference. For Bakhtin, to reach a relationally finite and total self would mean that one had to integrate through dialogue the vision that a multitude of other selves (alterity) possess of the world (Bakhtin 1990 [1920–23]: 36). Naturally, within IR, the ethical concern with regard to difference and the normative potential of the concept of dialogue was present prior to Bakhtinian interventions. Such an example can be found in Thomas Risse's (2000) adaptation of Jürgen Habermas' communicative action framework. It is striking, however, to note that the main impetus for the use of the notion of Bakhtinian dialogue derives from Tzvetan Todorov's work, which Iver Neumann describes as 'the first fully fledged application of the self/other problematique to a historical discursive sequence' (Neumann 1996: 155). It is worth remembering too that Todorov was deeply influenced by Bakhtin, with his well-known *La conquête de l'Amérique*, which directly followed his book on Bakhtin, establishing what may be called a 'Todorov link' (Todorov 1981, 1982). In IR, the 'Todorov link' can be traced in a number of pieces that examine identity politics, ethics and philosophy (Blaney and Inayatullah 1994, 1996, 2004; Shapcott 2001; Connolly 1989).

In IR theory, the normative aspect of dialogue is often taken, implicitly at least, as the foundation for a sociological understanding of transactions. For example, in addressing the possibility of dialogue between cultures, Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney argue that a problem arises, which stems from modernity's drive for an 'empire of uniformity' (2004: 32–43). A dialogue between alter egos is seen as an ethical imperative to go beyond the 'splitting' between a

self and an other, that is, 'the breakdown in the mutuality of interaction between self and other' (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 11, see 162–169 as well). There is a 'temptation' for the self in the 'reflexes' (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 11, 15) of othering or, in the term they borrow from Todorov (1982: 58, 67–68, 308–309), of the 'double movement': difference is transformed into inferiority and equality is seen through the lens of sameness. It is through this mechanism that 'the self comes to know and act toward the other' (Inayatullah and Blaney 1996: 75). It is only a temptation, though, because agents are able to enter a dialogue among different equals, alter egos, insofar as they have 'the capacity and willingness ... to distance themselves from their position in the global hierarchy and bring themselves closer to the other' (Blaney and Inayatullah 1994: 45). To be closer means to actually find the other within oneself thus empathically developing a sense of co-suffering with the other (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 9–16).

Todorov's 'double movement' seems to act as the sociological process by which a self necessarily interacts with difference; it becomes a self by othering difference. This sociological process is one that social agents attempt, at least normatively, to escape from. Indeed, one is left with the feeling that Blaney and Inayatullah are conflating the specific mechanism of othering with the more general processes of identity formation, performance and transformation; themes that can also be spotted in the work of David Campbell (1998) and William Connolly (1991). Of course, all these authors distinguish, analytically, between othering as a specific mechanism and a general process of identity formation. Practically however, their own narratives and normative orientations blur this fundamental distinction. In contrast, Bakhtin's notion of dialogue, while integrating this normative dimension, is not as restrictive, offering space for a sociological conceptualization of identity formation independent, but not detached from, the normative concerns: a point flagged up in Iver Neumann's work on collective identity formation (1996).

Indeed, Bakhtin's conception of dialogue 'is not always the fruit of peaceful coexistence' precisely because Bakhtin 'is not a philosopher of the ideal speech situation and [he] is not a philosopher of agreement' (Wall 1998: 205). This point is brought into sharp relief, when turning to his use of carnival and parody, essential aspects of his doctoral dissertation, published in English as *Rabelais and his World* (Bakhtin 1984 [1965/1968]). Evidently, *Rabelais and his World* not only demonstrates that power relations existed between classes during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, but it also serves to introduce contestational practices in societies, illustrating their potential transformative power within either a society, in the form of a 'popular-festive culture of laughter' (Hirschkop 1999: 275–276, 283–285), or in a literary genre, in the Menippean satire (see also, Gardiner 1999; Morson and Emerson 1990: 433–470). By offering a conceptualization of the notion of dialogue stressing an inherent processual – and as we will see – a political character, Bakhtin's work can open up IR theory to a more refined approach to the identity/alterity nexus, highlighting the role of sociological processes.

Identity as process

Writing on the relation existing between the writer and his/her hero and of the necessity for the former to detach him/herself from the latter (if he/she resembles the author too much), Bakhtin affirms that this activity of putting things in perspective – in other words to perceive him/herself under another referent – is a daily act of our existence. Generally, we can say of the other that he/she is a transgredient element of our own conscience (Bakhtin 1990 [1920–23]: 15–16). Transgredience is the necessary relation and dependence that self establishes with alterity, with multiple alternative self-understandings and self-representations. Bakhtin explains that a self alone cannot feel and be itself within its own realm of existence. Human beings, he suggests, have an ‘absolute need for the other, for the other’s seeing, remembering, gathering, and unifying self-activity – the only self-activity capable of producing his outwardly finished personality’ (Bakhtin 1990 [1920–23]: 35–36). This idea of finitude, however, should not be equated with the ‘absorption’ of difference by the self, whatever form this ‘absorption’ might take (integration, assimilation, extinction, sublimation). Instead, Bakhtin posits *the continuous separation and simultaneity* of each self-understanding and self-representation (Holquist 1990: 20; Todorov 1981: 150). While the idea of finitude might echo the dialogic dimension highlighted earlier, it is important to replace this idea of transgredience with its *dialogical* dimension. A first step in this direction is to understand that an identity is a process, because it belongs to a *dynamic network* of meanings; identity thus represents a certain position in a field of relations. As expressed by Bakhtin:

There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic[al] context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of the past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) – they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue’s subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival.

(1986 [1974]: 170)

Transposed to the identity/alterity *problématique*, an identity, here taken as expressed through utterances, is formed through constant transactions within a network of signifiers in relation to which it acquires contextual and enunciative meanings, its context and expression (Guillaume 2002a). From a processual perspective, then, an identity is best understood as a social continuant; that is, as a process that is both stable in time and yet capable of change (Guillaume 2007). In other words, identity is never static, but is understood as an ongoing event that might simply reproduce itself or might evolve in one way or another.

Finally, identity is best approached through a 'narrative prism' for it 'provides an opportunity to infuse the study of identity with a relational and historical approach that avoids categorical rigidities by emphasizing the embeddedness of identity in overlapping networks of relations that shift over time and space' (Somers 1994: 607). For Margaret Somers, an identity is to be understood as 'plotted' through a multitude of commitments and identifications (1994: 616–617). Identities are filtered by the structures and the horizons through which individuals, groups, societies or political communities determine what the good is, or to what or whom one should be associated or opposed. These different identities are not equivalent to one another; indeed they tend to be hierarchically articulated, and function in a variety of different ways, across cultural, societal or contextual plains (Smith 1991: 3–8). There are 'evaluative criteria' allowing one to see if some of these issues are felt contingently, or to discern if these criteria are circumstantial (Somers 1994: 617).

However, one should be aware of two key problems inherent in this approach (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). First, there is a risk of reification when considering narrative identity. That is, whether narrative identity is an actual identity, or a spatially and temporally circumscribed crystallization or constellation of power relations. Second, there is also the problem of reproduction and reification linked to readings of narrative identity. For Brubaker and Cooper this can be seen in the uncritical adoption of 'categories of practices as categories of analysis' (2000: 5). Indeed, 'Identity' might be a category felt by a subject ('I feel that I am Swiss'), which might in turn, be taken as an 'object' of or category of analysis ('what is Swissness?'). The same signifier ('Swissness') might not necessarily be associated with the same referent since there is necessarily a discrepancy between what 'identity' is for those who are subjectively feeling and referring to such a category (whether reflexively or not), and for those who are trying 'objectively' to make sense, analytically, of this category. In fact it is precisely this discrepancy, this dissymmetry between a cognizant and a cognized, which lays the epistemic foundation for a processual reading of identity (Amorim 1996: 22–23, 31, 59).

One advantage of the narrative approach to identity is that 'identity' as a fictional (narrative), subjective (individual) and intersubjective (collective) phenomenon is not studied as a voiceless/reified 'object' since this will tend to characterize it as a monolithic and unchanging *thing* and not as a plural, dynamic and contingent *process*. If, as I have suggested, 'identity' is a narrative instance, we thus have to adapt our conceptual lens to this situation. Identity has, in this view, no fixed or essentialist quality, and as we try to understand how it is continuously constructed, we cannot imply that it has this character if we are to maintain this constructivist perspective (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 27–28). Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) may help here in their distinction between three ways to divide such an encompassing phenomena as 'identity', for they note that the latter can be first a dispositional, situated subjectivity and/or second a dispositional, situated intersubjectivity and/or (third) a relationality. From a dialogical perspective, each can, ideally, be compounded as expression, context and relation.

In sum, collective identity is then in a *dialogical trans-action* with alterity, that is to say that the boundaries of identity, as a social continuant, are the reflection of the interweaving of its expression, its context and its relations to other social continuants, as well as to sets of events and phenomena. From this perspective, when considering an identity's specificity, emergence, performance and transformation, three dimensions are especially important: its *expressivity*, 'how' it is performed, its *context*, 'where' and 'when' an identity is performed, and its *relationality*, in regard to 'whom' it is articulated or not. If an identity's constitution, performance and transformation are always dialogically linked to other identities or social events, the characterization of these links can be explored once they are conceptualized as continuous relations, a continuous 'dialogue' between a multitude of social continuants. However, to establish which social continuants are the principle constituting influences in, say, a specific 'national identity', it is crucial to concentrate on how this is expressed through self-representation. In short, a Bakhtinian analysis points us through methodology to specific research questions, to suggest that analysis should pay attention to a 'national identity's' scope, style and content for these particular reasons.

All in all, approaching identity as a dialogical process with alterity can provide a better way not only to understand a series of phenomena challenging our spatial comprehension of the 'international' but also provide a tool for theorizing the 'international' as a series of complex and varied processes in itself, both constituted by and constitutive of these phenomena (Guillaume 2007). It is commonly held, whether implicitly or explicitly, that the 'international' is a (modern) place and location defined by its organizing principle, sovereignty (Agnew 1994). When using Bakhtin's processual conception of the identity/alterity nexus, the 'international', however, is more likely to be viewed as a *problématique* constituted through a multitude of subordinated processes.

Process to politics

The question of power and, ultimately, of the political, in relation to what is in essence a 'scheme of intelligibility', or 'a matrix of operations permitting to inscribe a group of facts within a system of intelligibility' (Berthelot 1990: 23) is evident when turning to read politics as process. From a process-based perspective, power is not to be understood as something one possesses so much as a relation emerging 'out of the very way in which figurations of relationships ... are patterned and operate' (Emirbayer 1997: 291). Power both reflects the relative position that social agents entertain and the constitution of these social agents' identity (Bourdieu 1994: 53–57). What a process approach helps us to do, is to grasp complex configurations of power relations from which an 'identity' emerges, or through which an identity is maintained and performed. Many of these configurations would otherwise be edited out of spatial conceptualizations of the 'international' and identity because either they would be present in accounts of IR theory shaped by an inside/outside dichotomy – or would be subjected to a form of 'process reduction', that is to say a movement by which the

‘possible separation of interrelated things into individual components – “variables” or “factors” occur – without any need to consider how such separate and isolated aspects of a comprehensive context are related to each other’ is made possible (Elias 1978: 112–116).

Elsewhere, I have argued (Guillaume 2009) that within the framework of a dialogical approach to the international, the political should be understood as an expression of particular structures and constellations of power relations. This constellation of power relations is itself subject to challenging and conflicting utterances about what is the dominant ‘ordinary model of legitimacy’ (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991: 86–87). The political is the realm where different political grammars are in a constant state of flux, for political grammars are ‘expressive vehicles for exemplary definitions of normalcy and deviance, recipes of duties and obligations, and syntaxes of self and other’ (Brown 1987: 122). In other words, the political is reflective of a situation of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981 [1934–35]: 263, 270–275), where centripetal and centrifugal utterances are competing while living in ‘complex space–time configurations that are produced ... by different actors and are only able to reach relative, incomplete and temporary adjustments; they therefore are unachieved and open historical systems’ (Bayart 1985: 351–352, author’s own translation). Thus, conflict over particular issues, or grammars, is indicative of the political, insofar as it is the manifestation of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses participating in the formation, performance and transformation of a collective identity.

Contestation and resistance are important aspects of the formation, performance and transformation of collective self-understanding/representation. In his work, Bakhtin has stressed the importance of contestation and resistance most notably through his use of irony and the carnivalesque (1984 [1965/1968], 1986 [1970–71]). In order to flesh out these aspects of the political, it is useful here to turn to Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope (1981 [1937–38]). Bakhtin developed this notion in an essay on time–space relations in literary genres in order to tackle the ‘intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships’ (1981 [1937–38]: 84). The chronotope was also useful for Bakhtin, because it drew attention to multi-temporality, the site in which an epoch, an author, an utterance or an audience are embedded (1986 [1970–71]: 134). A chronotope is ‘the field of possible action, in which particular stories are told’ (Morson 1991: 1082–1083). As Bakhtin puts it, ‘[o]ut of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and created chronotopes of the world represented in the work (in the text)’ (1981 [1937–38]: 253). For Bakhtin, then, the chronotope both makes possible and concretizes representation; the chronotope is the latter’s ‘representational significance’ (1981 [1937–38]: 250). In terms of the *politics* of representation, chronotopes therefore represent two distinct yet parallel moments.

While Bakhtin (1981 [1937–38]) considers chronotopes to be literary markers defining genres, as each specific narrative form is delimited both by its temporal settings and its spatial configurations, chronotopes can nonetheless be used to enrich IR. First, they capture the condition of possibility of representation as

such. In a certain epoch the available forms, contents and meanings of an utterance are limited by the way they are embedded in time and space. Chronotopes point towards the contingent context in which a representation occurs.² Indeed, an 'identity' can be understood as being expressed within and delimited by chronotopes. In this way, chronotopes are thus an articulation of space *and* time that shape experience (Bakhtin 1986 [1936–38]). As Benedict Anderson (1991: 22–36) argued, the apprehension of time is related both to imagined time *and* the experience of common spatiality – in his example through the media of print-capitalism – and it is this relation that gives rise to a sense of community. 'Modernity' can, for instance, be seen as a chronotope in the field and the discipline of IR. In their IR nexus, modernity is a spatial marker defining what the international is – a 'where' delimited by the modern sovereign state that limits our object of enquiry. It is also a temporal marker defining 'when', which offers a reading of the international in terms of expected norms and development whether in terms of liberal governmentality or in terms of an analysis of international political economic relations.

Second, if one wants to move away from the process of identity formation, performance and transformation, chronotopes can also be seen as a way to map and analyse practices of everyday resistance (de Certeau *et al.* 1990). Michel de Certeau distinguishes between the strategic dimension – referring to the power relations that some social agents can develop through their ability to delimit and define, even if only partially and symbolically, an environment 'as their own' and through which they will manage their relations to others – and the tactical dimension of resistance. According to de Certeau the latter refers to an *art de faire* (art of doing) and an *art de dire* (art of saying) developed through time by social agents who can only deploy themselves, and their possible actions, in an environment that they cannot delimit or define 'as their own' (one has only to think about the consumer in a supermarket). While strategies 'bet on the resistance that establishing a place offers in relation to time; tactics bet on a cunning use of time, of opportunities that time offers and of the games that time introduces in the foundations of power' (de Certeau *et al.* 1990: 63, author's own translation). Since using tactics offers no gain but only a fleeting moment of reappropriation over an environment that is designed to impose itself symbolically or physically on us, chronotopes can help us determine how social agents represent their own *art de faire* and *art de dire* by tracing how they narrate or enact these 'arts'.

In order to animate my argument about the application of chronotopes to IR, I will turn briefly to examine tactics of resistance based on humour in the environment of Eastern Germany and East Berlin during the Cold War. For example it would be impossible, without taking into account the chronotope of the 'Wall', to appreciate how individuals used humour to offset the repressive nature of the communist Eastern bloc (Stein 1989). Some writers have argued that humour has an intricate relation with power and social protest (Speier 1998 [1975]; 't Hart 2007). In this way, humour, and particularly humour that is political in character, is strongly dependent on an audience. And, moreover, the articulation of humour can clearly be both oppressive and subversive. Nonetheless, it is no

surprise to note that Eastern Europe and Russia during the Cold War proved to be places in which ‘the longest, largest and most widespread instance of humour’ was used ‘as social protest’ (Davies 2007: 291). As an *art de dire*, political humour can sometimes be used to empower. But the act of empowerment should be seen as resistance to power and perhaps, more importantly, as a reappropriation of power through the use of parody. In this sense, chronotopes such as the Wall are useful prisms through which to interpret how social protests were enacted. Indeed, while

[t]he Wall in the West is visible, everyday. It is not a topic. In some circumstances, The Wall can be seen to chronotypically represent the socialist time of the East and the spatial yearning for the West. The Wall in the East is invisible, everyday and a topic – which is very much taboo.

(Stein 1989: 86, 92–100)

Political humour in West Berlin was indeed not as pervasively tainted by this chronotope as it was for East Berliners. Moreover, to identify chronotopes such as the Wall or Berlin itself enables us to identify the ‘shifting of boundaries’ of the self. This is illustrated, for instance, in the multiple versions of a play, ‘Wrongful Detention’ (*Freiheitsberaubung*), around which narratives evolve, and which move the landscape and changing time of Berlin, from separation to reunification to post-unification. In its latest version,

The text itself ... by ridiculing *in absentia* the sole representative of west German dominance and making common cause with an implicitly east German audience, re-empowers both them and the audience. There is a sense ... of east German nationhood through narration, not as a binary opposite to any perceived notion of west German nationhood, but simply as a moment of resistance to a superficially successful attempt to drown a nation’s sense of identity, however ‘imagined’ that sense might be.

(Hollis 2000: 129)

But this also indicates a second point; chronotopes exists in multi-temporality, that is to say that the conditions of possibility of representation are multiple and parallel. For instance, in the interwar period it is interesting to note that Italian fascist narratives, predominantly uttered by the fascist elites, were informed by chronotopes such as the ‘revolution’ or ‘Rome’, encapsulated as they were in the idea of *romanità* (Stone 1999; Visser 1992). The idea of a fascist colonial empire and of its destiny was very much narrated around the chronotope of Rome and its empire while the emphasis on modernity and speed were articulated through the chronotope of the fascist revolution. These conflicted with non-fascist narratives informed by chronotopes that were neither national in scope nor historical in style, partly due to the role of regionalism in Italy. Furthermore, they also had to face alternative and conflicting understandings and representations of certain chronotopes. One such example stemmed

from the relationship between chronotopes of political identity and those advanced by the Church, whose symbolic interpretation over the dead differed from that of the fascist movement. The black shirt and the black cassock were fighting for the meaning over one's death: a Christian's death or a fascist's death (Berezin 1997: 196–244). These alternative chronotopes might have varied in shape and strength and provided conflicting or supporting stories, but, most importantly, the fascist narrative chronotopes coexisted, in the same time and space as the other chronotopes; indeed, each was often constructed in relation to the other.

The fascist's use of certain chronotopes had, thus, to provide a legitimizing performance and discourse explaining why they arrived at the position of domination (Bakhtin 1981 [1937–38]: 252). Thus, by paying attention to chronotopes at play we are able to move towards a 'concrete sense of possibilities – of potential actions and potentialities of meaning' (Wall and Thompson 1993: 48). Chronotopes then, are useful inasmuch as they can be used to make sense of the political, allowing analysis to interpret constellations and representations of power relations, to examine differing hegemonic and counter-hegemonic positions and to explore where these positions interact. They thus represent a specific tool to consider more globally what political grammars are at work in a specific society, field or discipline.

Conclusion

Far from exhausting Bakhtin's contributions to the field of IR, this chapter has advanced a reading of aspects of his work, so as to engage with the identity/alterity *problématique* in the field of IR. Starting from his conception of dialogue, I highlighted the processual facet in Bakhtin's thought; a facet that encompasses a conceptualization of identity as a multilayered process as well as a possible 'methodological' approach to the question of power within this *problématique* through the concept of the chronotope.

This processual facet provides IR with a better way not only to understand a series of phenomena challenging our spatial comprehension of the identity/alterity nexus but also provides a tool for theorizing the 'international' as a series of complex and varied processes in itself, both constituted by and constitutive of these phenomena. It is still commonly held that the 'international' is a (modern) place, the boundaries of which are constantly reified. But the 'international' has been defined by its organizing principle, sovereignty, thus (de)limiting its space at the interface among states' actors. In contrast, I have argued here that the 'international' is more effectively read as process, which itself is constituted by a multitude of subordinated processes.

The concept of chronotope was introduced to illustrate how we can approach different articulations of collective self-understandings and self-representations by recognizing how these articulations are narratively enabled, how they can be sites of resistance and how they exist as a constellation of power relations, that is subject to challenging and conflicting utterances. Chronotopes help us to shed

some light to an understanding of the political where different political grammars are conflicting to emerge as the relevant and legitimate one. In other terms, they help us to comprehend the political as heteroglossia.

Notes

- 1 On Bakhtin's life, work and concepts in general one can refer to the work of Michael Brandist (2002), Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist (1984; Holquist 1990), Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson (1990; Emerson 1997) and Tzvetan Todorov (1981).
- 2 The chronotope should not be confounded with Foucault's notion of 'épistémè' as he developed it in *Les mots et les choses* (1966), though they bear some intuitive resemblance. Épistémè, in Foucault's sense, strictly refers to the 'relations existing in a specific epoch between the different scientific domains' (Foucault 2001 [1972]: 1239).

10 Derrida

Aporias of otherness

Claudia Aradau

Introduction

Jacques Derrida has often expressed a reticence towards hermeneutics. This reticence, however, has not meant the rejection of an interpretive endeavour, but its radicalisation and reconfiguration. Compared with the hermeneutical quest for meaning, deconstruction confronts interpretation with potentialities that are yet unknown, incalculable, unimaginable and unplanned. Having rejected the quest for ‘the’ meaning and working within a context defined by a profusion of meanings and signs, the interpretive endeavour of deconstruction can only lead to a ‘hermeneutics *without* hermeneutics’ or radical hermeneutics (Caputo 2000: 3). Deconstruction as radical hermeneutics is informed by the sense of contingency and the rejection of an outside. It works from within a text, by unpacking its ‘blind spots’, absences and contradictions, ‘by letting the system itself unravel, letting the play in the system loose’ (Caputo 1987: 260). From a deconstructive perspective, any text is constituted through contradictions, alternative readings, remainders and supplements that cannot be transcended within a self-contained structure. Deconstructive interpretation brings a text in contradiction to itself to reveal a position of radical alterity that goes against what the text wants to say (Critchley and Mooney 1994: 369). The remainder that is revealed in any text is unsublatable; it cannot be integrated in a higher dialectical whole.¹

Such a radical hermeneutic perspective does not only unmake and displace familiar texts, but also familiar understandings of identity and the subject. Deconstruction unsettles the understanding (and self-understanding) of the subject. For Derrida, the subject defined as self-presence and identity is as contradictory as texts that attempt to achieve stability as the expense of absence and difference. As the text itself is unravelled by its own unsublatable alterity, by the remainder, the subject is also revealed as inhabited by its ‘other’. At an ‘art of understanding’, hermeneutics has always engaged both with text and identity. This chapter unpacks a deconstructive reading of alterity and considers its implications for rethinking international politics and political transformation. In International Relations (IR), a deconstructive perspective has challenged taken-for-granted ‘truths’ about what the international is and how it functions. Deconstruction has helped IR scholars destabilise both hegemonic texts and

dominant understandings of the subject. Unsettling given dichotomies and the identity/difference hierarchy has been especially important against reified distinctions between inside/outside, domestic/international and self/other.

This chapter is structured around two ideas that are defining of a deconstructive approach to alterity: the ‘impossible’ and aporia. Deconstruction pays close attention to the remainder, tensions and the *différance* that the relation to the other presupposes. In Alain Badiou’s concise formulation, for deconstruction ‘whatever the form of discursive imposition, a point exists which escapes that imposition’ (2007: 40). The point that escapes is the impossible, the incalculable or the unconditional. The aporia, according to Derrida, is the experience of responsibility that emerges from the impossible. *Aporia*, from the Greek *aporos* (without passage, issue) defines the unsublatable negativity and undecidability of every concept (Derrida 1993). Aporia is the condition of traversing the experience of the impossible, of encountering the border and limit. To unpack the role of these concepts for deconstruction and their implications for ‘reading’ international politics, I proceed in three stages. The first part of the chapter offers a brief account of alterity, aporia and the impossible in Derrida’s work. The second part focuses on the work of IR scholars who have drawn on Derrida’s insights about the ethico-political relation to the other. The final part of the chapter considers the limitations of deconstruction for political transformation. It argues that a double ‘lack’ can be located in many writings from a deconstructive perspective: the lack of engagement with security and ‘dangerous others’ on the one hand and the lack of theorising social struggles on the other.

Aporias, alterity and the ‘impossible’

From the interpretation of the other pursued by hermeneutics, deconstruction radicalises the relationship with alterity and pushes the self towards the aporias of otherness. While Western metaphysics has been founded upon the dichotomy of presence/absence, self/other, identity/difference, nature/culture, deconstruction unravels the hierarchical relation between the two and unsettles presence. Yet, it is not by privileging the subjugated second term that deconstruction proceeds, but rather through the introduction of the concept of *différance* meaning both to differ and to defer that the dichotomy of presence and absence can be unsettled. Overturning the hierarchy would simply mean to operate from within the deconstructed terrain (Derrida 1987). As all signification is based on differentiation, there is always a supplement that cannot be subsumed to the exhaustivity of signification, an excess or an impossibility. No identity can be self-identical and no alterity is pure – both are enmeshed and identities are dependent upon the traces of other identities. *Différance* is neither identity nor difference, but ‘a kind of differentiation that produces the effect of identity and of difference between those identities’ (Deutscher 2005: 29). *Différance* functions both as temporality and differentiation, as the inscription of the traces and alterity in the repetitive constitution. The temporality of *différance* is one of delay or detour that makes the full presence of a text impossible (Calcagno

2007). The third term or the 'unsublatable negativity' displaces the dichotomy and the implied hierarchy of terms. Thus, deconstruction is not simply negation but equally affirmation. It works through a double move, as both reversal and displacement (Zehfuss 2002: 203).

The main move associated with deconstruction is to unsettle the identity/difference relationship and challenge its closure. Difference is not only difference between, but is already immanent within apparently stable and self-contained identities. Constructivism, post-structuralism and deconstruction have turned a radical hermeneutical eye upon the question of otherness. The 'other' is interpreted as relational, socially and culturally constituted. Since identities are no longer considered to be 'natural' or given, deconstruction attends to the cultural performance of identity, languages and exclusions that the dichotomy identity/difference presupposes. Identity formation is shown to be a process of differentiation from the 'other', of drawing boundaries and entrenching exclusions (Barnett 2005; Campbell 1998c [1992]; Edkins *et al.* 1999). David Campbell (1998c: 23) has argued that neither identity nor difference can be understood except as relational terms and claims about secure identities need to be met with critical scepticism. Similarly, Maja Zehfuss (2002) has suggested that one way of rejecting the problematisation of identity as the basis for action is by unravelling the myth of unified, self-present identity. Identity contains difference within itself: there 'are no settled identities; the subject never achieves the completion or wholeness towards which it strives. It remains haunted by that which has to be excluded for subjectivity to be constituted in the first place' (Edkins and Pin-Fat 1999; also quoted in Zehfuss 2002: 220). Zehfuss has used deconstruction to undermine the myth of German identity as linear and based on exclusions. In this deconstructive move, difference is not defined in relation to another identity, but as *différance*, the differentiation that any apparent self-identity harbours.

The rational understanding of identity/difference has met with criticism for having focused on the reiteration of 'the banal truism that all identities and institutions are founded on repression, or denial, or exclusion, and yet are always permeable to disruptions by these exclusions that define them' (Barnett 2005: 7). As Barnett argues, there are other ways of engaging with otherness. Practices of generosity, solidarity and friendship have informed different approaches inspired by Derrida's work. Rather than necessarily opposed to the displacement of the identity/difference dichotomy as Barnett sets them out to be, these two approaches to alterity can be seen as the main thrust of the early and late Derrida respectively. While the Derrida of the 1960s and 1970s focused on dislodging and displacing hierarchies and metaphysical dichotomies, the later Derrida was concerned with the relation between the possible and the impossible, the conditional and the unconditional in concepts that structure social and political relations. The relation to alterity is mediated through these aporetic concepts of responsibility, tolerance, hospitality, forgiveness, mourning or cosmopolitanism. The aporia of these concepts is the experience of both what is conditional, governed by law, rules and morality and the unconditional or the impossible.

The aporetic experience refers to the necessary negotiation between these two poles, which are simultaneously irreconcilable and indissociable. Aporia, for Derrida, is another way of approaching the 'rhetoric of borders', the encounter with the threshold, the boundary, the dividing line that is different from a problem. Unlike a problem, which is 'the projection that we make in the future in order to protect ourselves and hide something unavowable', aporia is 'the point where the very project or the problematic task becomes impossible and where we are exposed, absolutely without protection' (Derrida 1993: 11–12). Aporias are not dialectisable contradictions in Hegel's sense and neither are they simple antinomies. Rather, aporia is the experience of the impossible, of the negativity that cannot be transcended in the positivity of the system. It is through the aporetic experience that the relation to alterity is radically reformulated as infinite responsibility. Any relation to the other must therefore exceed the problematisation of the other in knowledge, certainty or theory and respond to the ethical obligation of responsibility.

For Derrida, the relation between self and other is reconfigured radically from the perspective of the 'unconditional'. In a world increasingly defined through the proliferation of dangers, Derrida proposes that the relationship to the other passes through the experience of the impossible or the unconditional. The relationship to alterity follows the double move of deconstruction: it overturns the hierarchical relationship between self and other and invents a 'third term' that cannot be recaptured in the previous dichotomical regime. Derrida's reformulation of the ethical relation to alterity is indebted to Emmanuel Levinas's thought on ethics and responsibility (Derrida 1999a). Levinas has been critical of the metaphysical reduction of the other to the same in Western philosophy and has reconceptualised the self not as an autonomous self-identical subject, but as subjected to the demand of the other.

According to Levinas, the other precedes the self and thus cannot be assimilated or known. This asymmetrical relationship marks not only the 'subjection' of the self, but also the subject's freedom. Responsibility for the other is not a secondary development, but is constitutive of the self. As limited responsibility and conditional hospitality can only take place 'in the shadow of the impossibility of their ideal version' (Deutscher 2005: 68), the unconditionality of responsibility and hospitality is a real demand upon the subject. The subject cannot experience closure and self-identities are unravelled as the subject can only exist through subjection to the 'other'. Responsibility is not the result of a rational calculus, but it comes from the other, the 'other in me'. The responsibility to the other cannot be reduced, bordered, limited. Responsibility is unconditional, regardless of who the other is or what her intentions might be. While inspired by Kant's idea of 'universal hospitality', Derrida is critical of the limitations that modernity has imposed upon concepts:

I must be unprepared, or prepared to be unprepared, for the unexpected arrival of *any* other. Is this possible? I don't know. If however, there is pure hospitality or a pure gift, it should consist in this opening without horizon,

without horizon of expectation, an opening to the newcomer whoever the newcomer might be. It may be terrible because the newcomer may be a good person, or may be the devil; but if you exclude the possibility that the newcomer is coming to destroy your house – if you want to control this and exclude in advance the possibility – there is no hospitality.

(1999c: 70)

If ethics is the welcoming of the other, then ethics is coextensive with unconditional hospitality. By opening up concepts to the unconditional and the impossible, Derrida attempts to challenge concrete politics and ‘intervene ... in the condition of hospitality in the name of the unconditional, even if this pure unconditionality appears inaccessible’ (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000: 149). The ethical relation to the other entails the aporetic passage between limited and conditional hospitality and its pure or unconditional aspect.

The other and the ethico-political relation

In IR, several authors have challenged the limitations of law and concrete politics from the perspective of an ethico-political relation to the other. The ethico-political relation draws on unconditionality, the limit or the impossible inscribed in aporetic concepts to become the source of transformative and more generous forms of politics. David Campbell and Michael Shapiro, for example, have argued for an ‘*ethical relation* in which our responsibility to the other is the basis for reflection’ (Campbell and Shapiro 1999: x). Such an ethics of pure opening, unlimited responsibility and unconditional hospitality is resonant with Campbell’s concern with Bosnia as it implies responsibility for the plight of Bosnians, responsibility for the ones who are not immediately dangerous and who could be conceptualised as ‘our neighbours’ at the margins of Europe. Bosnia makes clear the case for the deconstruction of identity. While the break-up of ex-Yugoslavia erased markers of certainty, it was followed by a re-enactment of national and ethnic identities defined through boundaries, limits and separation. Campbell (1998a: 241) reads responsibility as encouraging forms of conflict that disturb exclusivist notions of identity while resisting conflicts that attempt to erase plural and hybrid identities.

Jenny Edkins has approached the deconstructive ethical imperative by considering the relation between the impossible and the undecidable in Derrida. For Derrida, the impossible ‘comes upon me from on high, in the form of an injunction that does not simply wait on the horizon, that never leaves me in peace and will not let me put it off until later’ (2003: 134). The impossible leads to the moment of undecidability, the aporia of calculability and incalculability, of regulative ideas and unconditional principles. Edkins has suggested that one needs to accept the situation of famine relief as undecidable. Contra approaches that contend that aid contributes to the production of famine, Edkins proposes that whether famine relief solves or exacerbates the famine is undecidable (2000: 147). Rather than depoliticising situations of undecidability by creating new

regimes of certainty and knowledge, what is needed is to negotiate the relation between the calculable and the incalculable in each particular situation. In her words, '[w]e have to make a move for which there are no secure grounds. This moment is, nevertheless, something that we must face: the fact that it is undecidable is not an excuse for inaction' (2000: 157). What needs to be avoided is the moral code of certainty created by humanitarian intervention and the forms of responsibility entailed by the technology of humanitarianism. Aid is undecidable as it is caught in the aporia of the regulative ideal of human rights and the unconditional demand of the other.

Maja Zehfuss (2002) has also explored the role of the 'impossible' through the use of responsibility concerning German military intervention in the post-Cold War world. While infinite responsibility depends on the experience of the impossible, debates about German responsibility are based on a concept that has been reduced to a technical question of troop deployments. Technologisation destroys the relation of responsibility as undecidability. In Derrida's terms, however, responsibility requires the experience of the aporia. In order to be a free decision, ethico-political responsibility needs to undergo the experience of the impossible. The representation of responsibility underpinning the debates about German military intervention in Yugoslavia foreclosed the political space by being derived directly from historical and economic considerations: Germany was the economically strongest and most populous country in Europe, while military involvement was read as the repayment of a historical debt to Western allies (Zehfuss 2002: 232–233). Yet, the dilemma of the leader of the Green party, Joschka Fischer, 'never again war' and 'never again Auschwitz' appears to resonate with the aporias of responsibility. The option was between staying out and thus allowing for atrocities to continue and intervening and thus killing innocent civilians (Zehfuss 2002: 256). Nonetheless, one could argue that this double bind bypasses the real political stakes. The decision is not between intervention and non-intervention, but between an ethnically defined state versus a state for all.

From responsibility and hospitality, Derrida has revised other terms to capture the unconditional ethical relation to the other: tolerance, forgiveness, mourning or cosmopolitanism. Forgiveness is particularly interesting as it is a term enmeshed in political change and the transformation of relations of oppression. Derrida starts from the increasing relevance of forgiveness in politics, from truth commissions and amnesties to political repentance. Yet, what happens, asks Derrida, with acts that are truly unforgivable? Just as responsibility and hospitality, forgiveness is an aporetic concept caught in a double bind: pure, unconditional forgiveness and conditional forgiveness. Unlike forgiveness, which is inscribed in a set of conditions and limits, unconditional forgiveness refers to the forgiving the unforgivable (Derrida 2001). As a freely given gift, forgiveness cannot be incorporated in the political process, just as the gift cannot be integrated in the economy of exchange. Nonetheless, the aporia of the gift can only be stated in the conditions of a 'rigorous' distinction between the unforgivable and the forgivable – and between unconditional and conditional forgiveness (Bernstein 2006: 401). The need for distinction, of separating the forgivable and

the unforgivable can be extended to all the unconditional concepts in Derrida's thought. It appears most starkly when unconditional concepts need to be thought in the context of 'dangerous others'.

'Dangerous others'

How does unconditional ethics respond to dangerous others? The problem of security and of dangerous others has not been explicitly tackled by Derrida, with the exception of a few comments on the arrival of the other. According to Derrida, the arrival of the other cannot be anticipated or calculated, it cannot be made conditional. Absolute hospitality requires giving to the 'absolute, unknown, anonymous other' (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000: 25). The other is to be unconditionally welcome, whoever he or she is, and danger is excluded from the ethical experience. Nonetheless, the danger of the other is constructed out of the encounter with the other. 'Dangerous others' are not only a limit to infinite responsibility, but also raise the question whether the ethical unconditionality entails a desirable transformative politics. How can the construction of danger be glossed over? What would ethical unconditionality mean in the struggle against fascism? William Connolly has drawn attention to the challenge that the first question poses for ethics:

Some of the most difficult cases arise when people suffer from injuries imposed by institutionalized identities, principles, and cultural understandings, when those who suffer are not entirely helpless but are defined as threatening, contagious, or dangerous to the self-assurance of these identities, and when the sufferers honor *sources* of ethics inconsonant or disturbing to these constituencies.

(1999: 129)

The difficult cases of the 'dangerous others', of categories of people who are represented as dangerous, risky or in some way undesirable, exposes some of the problems that emerge from ethical unconditionality. While unconditional principles assume the possibility of danger (that the other has evil intentions), Derrida transcends them by making responsibility and hospitality incalculable. Therefore, hospitality cannot be limited according to considerations or representations of danger. Forgiveness is not limited to calculable forgiveness, but its aporia is defined by the incalculable encounter with the unforgivable. Yet, pure or unconditional concepts need to be translated into politics, as long as its task is to mediate unconditionality into concrete contexts and situations. Derrida has acknowledged that the aporia means exactly striding the limit condition rather than going beyond order. Nonetheless, Derrida's reliance on Levinasian ethics has political consequences for how we relate to dangerous others – those whose actions, behaviours or identity have been constructed in some way as threatening.

Levinas's ethics is restricted to the neighbour, to the other defined by 'proximity'. Such proximity is described by Levinas in terms that echo conceptions of

Gemeinschaft: 'my next of kin are also my neighbours' (Levinas quoted in David 2002: 85). Given the organic proximity of the other, the question of dangerousness is suspended. When faced with the idea of threat, Levinas is adamant that '[i]f self-defense is a problem, the "executioner" is the one who threatens my neighbour and, in this sense, calls for violence and no longer has a Face' (Levinas 1998: 105). The ethics of responsibility can be suspended when faced with dangerous others. Fraternity and proximity as the underlying assumption of ethics is one of the problems that Simon Critchley has located in Levinas's direct translation of ethics into politics (Critchley 2004). Thus, for Levinas, the ethical relation to the other functions within the boundaries of community rather than transversally, beyond the community, beyond filiation, gender and nationality. Concrete politics takes the dangerous other outside the realm of ethics and of unconditional hospitality and ultimately undermines the infinite responsibility to the other.

Richard Kearney has sharply formulated the theoretical impasse of the encounter with a dangerous other:

[H]ow are we to address otherness at all if it becomes *unrecognizable* to us? Faced with such putative indetermination, how could we tell the difference between one kind of other and another – between (a) those aliens and strangers that need our care and responsibility, no matter how monstrous they might first appear, and (b) those others that really do seek to destroy and exterminate.

(2002: 10)

The dilemma Kearney voices cannot be tackled from within Levinas's ethical approach, given that his other as the 'Altogether Other' that transcends mere finite experience is the name for God.² Levinas's ethics is 'the ultimate name of the religious as such' (Badiou 2002: 23) and the ethical relation to the neighbour is modelled upon a theological relation with God. The dilemma of the dangerous other is solved when concrete politics renders the relation to the divine into a relation of proximity, close-knit community and filiation. Politics introduces the relation to the third (*le tiers*) to replace the ethical relation to the other (*autrui*).

The inability to consider the relationship to dangerous others from the vantage point of the ethical encounter appears even more strikingly in the political conditions of conflict and war. As Žižek has remarked, Levinas himself succumbs to 'to vulgar commonsensical reflections' when asked to make this translation in relation the Palestinian/Israeli relations:

My definition of the other is completely different. The other is the neighbour, who is not necessary kin, but who can be. And in that sense, if you're for the other, you're for the neighbour. But if your neighbour attacks another neighbour or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least then we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust.

(Levinas quoted in Žižek 2004: 106)

The same quote appears in David Campbell's book on Bosnia. Campbell sees the 'potential limiting of responsibility ... in the passage from ethics to politics' (Campbell 1998a: 180). That is why he supplements Levinas with Derrida. Critchley has also separated Levinas's ethics from his politics and has used a deconstructive concept of politics to supplement Levinasian ethics. While ethics is defined as unconditional hospitality, politics implies 'the taking of a decision without any determinate transcendental guarantees' (Critchley 2004: 178). The stuff of ethics is hospitality, while the matter of politics is risk and danger (Critchley 2004a). Critchley uses risk and danger as synonyms for the undecidable for the radical uncertainty that is constitutive of politics. Rather than deriving politics from ethics, he argues that it is important to consider the hiatus between ethics and politics and differentiate them.

Nonetheless, this hiatus between infinite responsibility and undecidability does not tell us anything about the form of the political decision or the many ways in which risk and danger are inscribed within 'conditional' politics. This is the problem that the second question I formulated at the beginning of this part of the chapter raises – What would ethical unconditionality mean in the struggle against facism? Just as ethics cannot make room for considerations of danger, the politics of undecidability erases the differences between undecidability and hegemonic constructions of risk, danger and insecurity. Yet, hegemonic constructions of risk and security close off political transformation, challenge democratic practices and suspend the quest for justice rather than furthering it (Aradau and van Munster 2007; Neocleous 2000). Security legitimises inequalities between the domestic and the international, as well as practices of inequality among the different members of the realm of the international, be those states, political communities or other types of actors. As the constitution of political communities is based on the inegalitarian delimitation of inside and outside, citizens and strangers, natives and aliens, security supports the status quo and legitimises inequalities.

From the perspective of deconstruction, the role of unconditional concepts is to preserve the gap between politics and ethics, and always make room for a more generous form of politics. Radical concepts such as pure hospitality or forgiveness expose and challenge the limitations of a politics of migration or war for example. Yet, absolute hospitality is challenged by security as a practice of governing communities and their relations to the 'other' and the 'outside'. Rather than understanding politics as risk, a deconstructive perspective would need to get to grips with the work that security and constructions of danger do politically. From the perspective of deconstruction,

[w]e can ask for nothing more than the free assembly of diverse points of view in which men and women with mixed motives and with uneven intellectual and rhetorical abilities will hammer out solutions for this problem or that, with more or less successful or disastrous results.

(Caputo 1987: 261)

Yet, what politics can we pursue when we encounter 'dangerous' others, others who are rendered as threatening or risky? And what politics can be pursued against the inequalities and domination reified by security practices? Deconstruction misses an important element of social struggles against domination and injustice.

Let me for a moment return to Connolly's remark on 'difficult cases' for ethics. Connolly mentions slaves, women and homosexuals as some of these 'difficult cases' for ethics. His carefully chosen examples gloss over the important element of social struggle that slaves, women and gay people have been involved in. Neither hospitality nor responsibility has been the stake of political change and the transformation of the relationship to the other. Similarly, political decisions have not been the result of the 'free assembly' of points of view. Rather, the status of slaves, women and gay people has changed through their political struggles against domination and representations of danger, through their irruption on the political scene and a claim to politics that was a formulation of the injustice to which they had been subjected.

Political struggles supplement both Kearney's hermeneutical ambition to distinguish between 'aliens' and 'others' and his cautionary note about the deconstructive formless gap between decision and undecidability. The 'difficult cases' mentioned by Connolly take the Derridean relationship with alterity towards a different aporia: identities are never given as struggles are continuously fought over who counts as a subject of ethics and a subject of politics and what anthropological figure underpins the political subject. Read through the unconditional, the hiatus between ethics and politics can remain impermeable to social struggles. Yet, the dangerous others are not simply those who are not welcome, but who disturb order, hierarchies and given identities through their claims (Aradau 2008). Irregular migrants and asylum seekers, for example, have become 'dangerous others' when their claims to rights, access to the labour market and living conditions have disturbed taken-for-granted assumptions about who counts in the political community and who doesn't. The danger of the other is not just the limit that unconditional ethics can traverse. It also signals the politics of struggle against domination and inequality.

Deconstructive limits and social struggles

Social struggles against domination and injustice point towards another limit of the 'unconditional'. The aporetic experience of the limit, of the unconditional, is translated politically through the decision. The decision and its undecidability differentiate politics from the infinite demand of ethics. While Derrida's undecidability requires the decision, it remains unclear which decisions can further justice and which simply reinforce the status quo. Campbell raises this problematic of undecidability, arguing that while undecidability gives us the context of the decision, it does not provide an account of the decision itself (Campbell 1998a: 185). Although he argues that the procedure of the decision in Derrida contains an account of duty, obligation and responsibility of the decision, it

remains unclear what decisions exactly count as perverse calculations and which not. While Derrida maintains the need of taking a decision, there is an unbridgeable gap between undecidability and a decisive politics:

Not knowing what to do does not mean that we have to rely on ignorance and to give up knowledge and consciousness. A decision, of course, must be prepared as far as possible by knowledge, by information, by infinite analysis. At some point, however, for a decision to be made you have to go beyond knowledge, to do something that you don't know, something which does not belong to, or is beyond, the sphere of knowledge.

(Derrida 1999b: 66)

Whichever decision is reached, it runs the risks of depoliticisation and technologisation. From within a Derridean approach it is impossible to bridge the undecidable and the decision. Without some way of understanding how decisions can be taken 'ethically' when faced with the undecidable, decision becomes simply a matter of power. The question of decision is folded back either upon the Schmittian question of sovereign power revealing itself through the decision or upon the inescapability of power – any decision would be just part of the system of power relations and therefore depoliticising. Michael Dillon (1996: 199) is right to note that the political is always taking place in a space of undecidability that allows decisions to be taken without being certain which decisions are correct, as 'correctness' cannot be thought from within the situation. Yet, when exploring a political situation, it is possible to say that some decisions are 'correct'. We know what the right decision is. We know that there is a right decision in a fight for national liberation, in women's struggle for rights or in the struggle against racism. What is missing from this account of the relation to other is the other's agency and a context defined by social and political struggles. The decision is also not simply formal, but is informed by the content of equality and justice.

Jacques Rancière has offered an apt formulation of this lack in relation to the undecidable opposition that Derrida sets out between the democratic openness to the other and existing calculable 'liberal democratic' practices. According to Rancière, 'what disappears in this opposition between an institution and a transcendental horizon is democracy as practice' (2007: 98). Democratic practices create new subjects who enact equality and construct new words about community. Women's struggles, the struggle of undocumented migrants, of the *sans-papiers*, the struggles of workers, are illustrations of transformative politics informed by claims to equality against domination and security governance. Those who have been constructed as dangerous challenge the exclusions and inequalities of security by making themselves visible as part of the community. Rather than an infinite openness to the other, Rancière argues, there are many ways of inscribing the relationship to the other. These inscriptions of the relation to other are negotiated in social and political struggles that do not remain at the horizon of limited concepts but reclaim and expand this horizon through claims

for equality and justice. Political struggles are often struggles over existing inscriptions of equality, freedom or rights. For example, the struggle of the *sans-papiers* for the recognition of the right to work and to residence has challenged the limits of existing concepts and principles and has preserved a meaning for the 'principles of collective emancipation, popular sovereignty, and universality of the public sphere' (Balibar 2004: 32).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the importance as well as the limits of deconstruction read through the aporetic experience of limits and the 'impossible'. As identity is contaminated by *différance* as indefinite temporalisation and differentiation, the self/other relationship is defined through tensions, traces and supplements. Out of this theoretical insight, that there is always something that escapes dominant representations of identity, text or society, deconstruction derives the role of the unconditional or the impossible as mediating ethical and political relations. The aporia of otherness is experienced through unconditional concepts that challenge the limits of social and political institutionalisation. Avoiding the technologisation and depoliticisation implicit in the political calculability of concepts, IR scholars have drawn on Derrida's work to challenge those limitations and open possibilities for more generous forms of politics. Nonetheless, I have argued, there are important limitations or absences to be considered, namely that of social struggles. In the hiatus between the limitations that modernity and institutionalisation have imposed on concepts and their unconditional essence, we need to insert social and political struggles. Questions of undecidability and unconditional hospitality are decided within a context of social struggles against injustice. The problem of 'dangerous others' shows that it is politically important to see how constructions of danger emerge in situations of struggle. The other is not simply unknowable and unassimilable, but has agency that becomes manifest in multiple and differentiated ways. The relation to otherness is continuously negotiated and struggled over in between the limitations of our current concepts and their institutionalisation and their unconditional limit.

Notes

- 1 Unsublatable is derived from the translation of Hegel's concept of *Aufhebung* as sublation. The unsublatable remainder is thus defined in contrast to Hegelian dialectics.
- 2 Andrea den Boer (2003) has reflected on the role of religion and God in Levinas's writings on justice.

11 On the nature of sovereignty

Gilles Deleuze and the theory of world politics

Julian Reid

Introduction

In the years since his death the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze has become associated with the political ideal of the abolition of sovereignty. Of a human–social assemblage that, in refusing the call to unanimity, preserves its fundamental multiplicity, and that in the advance of its struggles eventually destroys all existing formations of sovereignty, thus creating the conditions for a stateless world. Certainly Deleuze rejected the kinds of false philosophy of unity on which the classical political ideal of sovereignty was founded. When it came, however, to confronting the political problems of his time he was insistent that a political theory and practice of the present required a new account of unity on which to advance its struggles. Substantial forms of political change, the vast historical cleavages and upheavals that his works were concerned with theorising, were underwritten by collective projects. The main question that motivated him was that of how, in the establishment of particular regimes of power, did new counter-strategic collectivities emerge? How, in turn, did such collectivities ‘embark on another kind of adventure, display another kind of unity, a nomadic unity, and engage in a nomadic war-machine’ (2002: 259). This was not merely a historical point for Deleuze. He thought it is as pertinent for the present as it was in the past. ‘The revolutionary problem today’, he argued,

is to find some unity in our various struggles without falling back on the despotic and bureaucratic organization of the party or State apparatus: we want a war-machine that does not recreate a State apparatus, a nomadic unity ... that does not recreate a despotic internal unity.

(2002: 260)

The central purpose of this chapter is to dispel the misconception of Deleuze as a theorist of the possibility of a ‘world without sovereignty’. This misrepresentation is a current trend in Deleuze research, palpable in a range of different recent treatments (Hallward 2006; Tormey 2006; Rasch 2004; Hardt and Negri 2001). In contrast this chapter will demonstrate Deleuze’s attention to the necessity of the complexity and necessary recurrence of the problem of sovereignty as a condition for an understanding of political agency.

The nature of sovereignty

The classical theory of sovereignty presupposes the philosophical idealisation of nature as the expression of unity. A people, for example, is traditionally said to be sovereign insofar as it is able to achieve a unity that allows it to overcome the multiple dispositions contained within it in expression of a superior condition called statehood. The idealisation of unity in classical accounts of sovereignty does not deny the essential multiplicity of peoples as a condition for the development of their sovereignty. It merely presumes the reduction of multiplicity to unity to be the operation of power through which any given people achieves what is most natural to it and through which it may constitute itself as a people among other peoples in a broader system of states (Walker 1993: 159–183). To achieve sovereignty is for a people to overcome its multiplicity and establish what Bernard Bosanquet described, in *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, as the ‘true nature’ of its will (1910: 108). A people that achieves sovereignty is by definition ‘a living and choosing people’ (1910: 108) as opposed to that ‘blind multitude, which often does not know what it wills, because it rarely knows what is good for it’ (1910: 121). Such a sovereign people can be likened, as Bosanquet also argued, to the sovereignty of an individual, who through the binding of his ‘life into a whole’ achieves the unity of self necessary for coherent expression of thought in language, and which, in turn, allows that individual to partake of society (1910: 110).

From a Deleuzian perspective, such classical accounts of sovereignty reflect only one, albeit powerful, aspect of nature. That is, its tendency towards unity. Worse, in doing so, they obscure what is most ‘true’ of nature, and what is most ‘true’ of peoples and individuals, which is their tendency towards multiplicity. Upon Deleuze’s understanding, nature possesses two tendencies, which exist in fundamental antagonism. One by which it relaxes, congeals, giving birth to some entity or product that exists outside of it in composite form. The other by which it opens up, multiplying, rediscovering in the product the power of movement through self-differentiation that gave birth to it at its origin. The classical account of sovereignty, in its celebration of unity over and against nature’s latter and indeed ‘truer’ tendency, has served to sever peoples and individuals from an understanding of the powers of multiplicity from whence they came and through which they may yet transform themselves.

Deleuze’s philosophical account of the power of multiplicity has inevitably attracted political theorists concerned with inverting the classical logic of political sovereignty. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, for example, have notoriously drawn on Deleuze in development of their account of ‘the multitude’, a form of human agency that refuses the authority of sovereignty in all its forms, seeking ultimately to abolish it at the global level (2004: 2001). The multitude refers to a model of democratic legitimisation that does not rely on ‘the sovereignty of the people’ (2004: 79), and that ‘cannot be reduced to a unity and does not submit to the rule of the one’ (2004: 330). One that ultimately, they suggest, is establishing the conditions for a ‘new humanity’ (2004: 356). Other radical

political theorists such as Simon Tormey have made similar moves in invoking Deleuze to argue for the possibility of a post-representational politics (Tormey 2006). For his critics such a rejection of sovereignty renders his thought too naive and utopian to be of any use for thinking through political problems. William Rasch, for example, derides Deleuze's philosophy for attempting to 'introduce a new social order that is precisely not an order, but a benevolent self-organization of all productive human endeavours' and for thus constituting an 'attempt to delete sovereignty from political actuality' (2004: 105–106). Peter Hallward provides a similar characterisation when he argues that Deleuze

poses the question of politics in starkly dualistic terms ... by posing it, in the end, in the apocalyptic terms of a new people and a new earth or else no people and no earth – the political aspect of Deleuze's philosophy amounting to little more than utopian distraction.

(2006: 162)

In contrast with these representations of his thought, both critical and enthusiastic, Deleuze warned us against being blackmailed into construing the relations between multiplicity and unity along dualistic lines. We will not do away with the problem of sovereignty by simply venerating the power of multiplicity over unity. The challenge he urges on us is to comprehend the relation between multiplicity and unity as one of permanent and constitutive conflict. Rather than conceiving multiplicity as an inferior condition that we can solve through the actualisation of unity, and in contrast to the anarchistic ideal of a multiplicity that deletes sovereignty from political actuality, the challenge is to conceive both multiplicity and unity as tendencies that operate in a process of indestructible oscillation, forging their own particular forms of coexistence and correlation in the world. Dualism does not suffice because the tendencies towards multiplicity and unity are two antagonistic features of a common set of laws that cannot be broken.

In his co-authored works with Felix Guattari, Deleuze extended the premises of his philosophical account of the conflict between multiplicity and unity in nature for an analysis and theory of social forms. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1999) an analytical distinction is drawn between nomadic and sedentary peoples. Nomadic peoples, Deleuze and Guattari argue, sustain a collective way of life that gives social expression to the ontological excess of the power of multiplicity over that of unity for a nomadic people is fundamentally 'a multiplicity that changes in nature as it divides' (1999: 484). In an anthropological context this power of multiplicity can only be understood, they argue, in terms of the highly specific relation of nomadic peoples to space. In their occupation and cultivation of deserts or steppes, nomadic peoples conserve 'smooth space' in prevention of the emergence of the 'striated space' necessary for the state to subject its people to a unitary form of identity and organisation. In the defence of their occupation of smooth spaces, and in their preservation of a style of life tied to and subordinate to that topography, nomadic peoples attempt to ward off the socio-political

processes of unification that Deleuze identifies analogously with the ontological illusion of sovereignty. But this is ultimately an analytical rather than a political distinction. Rather than blithely championing nomads, Deleuze and Guattari insist on a realist premise that 'smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory' and on the warning that we must 'never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us' (1999: 500). The nomad cannot be conceived meaningfully outside its antagonistic relation with the sedentary practices of states, for 'the nomads do not precede the sedentaries; rather, nomadism is a movement, a becoming that affects sedentaries, just as sedentarization is a stoppage that settles the nomads' (1999: 430). The relation between the state and the nomad, while conflictual, is also therefore constitutive. In their development, states have not destroyed smooth space but learnt how to utilise it, subordinating it to their own ends as a means of communication. States seek not to eliminate smooth space but to control it through an operation of 'capture' (1999: 386). As Deleuze and Guattari argued, the sovereignty of the state depends on a 'process of capture of flows of all kinds, populations, commodities, or commerce, money or capital, etc.' Striation does not equal stasis but proceeds through the establishment of 'fixed paths in well-defined directions, which restrict speed, regulate circulation, relativize movement, and measure in detail' the potential for nomadism of a state's people (1999: 386).

The constitutive function of the conflict between multiplicity and unity is as true, Deleuze argued, of the material processes by which life is subject to regulation in its creative evolution. 'Each line of life is related to a type of matter that is not merely an external environment, but in terms of which the living being manufactures a body, a form, for itself' (Deleuze 1991: 103). Life is always ultimately subject to relative forms of unity, limiting the power of multiplicity that gives rise to it, but also engendering its expression. Not in any perfectible sense, but in the form of a more or less successful resolution of particular problems. 'The construction of an eye, for example', is conceived as 'primarily the solution to a problem posed in terms of light' (1991: 103). As solutions to particular problems posed for the power of multiplicity, unities are more or less successful. Never perfectible, always contestable, the reduction of the power of multiplicity to unity, the provision of form to life, is a necessary hindrance in the process of the unfolding of life. Unities are continually being reworked by nature's power of multiplicity in production of new and better expressions of life. 'Life as *movement* alienates itself in the material *form* that it creates; by actualising itself, by differentiating itself, it loses 'contact with the rest of itself' (1991: 104).

Deleuze followed Bergson in believing that the vitality of any living thing is ultimately not to be determined by these two conflicting tendencies of multiplicity and unity, although every living thing is ultimately a site of precisely such an antagonism. It is located, Bergson argued, within one specific condition, that of duration, and in one specific tendency, multiplicity. The movement of life results on this account from the insertion of duration into matter through which the power of multiplicity is realised in resistance to the unity of experience presupposed by spatial embodiment. 'The evolution of the living being, like that of the

embryo implies', Bergson argued, 'a continual recording of duration, a persistence of the past in the present' (1928: 20). But this indivisibility of duration is a condition for the destruction of the unity of experience; the more indivisible our experience of duration the more multiple we must necessarily become. For the nature of duration is itself to produce differences in kind as opposed to differences in degree. It is in the nature of duration to change in nature as it divides. Duration is thus 'naturing nature' as opposed to the 'natured nature' of matter. This argument provokes seductive questions as to the accessibility of pure duration itself, and how we might experience it. However, the essential point to bear in mind is that the construction of this dualism is only a 'moment' in Bergson's method, an abstraction for the purpose of analysis (Deleuze 1991: 92). In its actualisation as differentiation, Bergson was adamant that duration must pass through matter. For it to become living it must be given extension. Otherwise it knows no reality.

The myth of the multitude

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, inspired by Deleuze, understand the historical struggles for and against variable forms of political sovereignty to be an expression of the fundamental struggle between unity and multiplicity that shapes his entire philosophy. But rather than understanding this struggle as a permanent and ineradicable condition for the articulation of new forms of sovereignty, Hardt and Negri pitch all their faith in the tendency towards multiplicity and on the claim as to its superiority over the tendency towards unity in the articulation of the political project of 'the multitude'. The multitude refers to a form of human agency that does not merely rearticulate sovereignty but refuses its authority in all forms, seeking ultimately to abolish it at the global level (Hardt and Negri 2004: 353). It refers to a model of democratic legitimisation that does not rely on 'the sovereignty of the people' (2004: 79), and that 'cannot be reduced to a unity and does not submit to the rule of the one' (2004: 330). One that ultimately, they suggest, is establishing the conditions for a 'new humanity' (2004: 356). The changes in world order that have occurred in the wake of the Cold War represent, they argue, in spite of some of their pernicious effects, the establishment of political conditions for the realisation of humanity's desire to shed its remaining links with sovereignty.

This conceptualisation of a form of humanity and a model of democracy that can exist free from 'sovereignty in all its forms' (Hardt and Negri 2004: 353) is quite different from Deleuze's own theorisation of relations between humanity, democracy and sovereignty. The political ideals of humanity and democracy are, when understood in their historical context, expressions of what Deleuze argued to be a transformational struggle against a specifically *European* model of sovereignty. Most significantly they express the spirit of the American Revolution and the allied development of pragmatism in philosophy that as Deleuze argued, was born of a desire 'to transform the world, to think a new world or new man' (1998: 86) as well as being a fight 'against the particularities that pit man against

man and nourish an irremediable mistrust' among them (1998: 87). The democratic quality of the specifically American understanding of humanity is expressed as much, Deleuze argued, in its literature, which is distinct in that it grasps 'the innermost depths of life and death without leading us back to reason' (1998: 82). In giving a newly intensive expression to the life of humanity thus, the American tradition struggled against the dominance of the European model of sovereignty based as that was on the privileging of the power of unity over multiplicity (1998: 87). In its place it founded a new

morality of life in which the soul is fulfilled only by taking to the road, with no other aim, open to all contacts, never trying to save other souls, turning away from those that produced an authoritarian or groaning sound, forming even fleeting and unresolved chords and accords with its equals, with freedom as its sole accomplishment, always ready to free itself so as to complete itself.

(1998: 87)

From the perspective of Hardt and Negri it is this American idealisation of the human as an 'open whole' that is finding its culmination in the contemporary struggles of the multitude. The traditional European model of sovereignty on which the modern international order originated has been displaced over time, they argue, through 'the global expansion of the internal U.S. constitutional project' (Hardt and Negri 2001: 182). It is on account of the expansion of the American ideal that, currently in the twenty-first century, we may be said to be 'experiencing a first phase of the transformation of the global frontier into an open space of imperial sovereignty' (2001: 182). Imperial, they argue, not in the classically European sense of expanding power linearly in closed spaces through the invasion, destruction and subjection of other states and societies, but 'constructed on the model of rearticulating an open space and reinventing incessantly diverse and singular relations in networks across an unbounded terrain' (2001: 182). In this contemporary context of global openness the political project of the multitude finds fertile ground. The humanist and democratic ideal of a 'society of creators', in spite of its predication on the globality of the American model of sovereignty, is depicted as tangible.

Hardt and Negri's articulation of the problem of sovereignty, and their enthusiasm as to the capacities of 'the multitude' to solve it, through the further invocation of its powers of multiplicity, does a tremendous disservice to Deleuze. This in spite of the fact that they are considerably influenced by him. To an extent, the misperception of Deleuze as a theorist of the possibility of a 'world without sovereignty' owes much to the fact that the differences between their works have been elided in secondary literatures. Their concept of the multitude is, it is presumed, an authentic vindication of Deleuze's metaphysics (Callinicos 2006: 121–122; Rasch 2004: 104–107). In contrast, what we lack today, politically, from a more authentically Deleuzean perspective, is neither a concept of democracy nor that of humanity, but creative resistance to the limits of precisely

these concepts. For they have become vast obstacles, Deleuze argued, narrowing the scope for political creativity, founding claims to sovereignty on which strategies for the subjection of peoples are based, and removing from peoples the powers by which they might otherwise transform themselves in conflict with the worldwide axiomatics imposed by hegemonic accounts of what humanity is and ought to be. 'We lack creation. We lack resistance to the present', he argued (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 108).

Hardt and Negri, in seeking to exemplify their theoretical account of the multitude empirically, point to the globalisation protest movements that have developed of late in North America and Europe (2004: 87). Such a mode of exemplification is quite contrary to Deleuze's own understandings of the locus of resistance in the present conjuncture. For such a resistance cannot, Deleuze argues, arrive from within the Western world but must come from outside it. 'The creation of concepts in itself', he argued,

call for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist ... this people and earth will not be found in our democracies. Democracies are majorities, but a becoming is by its nature that which always eludes the majority.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 108)

To do justice to Deleuze's understanding of how we might think through contemporary problems of sovereignty, we must systematically oppose Hardt and Negri's concept of 'the multitude' with that of the more authentically Deleuzian concept of a 'nomadic unity'. Doing so will force us to revisit the main problem in which Deleuze's philosophy is grounded; the problem of unity, its variability, inescapability and ultimately its necessity for the thinking and practice of politics.

Nomadic unities

The political ideal of the multitude rests on a particular myth generated by the American Revolution. That is the belief that the problem of sovereignty can be resolved through its subordination to the 'creative movements of the multitude' (Hardt and Negri 2001: 162). In contrast, Deleuze insisted on the precisely mythic qualities of this understanding of the problem of sovereignty. He insisted, moreover, on the 'failure' of the American Revolution, and more especially of those political concepts of humanity, and democracy that it brought into being (1998: 88). There is only one concept that we might still want to retain from the American Revolution and through which, Deleuze argues, we might sustain a politics contemporarily; that of the concept of revolution itself (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 100). To reclaim the concept of revolution, to be able to live out the possibility of revolution once more, requires that we empty the form of the idea of revolution of its humanist and democratic content. Quoting Kant approvingly, Deleuze and Guattari claimed that 'the concept of revolution exists not in

the way in which revolution is undertaken in a necessarily relative social field but in the “enthusiasm” with which it is thought’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 100).

Refashioning the concept of revolution requires today, therefore, a systematic opposition to its historically modern associations with ideals of humanity and democracy. It requires that we experience only ‘the shame of being human’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 107). A shame, he argues, at the forms of ‘mean-ness and vulgarity of existence’ that have been established within ‘democracies’ in accordance with the ‘values, ideals, and opinions of our time’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 107–108). The political ideal of a ‘world without sovereignty’, of a human–social assemblage that is utterly self-organisational, and that makes no recourse to unity, is one such currently hegemonic ideal within radical political thought. And yet so many of Deleuze’s critics have regaled him for advocating precisely this ideal and possibility. Deleuze himself engaged in and celebrated the superiority of multiplicity as a tendency and power of nature over and against the tendency and power of unity. However, as we have seen, he always insisted on the necessity of its conjugation with the tendency towards unity. When it came to confronting the political problems of his time he was insistent that a political theory and practice could only meaningfully be grounded in an understanding of the necessity of the role of unity in the creation of political struggle. Substantial forms of political change, the vast historical cleavages and upheavals that his accounts of the historical development of states and peoples were concerned with theorising, were underwritten by collective projects. The main question that motivated him was that of how, in the establishment of particular modes of political sovereignty, did new counter-strategic collectivities emerge? How, in turn, did such collectivities ‘embark on another kind of adventure, display another kind of unity, a *nomadic unity*, and engage in a nomadic war-machine’ (2002: 259). This was not merely a historical point for Deleuze. He thought it as pertinent today as it was in the past. ‘The revolutionary problem today’, he argued,

is to find some unity in our various struggles without falling back on the despotic and bureaucratic organization of the party or State apparatus: we want a war-machine that does not recreate a State apparatus, a nomadic unity ... that does not recreate the despotic internal unity.

(Deleuze 2002: 260)

In what conditions, then, did Deleuze think that such a nomadic unity could come about? What would distinguish it from the badly composed forms of unity associated with prevailing formations of sovereignty? The answer lies in his identification, and in his expression of solidarity with the ‘abominable sufferings’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 110) of those ‘subjected peoples’ (1996: 108) whose pursuit of the possibility of attaining a given form of unity locates them outside of, in danger of and as threatening to, the despotic unity of democratic majorities. Nomadic unities, in other words, are only conceivable in the con-

ditions of their suffering and subjection. Without their subjection within unequal power relations and without their suffering in the context of that subjection to despotic democracies there would be no possibility for nomadism. Thus their constitution as unities presumes a world specifically of democratic rule and violence. It presumes, likewise, the necessity of constituting resistance through the positing of a rival account of sovereignty. This is not a politics for a world in which one non-unified collectivity may strive and succeed in abolishing sovereignty, but a politics for a world in which different accounts of sovereignty circulate, a world of contending unities, in which the experience of subjection and suffering at the hands of despotic democracies necessitates experimentation in the creation of contrary accounts and expressions of sovereignty.

The role of theory, here, in Deleuze's account, is heavily circumscribed. It is not the task of philosophers working from the position of privilege to prescribe the conditions for the emergence of a revolutionary form of subjectivity on a global basis. But to latch on to those conditions as they are articulated by those who suffer and to express solidarity with them in their attempts to constitute a political project of their own in antagonism with privileged accounts of subjectivity. Deleuze's account of the politics of postwar cinema is particularly instructive here. Throughout these works he differentiates deliberately and explicitly between political and non-political cinema. The concept of political cinema is reserved more or less exclusively for cinema of the non-Western world. In spite of his interests in the aesthetics of both European and American genres of cinema he was adamant that neither of them had any actual political content or potential. The political potential of a cinematic work is conditioned entirely by a political world extraneous to the world of cinema itself (Deleuze 1989: 215–224). In what particular community a filmmaker is located and in what social conditions he or she works will determine whether or not the work obtains a political potential. It was for these reasons that he was so humble about the political importance and potential of his own creative work. When and wherever he did attempt to draw out the political implications of his own philosophical principles it was always in solidarity with the actuality of the suffering and subjection of other non-Western subjects.

This was precisely why his greatest political passion was for the cause of the Palestinians. The Palestinians, Deleuze argued in his lifetime, are a prime example of precisely such a nomadic unity. The Palestinians are nomadic in so far as their struggle is conditioned by their exclusion from a territory and their denial of statehood. The Palestinians exist without a state, living only on the margins of a despotic state and subject to a despotic regime, terrorised on account of their difference from a colonising majority. They are doubly nomadic, on Deleuze's definition, because in order to contest their exclusion they have to recover and deploy the power of multiplicity through which all peoples, he argues, are enabled to constitute themselves as peoples (1990a: 126). But in the case of the Palestinians what the people in question are in the process of becoming is merely what they already are, 'that is a people with an "unexceptional status"' but recognised thus as 'a people like any other people' (2006: 199). The

Palestinian struggle is nomadic insofar as it can only be achieved through the demonstration of the false premises and violence of an exclusionary form of sovereignty. Outside its subjugated relation to those latter formations it would be divested of any nomadic character. But likewise, and crucially, it would have no political form or content without being able to lay claim to be a people among peoples, a unity among other unities, treated according to the same standards and afforded the same kinds of recognition as any other people defined by ordinary principles of sovereignty.

If the logic of sovereignty depends on a deeply problematic reduction of multiplicity to unity, Deleuze argues, the contestation of any particular formation of sovereignty requires itself, nevertheless, the assertion of a counter-unity on which to resist that very operation. At the very least we have to be able to draw political distinctions between different types of unity. The idea of being able to imagine and pursue the possibility of a world divested of unity, a world subordinate to the one tendency towards multiplicity, is nonsensical from a Deleuzian perspective. Deleuze accords a greater power and importance to the tendency towards multiplicity over unity in nature, and he identifies multiplicity as the source of the political, but he does so on the understanding that multiplicity can only find expression both against and through a concept of unity. A truly Deleuzian political theory cannot base itself on a declaration of war against unity in the interests of a multiplicity that can exist free from the world of sovereignty. Such dualistic understandings of Deleuze's account of the relation between multiplicity and unity in both nature and politics are unsustainable, and both those critics and enthusiasts who represent his works this way are profoundly mistaken.

Conclusion

'You ask me whether I believe in nomads', Deleuze responded once to one particular critic. 'Yes I do. Genghis Khan is nothing to sneeze at. Will he come back from the dead? I don't know, but if he does, it will be in some other form' (2002: 260–261). As the new millennium unfolds, and while claims as to the essential unity of the human species become ever more constitutive of the strategies through which the military force and violence of sovereign powers is deployed globally, the question of the actual forms that a sustained resistance to the worldwide axiomatic of Western, supremely liberal, universally capitalist, state formations might take becomes more pressing. The existence of peoples outside of and in antagonism with the worldwide axiomatics of Western models of sovereignty remains a fact of international political life. Particular peoples continue to refuse the axioms of liberal modernity, actively choosing to constitute themselves in ways that defy the regulatory demands of a global liberal order. Insofar as that continues to be the case Deleuze's philosophy of nomadism will resonate with theorists of world politics who neither assume sovereignty to be a given nor believe in the naive utopian possibility of its destruction.

12 Edward Said and post-colonial international relations

Mark B. Salter

While it perhaps seems peculiar to speak of the pleasures of exile, there are some positive things to be said for a few of its conditions. Seeing ‘the entire world as a foreign land’ makes possible originality of vision.

(Said 2000: 186)

Introduction

Whether a cosmopolitan liberal, an abstract and rational realist or a light-footed ironic post-structuralist, too often International Relations (IR) theorists have used a conceit of placelessness, an Archimedean point outside the world and politics from which they can diagnose the dynamics of power.¹ The political implications of these inter-national, abstracted and bloodless theories of world politics have been highlighted by Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker (1990) among others. This critical turn in IR theory inaugurated a period of reflection of culture, identity and discourses, and while Foucault became central to a certain part of the discipline, other contemporary important critical philosophical voices did not find an audience. Edward Said (1935–2003) was a prominent humanities scholar, founding almost single-handedly the field of post-colonial studies with *Orientalism* (1978). While he came to the attention of IR scholars during his engagement with Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* thesis (2000), Said had long been engaged in questions at the heart of the discipline, and there has been recent recognition of this with a special forum in *Millennium* (2007). This chapter reads Said back into IR through a meditation on his use of exile, experience and the intellectual as critical concepts.

Post-colonial studies

Said inaugurated the field of post-colonial studies, which has flourished over the past thirty years (Moore-Gilbert 1997; Gandhi 1998). Although the very term ‘post-colonial’ is itself a site of debate (does ‘post’ mean a transcendence of the colonial or a past historical epoch?), I will use it here to refer to the set of inquiries into historical and contemporary colonial relations of power. In IR theory,

the colonial is often all-too-absent. Brian Schmidt and David Long (2005) and Torbjørn Knutsen (1992) have demonstrated the complicity of early IR theory with the projects of European colonialism, but there is still a radical underestimation of the power, presence and pertinence of colonialism and imperialism to contemporary world politics. Some postwar Realist and English School writings do treat colonialism as a serious problem for IR theory – and indeed treat colonialism as important material, social, political and economic facets of world politics, notably Frederick Schuman, Hans Morgenthau, Arnold Toynbee, Martin Wight, Hedley Bull and Adam Watson. Marxist and Gramscian versions of IR theory, promoted by Robert Cox and colleagues, continued to speak of neocolonialism, driven by their materialist analysis, and some comparativist analysis examined the Non-Aligned Movement; but these were minority voices in the field. While Bull and Watson's *Expansion of International Society* (1984) is perhaps the best of this work, decolonization was relegated in IR theory to the analysis of colonialism (or of race) to a historical question.² Said's *Orientalism* (1978) did not have a large impact in IR. The discipline was largely silent on post-colonial theory, until Sankaran Krishna wrote 'The importance of being ironic: a postcolonial view of international relations theory' (1993) and Philip Darby and Albert Paolini published 'Bridging International Relations and Post-colonialism' (1994). This theme was developed in work by Ahluwalia and Sullivan's 'Beyond International Relations: Edward Said and the World' (2000) and Darby (1998, 2000, 2004), who chiefly focused on third wave post-colonial critics, such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, and on discursive representations of the global south. However, while it cannot be said that Said is at the core of IR, his questions of power, domination, culture, imperialism, identity and territory are at its centre. Darby and Paolini suggest that 'not only did [*Orientalism*] fail to dent the casings of international relations, it received only occasional mention in the literature', which they attribute to its source material and the genre of literary criticism (1994: 381). They continue that post-colonial theory can bring three important questions to IR: power and representation, modernity, and to emotion commitment and radicalism (1994: 384). Chowdhry and Nair claim that these areas, though productive, 'do not show how the intersections of race, gender and class, and the imbrication of culture and capital, are relevant for the study of IR' (2002: 14).

There are thus two distinct claims for why IR theorists *should* study and use post-colonial theory (Jones 2006). First, empirically, the world is better explained by post-colonial theory, with its subtle awareness of the power of imperialism/colonialism in its historical context and in its contemporary effects on those relations (not simply neocolonialism, but in the way that knowledge politics circulates along imperial trajectories). Work in this vein includes Chowdhry and Nair (2002), Ling (2002) and Barkawi and Laffey (2006) who make empirical cases for the importance of the post-colonial scene.³ This includes a sensitivity to the cultural underpinnings of political power not simply in representations of Others, but also in the way that these reflections about the Other come to condition the self, and in the persistence of these cultural politics in the

structuring of quotidian life (Doty 1996; Lapid and Kratochwil 1996). Second, normatively, post-colonial theory attunes scholars to the different kinds of power and violence made evident by colonial relations expressed in identity, culture, nation, resistance and revolution (Krishna 1999; Manzo 1997; de Silva 2007). Both of these claims are founded in an interpretivist methodology, which in its current mode is largely textual, literary and discursive.

There are three waves of post-colonial theory (this parsing is slightly different from Darby and Paolini 1994) that give us a wider sense of the possible object, purpose and method of study. The first set of anti-colonial thinkers, notably Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, were activist intellectuals. In addition to their writings, Césaire was a politician in France and his native Martinique, and Fanon was a psychiatrist who trained in Paris and practised in Algeria. Césaire's famous *Discourse against Colonialism* (1972 [1953]) provided a moral accounting of occupation, and argued that the Nazi party was simply the logical extension of colonial practices against a European population. Fanon wrote about the psychic and psychological effects of colonialism and its violence on both colonizer and colonized, grounded in his experiences in Martinique, Paris and during the Algerian civil war as a doctor and a revolutionary (1952, 1963, 1967). Fanon uses his auto-ethnography, medical practice and sociological analysis to lay bare the power relations that must be overthrown for personal and national decolonization to succeed.

Said is the doyen of the second wave of post-colonial theorists, who uses a wide array of literary and cultural sources (chiefly high cultural representations of the Orient and other). His works *Orientalism* (1978), *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994) set out three key concepts for a post-colonial interpretivist methodology: contrapuntal analysis, exile and travelling theory.⁴ As Duvall and Varadarajan argue, *Orientalism* in particular 'also created space for scholars to analyse the discursive production of structures of authority, particularly in the imperial context, as well as to reflect on the implication of academic work in such production' (2007: 85). Said also engaged with the contemporary political questions of Palestinian nationality, occupation and independence, particularly in the *Question of Palestine* (1979), *Covering Islam* (1981) and *The Politics of Dispossession* (1995).

A third wave of post-colonial theorists, such as Bhabha and Spivak, are more indebted to deconstruction and psychoanalysis and have written about the ambivalence of colonial signs, significations and discourses – but these are outside the scope of this chapter, and have become, in my view, overly discursive and more abstract. What is important for my reading of post-colonial theory is politically engaged immanent critique. Césaire, Fanon and Said each reported the everyday politics of their anti-colonial struggles, used a wide variety of source material for their writings and engaged in a critical self-reflection of their position to insert their institutionalization into their narratives of world politics.⁵ Without doing great violence to the complex work of these three writers, three aspects of Said's work are useful for IR theory. First, a focus on power dynamics through imagination and identity within forms of cultural production, and particularly the enclosure of oppositional discourses within a frame

of knowledge production – i.e. global war on terror, anti-globalization, clash of civilizations. Second, a consideration of the question of abstraction and ‘traveling theory’. Third, a clear exposition of the political stakes of intellectual positioning. Exactly as Said argued about literary criticism, IR theory is not separate from the world, from politics or from world politics, and theorists must get their hands dirty to engage in the actual struggles they analyse. I take Said’s primary contributions to IR to be a concern with discourse and the naturalization of power, a concern with (neo)colonialism, a concern about the fate of Palestine in world politics and an insistence on the centrality of land, territory and the importance of experience (such as the experience of nationalism, exile and exclusion). Said’s influence is as often indirect as part of the broader challenge to positivism as direct, and as such it has been insufficiently recognized as the catalyst for significant change in the critical debate in IR.

There are four main intersections between Said’s writing and critical IR theory. I would argue that while Said’s work in *Orientalism* on identity construction is vital to this project, the majority of his other work is neglected. His argument that construction and naturalization of the ‘self/other’ boundary is a cultural and political site of contention has been taken onboard by the majority of critical scholars. Critical theorists of nearly all kinds utilize the dichotomous structure of identity formation, for which Said is indebted to Derrida, Lacan and ultimately Hegel (Neumann 1999). In particular, Said adds a cultural and geographical dimension to this construction of self/other that is vital for understanding the constitution of sovereignty and of sovereign subjects, using cultural artifacts – such as Verdi’s *Aida*, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*. Cultural texts are understood as the product of a specific place, often in direct opposition to a global, international or ‘no-place’ (Walker 1984: 199). One of the important messages of *Orientalism* is that culture is not simply a reflection of dominant power relations, and resistance to them – i.e. it is not only directly related to the colonial scene. Beyond that, culture establishes the structure in which identities are played out, contested and invoked. There is a great deal of slippage between the ‘official’ discourse of the *Description de l’Égypte*, for example, and the cultural products of the Orientalist movement in painting or in texts such as Flaubert’s diary. He writes

texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe ... Consider Napoleon and de Lesseps. Everything they knew, more or less, about the Orient came from books written in the tradition of Orientalism. Such an Orient was silent, available to Europe for the realization of projects that involved, but were never directly responsible to, the native inhabitants, and unable to resist the projects, images, or mere descriptions.

(1978: 94)

In IR, literary sources may often be de-emphasized in preference to ‘official’ statements of policy. While there has been some movement in the field of IR to

encounter culture and identity, there have been few attempts to combine literary, policy and professional discourses (Hansen 2006; Moore 2006). Said tends to focus on an Arnold-inspired notion of 'high' culture, rather than popular culture, that has found resonances in some critical IR (Neumann and Nexon 2006; Welles 2003). Among the exceptions are Coker's work on the meaning of historical and contemporary war, which engages in the post-colonial alongside his other agendas when he looks at literature and cultural representations (1994, 2002), and Weber, Lisle and Shapiro, who explore cinematic representations of world politics (and the ways cinema can be used in its teaching) (Weber 2006; Lisle 2006; Shapiro 1997).⁶ Another notable exception is Darby's *The Fiction of Imperialism* (1998), which has not had a large reception in IR (Sylvester 1999; Yew 2003). This brilliant book makes the case for an engagement with post-colonial theory and literary products of specific cultures.

This work has international significance not simply through its impact on states but more or less directly through its connection with social change and resistance to social change' (1998: 13), through its establishment of links between individuals and social groups and the international. Said's work on the literary evidence of cultural formations is particularly important for IR because by identifying the cultural movement or tradition of Orientalism, he points to an ideational superstructure that conditions official discourse, historical or analytical works, high and popular culture. As post-positivists, feminists and post-colonial scholars would agree, scientific or social scientific IR is a genre with conventions and tropes just like fiction (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989). Roland Bleiker labels an 'aesthetic turn' which, 'being aware of the problematic dimensions of representations, [can] view academic disciplines as powerful mechanisms that direct and control the production and diffusion of knowledge' (2001: 534). Bleiker and others argue that the analysis of poetry and other forms of dissident representation can get away from stale state-centric, prose-heavy representations of world politics. Gerard Holden holds these aesthetically minded writers 'use literature to bolster views they already hold about world politics' (2003: 230). For example, Paul Sheeran acknowledges that his selection of texts is 'not entirely random', but must admit that the novels, plays, biographies are chosen to 'reflect [...] on the value of literature in making sense of the complex process of decision-making in world politics' (2007: xxii–xxiii). Said's point, however, would be that all writers always already have views about world politics – not simply the aesthetes. Bleiker has chosen dissidence, Sheeran has chosen rationalistic explanations of decision making. Said's work brings one to recognize that all theory – whether expressed through literary analysis or rational actor models – stems from a particular conflict, with particular stakes and an implicit position in that struggle from the theorist. So it is necessary to unpack those specificities of time, place and context to understand the force of theoretical claims – a strategy that post-colonial critique embodies.

One of the difficulties with this kind of literary-inspired IR work is evident also in Said: individual literary texts are subject to intense critical reading and stand-in for much wider and more complex colonial complexes. What holds true

for the *Heart of Darkness* as a signal of the social, cultural and identity relations between self and other or Occident and Orient may not hold true for *Aida*. British, French, German, Belgian, Russian, Japanese colonialisms have radically different registers, even as the fundamental colonial relationship may have analytically important similarities. This leads to the core paradox of travelling theory: how far may the specific lessons of one colonialism translate to others? While few theorists have embraced Said's notion of travelling theory, I take it to have some real value in IR theory.

Travelling theory

Said's core argument is that theory comes from experience and real historical struggles over specific territories. Because, at root, conflicts are always about territory, then every world political event is rooted, placed, spatialized (Said 1993: 7). Scholars, he argues, must gain some critical distance from the place where theory begins in order to generalize the dynamics of a particular conflict, but still be invested in that place. However, Said insists that the farther theory 'travels' from its point of inception, the less analytical power it possesses.

The first time a human experience is recorded and then given a theoretical formulation, its force comes from being directly connected to and organically provoked by real historical circumstances. Later versions of the theory cannot replicate its original power; because the situation has quieted down and changed, the theory is degraded and subdued, made into a relatively tame academic substitute for the real thing, whose purpose ... was political change.

(2000: 436)

Theory does not travel well. Mandaville suggests that

there is every likelihood that through extensive travel a theory will lose its radical edge. This does not mean, however, that all is lost. When a theory travels it can also sometimes take on a new critical consciousness – towards both itself and other theories.

(2003: 121)

The potential reinterpretation comes precisely from intellectuals adapting the theory to new circumstances. Travelling theory has a particular resonance in IR, where the universalizing claims of 'general theory' are called into question by the notion of theory in movement, theory not just in context but in changing context.

As one could guess, this poses particular problems for IR theory as an analytical project. Said's notion of travelling theory has been neglected, even in post-colonial IR theory. I suspect this is because Said's connection of theory to real historical events is at odds with the post-structuralist perspective. The historical experience or political conflict that provides the spark for IR theory is often

posed at that generalized level (states in an anarchical, self-help system) – because IR distinguishes itself from comparative politics or area studies by its lack of attachment to a particular time or place. Even as a problem-solving theory, to use Cox’s formulation, which might be more oriented towards political change, the hegemonic specifics of American IR is represented as universal, rational and global. I would make the case for a micro-level IR theory that was more engaged in political struggles, rather than the abstract theorization of politics divorced from actual territorial conflicts. Said argued in relation to Samuel Huntington that it is unwise ‘as an intellectual and a scholarly expert to produce a simplified map of the world and then hand it to generals and civilian law-makers as a prescription for first comprehending and then acting in the world’ (Said 2000: 573). This, of course, is just the task that mainstream, problem-solving IR theory sets itself. Thus, Said wants to make a fine distinction between theory driven by a specific political struggle towards change, and a simplified policy prescription masquerading as theory. For example, Said wrote *Orientalism*, which seems to generate an abstract theory of the production of a discourse about the ‘Orient’ that had real political effects, both for Europeans and its ‘others.’ How does this square with his view of travelling theory? He used the concept of exile and the method of contrapuntal analysis to gain critical distance and avoid complicity in a hegemonic project.

To balance this tension, Said argued that intellectuals function from a position of exile. He describes this exilic position as ‘just beyond the frontier between “us” and “them” is the perilous territory of not-belonging’ (2000: 177). Contrapuntal reading, as a strategy, is:

a simultaneous awareness of both the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts’ in order to understand ‘how [imperial] cultures maintained hegemony over the peripheries [and] how within them was consent gained and continuously consolidated for the distant rule of native peoples and territories.

(Said 1993: 51)

This position of being in both and neither culture offers a critical perspective that sees domination as not univocal, but complex and always resisted (Chowdhry 2007). There is a clear echo in Said of Foucault’s work on power (2000). The position of the exile allows the intellectual to gain a critical self-consciousness to make these contrapuntal readings. He argues in *Representations of the Intellectual* and *Reflections on Exile* that the experience of alienation from a national identity/territory allows and compels one to see the constructed nature of that identity (2000: 185). Thus, the historical experience of ‘exile’ can provide both the engagement with real political struggles and the critical distance needed for theorizing. Crucially, this experience of exile is not a position that can be assumed. ‘Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you’ (Said 2000: 184). While he admits that it may be possible that

exile may be metaphorical, he seems to allow no place for the non-exiled intellectual: there can be no critical distance without exile. The intellectual is an exile from his territory, and the experience of exile is the impetus for theory that travels. That theory is always connected to a particular struggle – particularly the struggle for a homeland – but attains critical distance in both space and theory. Said uses his biography as a foundation for this theory of exile and intellectualism: physical dispossession from Palestine allows him critical distance from the discourse of both Israeli sovereignty, security and nationalism and from the discourse of Palestinian resistance; while his psychic dispossession from American nationalism or American national identity allows him critical distance from the discourse of American foreign policy in the Middle East and the discourse of Palestinian resistance/Israeli security in the American media. Both critical positions are a privilege of his dispossession

Said operated under the influence, if not the specific sign, of Michel Foucault, who also based his critical impulse on experience.⁷ He says, ‘Whenever I have tried to carry out a piece of theoretical work, it has been on the basis of my own experience, always in relation to the processes I saw taking place around me’ (Foucault 1988: 156). Not territorial dispossession, Foucault speaks of a marginalization within institutions as being sufficient to generate a critical perspective. In discussing with Stephen Riggins his *History of Madness*, he says:

I was studying psychology in the Hôpital Ste. Anne ... There was no clear professional status for psychologists in a mental hospital. So, as a student in psychology, I had a very strange status there. ... I was actually in a position between the staff and the patients ... it was the consequence of this ambiguity in my status which forced me to maintain a distance from the staff ... It was only a few years later when I started writing a book on the history of psychiatry that this malaise, this personal experience, took the form of a historical criticism or structural analysis.

(Foucault 1997: 123)

Markedly different from Said’s experience of national exile, it is the experience *within the institution* that prompts Foucault’s critique. In Foucault’s corpus of work, I think, one may discern a view of the intellectual and the role of theory that contains several points of contact with the view from Said. Foucault offers the notion of the specific intellectual: able to occupy by force of his experience of exile an engaged position. In his lectures on power/knowledge he argues that Oppenheimer represents a movement from a general intellectual – who sees himself as separate from institutions and able to speak on a range of topics – to a specific intellectual, who is involved in institutions and speaks from a particular, institutional position (Foucault 2000). Often these interventions are part of a political programme of action, including direct action in which Foucault often buried himself. Foucault advocates for a knowledge-politics that be mobilized by the specific intellectual from *within the institution*, in particular, specific struggles. Political and social change in psychiatry

prove that these local, specific struggles haven't been a mistake and haven't led to a dead end. One may even say that the role of the specific intellectual must become more and more important in proportion to the political responsibilities which he is obliged willy-nilly to accept, as a nuclear scientist, computer expert, pharmacologist, etc.

(Foucault 2000: 130)

The institution is part of the power structure of the state and capital, but resistant discourses are possible, and the specific intellectual may enact strategic mobilizations of subjugated knowledges to question the closure of hegemonic politics. Said's work on Palestinian politics must be seen in this light – not as an off-stage aside to a nationalist audience, but rather an important engine of his theories. The general attitude of a grounded intellectual that is engaged in specific political struggles is shared between them, as his comments on Foucault's death suggests: Foucault 'imparts a certain deliberate extraterritoriality to his work' (2000: 189), he writes. Though I take Biswas' point that Said held a romantic notion of a general 'amateur' intellectual (2007: 124), there is also the suggestion of this position elsewhere in Said:

it's somehow important to balance and maintain a kind of coexistence between the necessities of the [academic] field and the discipline of the classroom, on the one hand, and of the special interest that one has in it, on the other, with one's own concerns as a human being, as a citizen in the larger society.

(Said 2000: 501)

A scholar must both be engaged in the discipline of IR, and slightly alien to it: aware enough to speak the language of dissidence, but distant enough to have a critical perspective on the play of power within the field. The specific, public intellectual must also be courageous enough to sail the rough seas of politics, chart the currents of right and responsibility. If we accept Said's description of travelling theory, then every abstraction has its political origins in a specific conflict. The intellectual is exiled from the day-to-day political struggles because they (often) operate within a different institution, but are also engaged with the values, norms and aims of that struggle.

IR as an exilic discipline

One could make the argument that IR is a discipline exiled from fields of government or political science, but this I think is a stretch. From a post-colonial perspective, there is a *prima facie* case for analysing the national contexts of international relations. Biswas argues

Said acknowledges the fact that all intellectual work occurs in a (national) context which imposes upon one's intellect certain linguistic boundaries, particular (nationally framed) issues and, most invidiously, certain domestic

political constraints and pressures, but he cautions against the dangers of such restrictions upon the intellectual imagination.

(2007: 124–125)

Still, one may look at the difference between English and American international relations theory, or the similarities between British, Canadian and Australian IR, or the similarities in writers on the post-colonial condition. In this, I am making an argument different from the contributors to Crawford and Jarvis (2000), who almost uniformly argue against a national IR culture. In the West, we are part of universities that urge publication, gauge the impact of publications on the discipline through citation indices, administer doctoral programmes and comprehensive exams, institutions that require us to choose ‘the canon’, interact with peers that determine tenure, are members of academic associations that vet conference proposals, engage with publishers with concerns of profitability and popularity, and students who demand entertainment and enlightenment. How does being here and now influence the way we study, teach and analyse international politics? Many of the foremost theorists of international relations have been personally exiled, Morgenthau to name the most obvious (Frei 2001), and go on to write about the importance of power politics and/or belonging. Even if one accepts that IR theory has a conceit for *inter*-nationalness as a quality, we cannot deny that the particular dynamics of national institutions have a fundamental impact on the *way*, frequency and kind of our academic work. As a member of a bilingual department engaged with Canadian and Quebec politics, I can say that even national perspectives can be contentious. How does being in a Western or post-colonial institution affect international relations theory: the access to publications (both to read and in which to publish), international conferences, local networks of power? In my previous position at the American University in Cairo, I experienced, albeit in an incredibly mediated and privileged way, the gravity-well out of which post-colonial scholars must emerge to engage the metropolitan discipline. Said was familiar with this struggle: ‘In universities in other parts of the world, of course, the academy is just part of the political system and academic appointments are necessarily.... outright political appointments’ (2000: 501). An explicit consideration of these institutional and disciplinary dynamics adds depth to our understanding of world politics, without becoming entirely narcissistic about intellectual genealogies and personal biographies.

Said spoke from a place of both privilege and exile. While he was privileged by virtue of his endowed chair at Columbia, he was marginalized in his own estimation by his position as exile. He repeated that his own experience of exile, dispossession and the identity as a Palestinian in America shaped his scholarship and politics. He presented work in both American and Arabic media. In America, he self-identified as an Arab-American, and a Palestinian. He was the subject of violent attacks in person, against his office and in the media. Said has also criticized the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Liberation Organization for their lack of understanding of the American media/public in his *Al-Ahram Weekly* column, and deconstructed the way that Israel and Palestine are con-

structed within American media. Said criticized the specific rewriting of the history of the village of Deir Yassin in 'The Politics of Partition' (1999). But, in this essay, Said moves quickly from competing discourses of nation and place to considering the incompatible claims to territorial sovereignty (an idea central to IR). Said was making a film and visits the site of an infamous massacre. The guard who guided him around the village, now a mental institution, made no mention of the massacre. Said concluded,

The irreconcilability of our stories was too great to bridge or even discuss. Yet we were undeniably talking about the very same hill, the same stones and houses, which in my mind acquired an even starker and unresolvable geographical presence as we both stood there this incident raises a profound existential dilemma, and not just for Palestinians: how to deal with issues of contested territory and competing claims of ethno-national identity?

(1999: 16)

Said's sentimental journey back to a homeland in which he had never lived both connected him to the homeland and illustrates the disconnect between his imaginary geography and the political forms of sovereign statehood that govern the material existence of Palestine and Palestinians. This homecoming reinforced Said's sense of exile and illustrates the importance of travelling theory. He is dispossessed not only from the territory that he claims as homeland, but also from the discourse of that land – the very naming of it as home.

What emerges from these considerations of institutionalized public intellectuals is the importance of belonging and exile as personal and professional positions from which to speak. Setting aside the politics of academic publishing and the extent to which the discipline allows non-academic voices to speak (much less voices from outside the discipline), we must see where theory takes place – both in the sense of occur and in the sense of claiming a position. Said illustrates the dangers and advantages of self-disclosing one's political position. Disclosing his affinity for the Palestinian cause opens up *Orientalism* to political attacks, but also connects the work to a specific, local struggle. This replacing of theory back into place and time – into the geopolitics of particular struggles – is not without its ethico-political dangers. Said's own involvement with the Palestinian cause is a prime example of the dangers of becoming attached to a particular issue or vision of a particular politics. Local concerns are by their nature not universalistic, but also not necessarily other-regarding – recent events in Israel and Palestine making this achingly clear. While his position of privilege as a Western academic is undermined by threats of violence and representations of violence, he was also granted a place as a spokesperson. Self-disclosing one's position is not a risk-free position, but does enable one to leverage the counter-hegemonic potential of one's institutionalized position. This kind of personal positioning has been used to great effect by post-colonial scholars. Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* describes the psychic consequences of imperial ideology. Like Fanon, and like Foucault, Said uses his biography and his experience with

Palestinian politics to inform both his work and his activism, and it is clear that he theorizes a necessary relation between the two.

There is a danger, however, in adopting the exilic position without disclosing the political change that drives the impulse to theory. Ashley seems to suggest that IR sees itself as a discipline in exile, which carries interesting political potential. However, as a discipline, I do not believe that IR can be seen as no-place – regardless of the Archimedean, sovereign position some mainstream scholars may adopt – the very adoption of a ‘problem-solving’ framework discloses a particular, philosophically conservative position. Biswas argues

This is not simply a matter of scholars working for the state, but indeed a larger question of intellectual orientation. It is not uncommon for IR scholars to feel the need to formulate their scholarly conclusions in terms of its relevance for global politics, where ‘relevance’ is measured entirely in terms of policy wisdom.

(2007: 122)

Can there be a productive tension, however, between the exile of the IR scholar and the place-less-ness of world political events? Said argues that the farther theory travels from its point of inception, at which it was generated from historical, geographical, political experience, the less analytical power it possesses. From the point of IR theory, this is not only counter-intuitive, but a critique of the very *international* quality of international relations theory. IR has the pretension to be a universal, or at least global, discipline. The experience that provides the impetus for IR theory must be nowhere, no place, no time – or rather while it may be generated from a specific circumstance, it must be generalizable (states in anarchy, sovereignty, war). IR data must travel well if it is to be international. The data of IR is assumed to be so trimmed of detail as to make comparisons across space and time possible. Particularly in its macro-philiac phase, I would argue that there has been a general, even critical, acceptance of this ‘international’ or placeless conceit of IR theory. Ashley and Walker, among others, contest the universalist claims of realist IR theory. But, they argue that this very place-less-ness is an advantage to the IR scholar. In ‘Speaking the Language of Exile’, Ashley and Walker write:

We do not call attention to these proliferating marginal sites of modern politics in order to highlight lapses in contemporary global political theory, some specific domains of conduct that theorists have yet to take seriously enough. We do so in order to suggest that these deterritorialized and decentred sites of political life already have their counterparts at the margins of modern international studies ... It is the spectre of a work of global political theory, a dissident work of *thought*, that happily finds its extraterritorial place – its politicized ‘nonplace’ – at the uncertain interstices of international theory and practice.

(1990: 263)

The authors chart the placelessness of certain political positions and celebrate them as emancipatory, outside the constraints of sovereign knowledge and thus as resistant or subjugated knowledges. Similar to Said's valorization of contrapuntal theory, the position of exile marks the author as countervailing the totalizing narratives of sovereignty, state and the discipline. More recently, Ashley reiterates this position:

the itinerate *condottiere* is a figure who travels light. Representing no thing and no place, he wears the most austere dress, bears no flag, carries no seal, commands no enduring loyalties ... lives the life of a vagabond, for he is a stranger to every place and every faith, knowing that he can never be at home among the people who dwell there ... But this nomadic figure is also one who gallops across the surfaces of life in search of some locality, any locality, where a strategic art can be performed.

(1996: 251)

For Ashley, it is the very placelessness, allegiance-less-ness of the IR theorist that enables him to escape a post-structuralist ethical dilemma – if all discourses are the product of power, and all action requires foreclosure, how does one act? The rejection of foundations, allegiances and power structures grants Ashley a position (on horseback) from which to intervene in particular struggles without being complicit in any systematized politics.

There are some very interesting counter-examples of self-referential theory in IR that makes use of personal narrative for theoretical purposes. James Der Derian engages in a kind of travelogue in his *Virtuous War* (2001). William Connolly frames *Neuropolitics* in terms of his own engagement with political theory (2002). Derek Gregory's *The Colonial Present* includes a preface of exceptional eloquence and political impulse:

What follows is an attempt to atone for my complacency, and to come to terms with cultures of political violence for which I had no terms ... a matter of recognizing the ways in which so many of us (I include myself) continue to think and to act in ways that are dyed in the colors of colonial power.

(2004: xiii–xv)

While we find many of these personal experiences and motivations in the footnotes, conference chit-chat and prefaces of IR theory, Said's thought demonstrates how and why we must make this unofficial discourse (and the structures of power they reveal) visible. The dangers of narcissistic biographical determinism are clear, 'a fetishism of one's subject position' (Duvall and Varadarajan 2007: 85). Another lesson that can be learned from the ethical tenor of post-colonial studies: scholars must be allowed to write their own position (and describing the position of another is an act of appropriation). Contrapuntal readings of the dynamic interplay between hegemonic narratives and resistance allow us to jealously guard the complexity of world and personal politics.

Conclusion

In part, my own interest in post-colonial theory, fostered by Gregory, and being able to write about post-colonial theory within the discipline, indicates my place in the first generation of scholars who have found widespread institutional support for research that falls outside the traditional definition of international relations. This led me to accept a position at the American University in Cairo. Being at AUC, however, made me more aware of the reach of the mainstream and its power as a discourse. My romantic notions of teaching in the post-colonial scene were quickly dismissed by my students – who it must be said represented on the whole a very privileged section of Egyptian and Middle Eastern society – who wanted much more Morgenthau and much less Fanon than I expected. They were gripped by the problem-solving nature of realism, and in particular by what they saw as the pragmatic advantages of international political economy. Without any formal training in the orthodoxies of International Relations as a discipline, their consumption of Egyptian and mediated Western culture had enculturated the comprador class as proto-realists. Even as this realism was viewed as the only solution to counteract American hegemony, the consensus was that Egyptian values would only be made real through the application of ‘real’ military and economic power. If it was not already clear to me, teaching in this environment demonstrated vividly that the grounds for contestation of the international political imaginary were not only in the academic journals of IR, but in the movies, the songs, the material culture, the media, the news and the experiences of colonialism and colonization.

While I am adamant that we are living in the ‘colonial present’ to use Gregory’s terms (2004) and that IR should take this into consideration, it seems important also that we also start to ‘place’ IR theory as originating from an institutionally specific metropolitan centre. This is not a risk-free strategy. But, I think it is important to make explicit what is implicit and bring this unofficial knowledge to light. We need to consider the position of the specific intellectual to the extent that they are encouraged to write themselves into their theory. Fanon, Césaire, Foucault and Said – not to mention Der Derian, Connolly and Gregory – have all demonstrated the value in folding a consideration of an exilic subject position into engaged theories of world politics.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Kate McInturff, with whom many conversations about Said have shaped my thinking. I gratefully acknowledge the support provided by the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities at the University of Cambridge and the post-colonial study group there, who provided an excellent sounding board for these ideas in their final iteration. This chapter has been simmering for a number of years: previous versions were presented at Orientalism Reconsidered conference at the University of Exeter (2001), the Pan-European International Relations conference (2001) and to colleagues at the American University in Cairo. My thanks also to the editors and Samer Aboud for their comments on an earlier draft.

- 2 For a wider discussion of this point, see Chapter 6 'Decolonizing the discipline' (Salter 2002).
- 3 Political geography has also engaged seriously with Said, see notably Slater (2004) and Gregory (2004).
- 4 This is not a complete bibliography of Said's work, which included frequent newspaper columns, a memoir and abundant literary and music criticism.
- 5 The new availability of media, through the internet, blogging, video-posting, etc., certainly opens space for post-colonial counter-readings of politics – such as blogs by Iraqis during the recent invasion – that could be interpreted as a deinstitutionalization of global narratives.
- 6 Other works on cinema and IR do not engage with post-colonial theory at all (Gregg 1998).
- 7 See Duvall and Varadarajan (2007) for an excellent discussion of Said's complex relationship with Foucault, although I see less distance between Said and Foucault on the question of travelling theory.

13 On Habermas, Marx and the critical theory tradition

Theoretical mastery or drift?

Alexander Anievas

Introduction

It is difficult to overstate the significance of Jürgen Habermas' work in contemporary intellectual thought. A scholar of unprecedented scope and profundity, he is often referred to as *the* German intellectual of the post-Second World War era. Given the scale and quality of Habermas' scholarly repertoire, it is not surprising that his ideas have inspired a rich and growing body of literature in International Relations (IR).¹ His thought has been particularly influential in the 'post-positivist' turn within the discipline of IR – a body of writing emphasizing the role of inter-subjective meanings, interpretation and linguistic communication in the construction of new and innovative approaches to world politics. Of course, such themes long pre-date Habermas' own unique contribution to them, as the various other chapters in this volume illustrate. This chapter explores first of all the sources and debates around Habermas' work and, second, some specific aspects of its significance in IR, including in particular the ways in which the work of Andrew Linklater develops, reflects and refracts his arguments.

Unlike some of the other thinkers in this collection, however, Habermas' work is quite well known within IR debates. Nevertheless, it may be argued that the application of his work in IR has been limited, largely impacting on various sub-branches of the discipline. Whilst Habermas' intellectual debt to Marx and the early Frankfurt School have been acknowledged within IR (Linklater 1990, 1996, 1998; Haacke 1996: 257–258; Weber 2005: 196–198), much less attention has been paid to *his* explicit engagement with Marx and the historical materialist tradition in general. Critical international theorists have largely accepted Habermas' interpretation of Marxism (Hoffman 1987: 234, 243–244; Linklater 1990: 24–27, 1996, 1998: 40–42, 90–92, 115–117; Haacke 1996: 257–258, 260). They have sought to elaborate a 'Marxian-inspired critical theory' that follows Habermas' efforts to 'reconstruct historical materialism' in order to more adequately fulfil the goals it had set itself whilst overcoming its 'inherent weaknesses' (Linklater 1996: 279–280). However, is this 'Habermasian' critique of Marx and the Critical Marxist tradition a fundamentally correct one? What does Habermasian-influenced critical IR incorporate from Marxism, and what does it leave behind?

This chapter critically problematizes the presumed relationship between Habermas, Marx and the Critical Theory tradition from which his project emerged.² In doing so, it addresses (if only partially) this lacuna within IR studies by rethinking the formulation of Habermas' specific theoretical *problematique* through his sustained intellectual engagement with historical materialism. The aim in examining the relation of Habermas' work to Marxism is not exegetical, much less to uphold Marxist orthodoxy. Marxism is a very broad tradition, which includes many different interpretations of the relationship between capital and class, society and emancipation, economics and politics. The interest in considering Habermas' criticisms of Marx(ism) is, therefore, to assess whether Habermas' theoretical reconstruction marks a decisive advance that can be used to enrich global politics. Does the Habermasian critical project represent a 'dialectical sublation' of Marxist critique, or theoretical drift? Ultimately, this must be judged by the theoretical aims Habermas sets himself.

The shifting sands of critique

Once considered the embodiment of modernity, the self-identified purveyor of progress and centre of Enlightenment, Europe found itself engulfed in a general war in 1939 – the second in less than twenty years. In the midst of Europe on the precipice of self-destruction, Walter Benjamin reflected on a small water-coloured painting he had purchased in Berlin almost two decades previously and the prospects for progress in history:

A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

(1999: 249)

A little over half a year later Benjamin would be found dead in a village on the French–Spanish border having almost certainly committed suicide as he attempted to escape the Nazis who had, by then, occupied France. The dismal end of an era in which dreams of a liberated utopian future seemed possible had given way to a nightmare of barbarism. This profoundly challenged the tradition of philosophical thinking stretching back from Kant through Hegel to Marx and the Frankfurt School Critical Theory of which Benjamin had been part. This peculiar idea of a distinctively 'critical theory' and the means through which it

could be rearticulated after this nightmare lay at the heart of what would become Habermas' lifelong intellectual project. But what makes a theory 'critical'?

Taking cue from Marx's (1975: 142) injunction for the 'ruthless criticism of all that exists', Max Horkheimer, in his seminal essay 'Traditionelle und kritische Theorie' (1972 [1937]), was the first to explicitly elaborate a 'critical theory'. From this work, four fundamental tenets constituting such a theory can be derived. First, all knowledge is a socially conditioned historical product. Theory must be understood in the context of 'real social processes' rather than 'absolutized ... reified, ideological categories'. The subject/object and fact/value dichotomies of 'traditional' (e.g. bourgeois) theories are thus rejected in favour of theoretical self-reflexivity (Horkheimer 1972: 194, 211). Second, the non-recognition of the inherently social function of science common to 'traditional theory' is itself an outcome of these historically specific 'real social processes'. It is an element of the social process of a 'scientific activity as carried on within the division of labour at particular stage in the latter's development' (Horkheimer 1972: 197). Traditional theory is thus inherently tied to specifically capitalist social relations, functioning to legitimize and sustain such relations. Critical Theory is, in contrast, a thoroughly *historicist* mode of enquiry. It situates explanation and understanding of social phenomena within changing historical contexts in order to then critique their necessarily transient nature. It is, then, also 'holistic'.

In examining the *totality* of social relations, the Critical Theorist seeks to transcend traditional theory's compartmentalization of the social into discrete (often binary) analytical spheres (e.g. the ideational versus material, the domestic versus international); a compartmentalization that is itself the result of the division of labour at a certain 'stage' of its development. In contrast to the methodological individualism of 'traditional theory', the subject of critical thinking is 'rather a definite individual in his [*sic*] relation to other individuals and groups, in his conflict with a particular class, and, finally, in the resultant web of relationships with the social totality and with nature' (Horkheimer 1972: 197). Finally, the self-proclaimed task of the Critical Theorist is not to accept existing social reality as it is, but rather to critique and transform it according to what *it should* and *can be*. As Herbert Marcuse put it, '[t]he tension between potentiality and actuality, between what men and things could be and what they are in fact, is one of the dynamic focal points of this theory of society' (1972: 69).

In sum, Critical Theory can be defined in terms of its methodological commitment to: (1) theoretical *self-reflexivity*; (2) *historicity*; (3) *social totality*; (4) *immanent critique* with *emancipatory intent* (Jahn 1998: 614–618). For Habermas, this latter element (immanent critique) was essentially abandoned in the later writings of Adorno and Horkheimer thereby problematizing the idea of a distinctively 'critical' theory. According to Habermas the realization of progressive and indeed emancipatory forces, developing within society, rang hollow for Adorno and Horkheimer after the events of the Thirty Years' Crisis (1914–45) of capitalist modernity. While remaining true to Marx's idea that the developments of industrial capitalism held out the *promise* of a more rational, emancipated society, they nevertheless emphasized how this promise had not only gone

unfilled, but also horribly wrong. The question remains though, why development within capitalist societies had gone array?

Under the conditions of 'late' capitalism, rationality had become one of pure instrumental function, setting forth the task of manipulating all facts as a means to an end. The logic of purposive rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) inherent to capitalist modernity had not led to the universal human emancipation as expected by Marx, but to the 'iron cage' of modern bureaucratic rationalism and technocracy Max Weber had foreseen (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972: 120–167). Further, instrumental rationality ceased to be conceived by Adorno and Horkheimer as the result of the specific logic of capitalist society. Rather, it became a more general feature of rationality *tout court*. Historical development is conceived as a universal process of 'rationalization as reification', of continually increasing modes of domination (see Habermas 1984: 339–365, 1987a: 106). Consequently, Adorno and Horkheimer effectively pulled the carpet out from under themselves by methodologically undermining the basis for immanent critique without ever having supplied an alternative foundation. For, if rationality is conceived in terms of a transhistorical instrumental rationality, how could it be used to criticize the very processes it produced? Philosophy becomes 'the reflective form of critical theory that discovers in each step of conceptual reflection a piece of the continued history of domination. Therefore, strictly speaking, it prohibits itself' (Honneth 1991: 61–62). As Habermas (1987a: 119) puts it, critique becomes 'self-destructive', endlessly circling within a 'performative contradiction'. Moreover, in viewing the ubiquity of instrumental rationality within capitalism as an impenetrable ideological veil circumventing the development of revolutionary consciousness among the working class, Adorno and Horkheimer essentially severed the intelligible link connecting their analyses of capitalist modernity with the emancipatory aim of their theories. Critical Theory became a theory of praxis without a subject (Habermas 1982: 231–232).

This narrative of the degeneration and ultimate self-contradiction of Critical Theory presented by Habermas is largely accepted by critical IR scholars. It is, however, not an altogether convincing one. Neither Horkheimer nor Adorno ever abandoned Marx's materialist theory of history. They remained committed to the idea that a 'critical theory of modern society must begin with the analysis of a society built on exchange' (Jahn 1998: 621). Whilst their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) paints a one-sided picture of capitalist modernity subsumed by the irrationality of instrumental rationality, this *remains* a critique of advanced capitalist bourgeois society and its positivist social sciences. It represented not so much a crisis of Critical Theory but one *within* it. The Habermasian would no doubt argue that this is precisely the problem with any such critique – that it indeed remains within the Marxist framework. Yet, the means by which this argument is pursued by Habermas stands in an external relation to the theory under consideration. That is, although Habermas' critique is conceived as immanent to historical materialism, as examined below, it is developed from a rather different conception of the purpose and nature of social theory (Rockmore 1989: 104–105).

From production to communication

For Habermas, the 'performative contradiction' of the early Frankfurt School could only be resolved by fundamentally breaking with the subject-centred conception of reason characteristic of Western philosophy since Descartes. This necessitated moving from a monological (located in a single subject) to dialogical (emerging from the interaction between subjects) understanding of rationality and subjectivity. Habermas demands that critical theory move from 'a paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness in favour of the paradigm of linguistic philosophy' (Habermas 1987a: 315). Only then could it recognize 'the cognitive-instrumental mastery of an objectified nature (and society)' as 'derivative' or 'subordinate' moments 'rendered independent' from their broader communicative contexts. Hence, the 'cognitive-instrumental aspect of reason' needs be put back 'in its proper place as part of a more encompassing *communicative rationality*' (Habermas 1984: 390). We need, in other words, to distinguish between 'strategic' and 'communicative' modes of action and rationality.

Habermas thus seeks to plough new horizons for critical theory by recontextualizing the standpoint for immanent critique from labour to communication. Like Marx and the Frankfurt School, Habermas remains committed to a conception of modernity as a haven for a (partially) unrealized core of potential rationality. However, the rational potentials within modernity are no longer to be found in the production process, but instead the 'presuppositions' or 'norms' of everyday communicative discourse: an idealized deliberative context where all impeding extraneous factors are absent and the guiding 'force of the better argument' prevails.³ Where the reality of deliberation fails to meet this ideal, there opens a space for immanent critique. Habermas' original thesis, as stated in the *Theory of Communicative Action*, was that linguistic communication presupposes an inherent orientation towards mutual understanding (*Verständigung*), striving towards uncoerced, rationally motivated agreement (*Einverständnis*).⁴

While Habermas' general thesis remained unchanged, he has more recently distinguished between 'weak' and 'strong' forms of communicative action (Habermas 1998: 307–342), the former entailing an orientation towards understanding but not agreement. In its 'strong' version, communicative action involves the simultaneous raising of three 'context-transcendent' validity claims regarding the truth, normative rightness and truthfulness of the speech act whereby 'participants refer to [an] intersubjectively shared value orientation that – going beyond their personal preferences – *bind* their wills' (1998: 326). Habermas now only terms this use of language oriented to agreement 'communicative rationality'. It represents the hard normative core or 'regulative ideal' latent in everyday communication. It is a procedural conception of rationality. In these ways, Habermas (1987a: 76) claims to reestablish the 'internal relation between practice and rationality' broken by the early Frankfurt School.

The *Theory of Communicative Action* is a sustained defence of the 'unfinished project of modernity'. It was primarily directed against both Enlightenment

thinking's positivist corrupters and its radical detractors, including the Heideggerian critical hermeneutics of Gadamer and the post-structuralism of Foucault and Derrida. However, the theory organically developed from Habermas' long-standing engagement with the Marxist tradition, to which I now turn.

Prior to the development of communicative action theory, the theoretical impasse faced by the early Frankfurt School was conceived as derivative of more fundamental deficiencies specific to Marx's materialist theory of history underlying them. In particular, two fundamental criticisms of Marx were developed by Habermas in the 1960s. First, Marx had neglected to sufficiently reflect on the possibility of knowledge and thus the presuppositions of his own critique. 'Marx never explicitly posed for himself the epistemological question concerning the conditions of the possibility of a philosophy of history with political intent' (Habermas 1973 [1962]: 242). Second, Marx had inadequately distinguished between labour and interaction; the latter instead being collapsed into the former. These two criticisms are connected. The foundation of subjectivity and self-reflection (critique) are not grasped epistemologically by Marx precisely because of his overwhelming focus on labour and reduction of *praxis* to it. Consequently, Marx misses the communicatively inter-subjective dimension of interaction through which self-identity and knowledge are constituted and reconstructed (Giddens 1982: 151–152).

In mistakenly collapsing social interaction into labour, Marx thereby conflated what Habermas conceives as two necessarily distinct types of action and rationality: the communicative and strategic (or purposive-strategic). These, in turn, Habermas (1987b) would later argue, are related to two analytically distinct perspectives of society: lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) and system.⁵ The lifeworld denotes the background horizon of taken-for-granted knowledge and interpretative patterns communicatively reproduced and tied to social integration processes. The 'system' represents various integrated apparatuses (such as the market and state apparatus) constituting modern society. Marx's failure to grasp the specificity of social interaction, its unique logic and rationality, led to his ambiguous embrace of positivist social science. Consequently, Marx reduced social problems to technical solutions as '[t]echnical reason appear[ed] to exhaust the capabilities of human reason as a whole' (Giddens 1982: 151).

From the outset then, the Marxist tradition lacked clarity in regards to its own normative foundations. There remained in Marx's work a fundamental tension between a 'relativist interpretation of ethical discourse and his tacit reliance on half-articulated normative concepts' (Callinicos 2006: 211). If Marx's 'critique of political economy' was conceived as a new science, demonstrating the ideological self-deception of all hitherto bourgeois economic theories, what justified its own unique claim to 'objective' non-ideological knowledge claims? What was its own status as theory? How could critique become science and science remain critique? Conceived neither as pure philosophy nor a naturalistic science Marxism's uncertain theoretical status as 'critique' required further elucidation, lest it not continuously slip into historical objectivism and dogmatic orthodoxy (Habermas 1979: 96–97).

In Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action*, the first 'epistemological deficit' of Marxism is essentially dropped (Rockmore 1989: 91). The fundamental problem in grounding critique is no longer conceived as being resolvable within the Kantian epistemological framework: rather, the problem *is* the framework. The 'performative contradiction' Habermas identifies in Adorno and Horkheimer is thus viewed as the unavoidable consequence of *any* critical theory remaining within a 'philosophy of consciousness' framework. Nevertheless, a Kantian conception of *Kritik* and theory clearly remains fundamental for Habermas.

In Marx, the possibility of unified subject and object (thought and action) had been removed from the realm of the Kantian transcendental subject (or Hegel's Absolute Idea) and philosophical speculation. Rather, it belonged to the sphere of practical activity (human beings' metabolic interaction with nature) and empirical science. The dialectical synthesis of subject-object is thus achieved in humans' reconciliation with nature through the reappropriation of the means of production. Habermas' rejection of this emphasis on the social production process essentially leads him back to the Kantian search for grounding 'universal' knowledge claims which, in his communicative action theory, is now reconceptualized in terms of rationality. In effect, Habermas' lifeworld concept assumes the role of Kant's transcendental subject. The synthesizing function of the transcendental subject in providing the foundation for knowledge (or rationality) is thus shifted from individual consciousness to the realm of linguistically mediated *inter*-subjectivity. Marx's failure to specify the universal conditions for self-reflective knowledge (critique 1) is, according to Habermas, solved by grounding a conception of rationality and critique within linguistically mediated interaction (critique 2).

Now, the peculiarities of Habermas' interpretation of Marx have been often noted in the literature (Giddens 1982, 1985; Rockmore 1989; Callinicos 1989). The problem here is that he continually subsumes Marx's 'forces of production' under the categories of 'labour', 'purposive-rational action' and 'instrumental action', on the one hand, and Marx's 'relations of production' with 'social interaction', 'communicative rationality' and 'communicative action', on the other (Habermas 1973: 168–169; Habermas 1979: 97–98, 117–118, 131–133, 138–139; Habermas 1982: 225–226; Habermas 1987a: 80; Habermas 1987b: 334–343). However, Habermas' claim that the concept of labour is primarily used by Marx as an epistemological category is highly questionable. Rather, it only becomes an epistemological one 'when assimilated to purposive-rational action' – an unjustifiable 'equation', according to Anthony Giddens (1982: 157).

Why? In the first place, the theory of alienated labour found in Marx's earlier works emphasizes the '*social* character of language and thought', clearly eschewing any understanding of labour as a simple 'monologic relationship between society and nature' (Callinicos 1989: 114). Cutting out the socializing nature of the production process, Habermas conceptualizes human rationality and agency as solely constituted through linguistic interaction. Consequently, agency is shorn of the key elements of their humanity. Actors become disembodied from the material-social reality in which they act.

Habermas' emphasis on 'interaction' over labour as the determining force in socio-historical evolutionary processes was, in the first instance, intended to enhance the explanatory power of Marx's relations of production concept. It sought to redress Marx's overemphasis on advances in 'technical and organization knowledge, of instrumental and strategic action' tied to development of the productive forces, subsequently fetishized by the economic Marxist approaches of the Second International and Stalinism (Habermas 1979: 97–98). The difficulty is that Habermas reconceptualizes production relations as a dimension of consensual, norm-governed social interaction; that of a moral–practical learning process. Cultural traditions and institutional change are imbued with an inherent 'developmental logic', whereby normative development becomes *the* 'pacemaker of social evolution' (Habermas 1979: 98, 121). Marx's relations of production are thus subsumed under Habermas' own concept of communicative action. Yet, as Alex Callinicos (1989: 114–115) points out, in Marx's formulation, production relations are 'reducible *neither* to the instrumental action ... occurring in the labour-process, *nor* to norm-government social interaction whose implicit telos is consensus ... Rather, they constitute a sphere of asymmetrical power-relations, unequal distribution of wealth, and irreconcilable social struggle.'

The issue then becomes whether Habermas' 'reconstruction of historical materialism' is theoretically productive. Does it mark a decisive advance over these 'classical' Marxist concepts? This question is considered below in relation to Habermas' ideas as applied to international relations – a dimension of sociality notable at least at first sight for its lack of norm-governed consensual relations. In doing so, it concentrates in particular on the work of Andrew Linklater, a focus that is justified since Linklater's work is often referred to as most directly influenced by Habermas, as well as one of the most influential within critical IR theory (Booth 2007: page 55; Devetak 2007: 153).

Habermas and critical IR theory

Challenging the 'value-neutral' epistemological assumptions of positivist IR theory, Andrew Linklater and others have called for a critical international theory that seeks to reflect on the conditions for 'universal human emancipation' immanently developing within existing international society. Linklater claims to go beyond Habermas in a number of key respects, including the conceptualization of an emerging global community, a development that this chapter will challenge. This renewed project of critique aims at re-examining the fixity of moral and political boundaries on empirical–ontological and ethical–political grounds (Devetak 1995, 2007; Booth 2005). For Linklater, as well as Habermas, globalization has significantly intensified the instances and possibilities of 'transnational harm', rendering nation states incapable of providing citizens with their basic needs of justice, social welfare and physical security. Hence, they argue that there is a practical necessity and immanent possibility for the creation of a post-national political community, though they differ over exactly what form this could take (Linklater 1998, 1999; Habermas 2001: 58–112).

For Linklater, it entails the defence of the normative ideal of the 'universal communication community' – an extension and radicalization of Habermas' discourse ethics to the global sphere. The 'universal dialogic community', he tells us, would be one 'in which the justice of all modes of exclusion is tested in open dialogue' (Linklater 1998: 220). It aims to provide a procedural means of clarifying and defending the 'good community' or 'moral point of view' through rational argumentative discourse. It thus rejects any 'Archimedean moral standpoint' that might seek to universalize a 'fixed and final vision of the future' or unitary 'conception of the good life' (Linklater 1998: 40–41, 48–49). The commitment to the extension of more inclusive dialogic communities underpins Linklater's injunction for the 'triple transformation of political community'; a political community aiming to transcend the exclusionary modern Westphalian sovereign states system by institutionalizing social relations that are more universalistic, less unequal and more sensitive to cultural differences. How might this 'post-Westphalian' state emerge from existing political communities? Here, Linklater turns to consider contemporary developments within the European Union (EU).

Drawing on Habermas' interaction/labour distinction, Linklater stresses the importance of examining social learning processes in the moral-cultural sphere. He focuses on the development of higher normative structures and practices that 'highlight morally irrelevant social differences and remove barriers to the development of wider communities of discourse' (Linklater 1998: 91). Following Habermas' three-stage moral evolutionary model, developed from moral psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, Linklater identifies the progressive development of different forms of moral understanding: the pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. At the pre-conventional moral level, people obey norms for fear of punishment, at the conventional, they obey out of a sense of group loyalty and, finally, from the post-conventional, subjects break with authority structures, thereby complying only with those norms that hold universal validity. This post-conventional stage implies 'an unqualified openness to the perspectives of others'. For Habermas/Linklater, then 'discourse ethics is the apex of post-conventional moral reasoning' (Linklater 1998: 91; Habermas 1979: 156).

More concretely, Linklater examines the development of these higher normative structures associated with the rise of modern European ideas of citizenship as emerging from the accumulative, antecedent historical social struggles against the growth of state power and capitalism (Linklater 1998: 121). During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, European conceptions of citizenship remained tied to the sovereign nation-statist conceptual and ontological framework. The end of the Cold War and the globalization process it unleashed witnessed strong forces decoupling the 'sovereignty, territoriality, citizenship and nationalism' quadruplet (Linklater 1998: 29–31). These decoupling processes have been most visible within the EU, which is identified as a nascent and potentially emancipatory form of post-Westphalian community – a first (if only partial) institutionalization of the 'universal dialogic community', as it exhibits the most explicit erosion of nation states' monopolies of powers. This is exemplified by the EU's

'transnational' citizenship, which makes some progress in moving towards a truly cosmopolitan citizenship (Linklater 1998: 199–200).

Some intimation of the magnitude and quality of Linklater's writings should be apparent from the preceding summary. Linklater's critical project is, however, a very problematic one that ultimately repeats, if not exacerbates, many of the theoretical contradictions and limits identified by critics of Habermas. There is, first, the lack of theoretically addressing inter-sociality itself – the distinct determinations arising from the coexistence and interaction of multiple political communities constituting the core 'international problematique' of IR theory (Rosenberg 2006; Allinson and Anievas 2009).

This problem is exemplified by Linklater's (1998: 68–69) uncritical adoption of Habermas' evolutionary three-stage moral development model. Here, as in his use of Marshall's evolutionary analysis of the origins of modern citizenship (Linklater 1998: 184–189), Linklater falls back upon a conception process emerging through a developmental logic *internal* to a *homogeneous* European international society (Shilliam 2002). Linklater seeks to avoid adopting Habermas' purely internalist perspective by explicitly incorporating 'inter-civilization relations' between the 'West' and 'non-Western' worlds in the development of Europe's higher normative structures and technological advances. In doing so, he posits a kind of 'normative competition model' analogous to the geopolitical competition models of neo-Weberian historical sociologists Charles Tilly, Anthony Giddens and Michael Mann, drawing especially on the latter. Yet, Linklater merely restates a Euro-centric 'inside-out' bias by attributing the West's development of higher levels of rationalization and morality to its own unique ability to learn and borrow from other cultures. The mechanism explaining the 'rise of a hegemonic Western civilization' ultimately rests on its own internal developmental logic (Linklater 1998: 126–127; cf. Jahn 1998: 633). This ties in to Linklater's conception of 'Western civilization' and 'European international society' (the two phrases are often used interchangeably) as a single, *homogeneous* social entity.

Neglecting the very different developmental trajectories *within* Europe during the early modern epoch (Teschke 2003), Linklater tends towards a *uni-linear* conception of socio-historical development whereby the more backward societies are destined to repeat the historical stages of *moral* development experienced by the 'West'. The directionality of Marx's progressive development of the productive forces is translated into a unilinearity of successive levels of moral development. The uneven, multilinear and interactive nature of social development is thus neglected by Linklater (see Rosenberg 2006; Allinson and Anievas 2009). These criticisms regarding the lack of an address of the 'international problematique' of inter-societal development within Linklater's work relates more generally to the inadequate attention to the problem of *Gewalt* (force/violence). This is derivative of Linklater cum Habermas' privileging of the role of normative social interaction as the primary force driving social-historical evolutionary processes. In this vein, Robbie Shilliam (2002: 3) accuses Linklater of an 'essentially metaphysical' conception of social struggle and resistance

whereby the dialectical contradictions between the universal and particular articulated through territorial/nation-statist conceptions of citizenship creates a “‘moral capital” (ethical inheritance) which fuels transformation[s]’ of political community. The key point is *not* that Linklater entirely overlooks the role of struggle and conflict (force) in effecting social transformations – though, as Shilliam notes, the absence of such major historical events as the French and Russian revolutions in Linklater’s historical sociological account is rather suspect. Rather, what Shilliam is arguing is that these social struggles seem to reflect an underlying idealist conception of social change whereby history unfolds through the inherent teleological structure of communicative learning processes (see, e.g. Reus-Smit 1999).

Similarly Linklater fails to specify the necessary material prerequisites (e.g. substantive levels of political, economic, racial and gender equality) that would allow for the ‘force of the better argument’ to prevail in any dialogic community. Yet, without these, Linklater’s dialogic procedure is not worth much compared to a free-standing ethical principle. Instead, it might simply act to legitimize and perpetuate hierarchical and unequal social relations (Geras 1999). An inquiry into the procedures specific to a dialogic community would, Linklater notes, necessarily connect with critiques of asymmetries of wealth and power. The triple transformation of political community comes fitted with an ‘ethics of redistribution’ taking into account the creation of socioeconomic conditions for the effective involvement of all members of any universal communication community (Linklater 1999: 173–174). Yet Linklater seems to illustrate the fundamental problem at the crux of achieving the ‘dialogical’ goal precisely in that he stipulates that such socioeconomic conditions must be achieved *before* the community’s creation. Can one expect a massive process of economic redistribution to be achieved *pre-community*? This seems implausible. As Elshtain (1999) argues, Linklater seemingly expects the ‘haves’ to willingly transfer their wealth and power to the ‘have-nots’ in achieving the proper functioning of a community.

Unless the ‘End of History’ has indeed dawned upon us,⁶ the material conditions necessary for any functioning dialogic community within and between political communities would necessitate some form of social struggle forcibly transforming the existing social order. A forceless ‘force of the better argument’ is not much help achieving universal human emancipation. The Habermasian emphasis on normatively governed social relations translates into the conceptualization of already *existing* forms of political community as relatively legitimate domestic and international orders. The ‘good’ community simultaneously becomes equated with the *what is* or *can be* socially accepted. Consequently, Habermas’ social theory and its IR offshoots border on a kind of critical-ized version of the ‘normative functionalism’ of Talcott Parsons and others.

In its most egregious forms, Habermasian-influenced IR studies thus demonstrate a systematic tendency (as illustrated in Habermas’ later works) to equate normative principles and ‘the good’ with prevailing beliefs and attitudes; to privilege ‘the effective acceptance required for social integration over the normative

validity on which legitimacy depends' (Callinicos 2006: 35); to uphold the needs of social order over radical change – in other words, for critique to negate itself in the acceptance of 'really existing' society. At the heart of Habermasian perspective thus lays an antinomy between theory and praxis: the goals of its theoretical commitments too radical to be accomplished within 'really existing democracies', its praxelological commitments too weak to bear the brunt of its theoretical aspirations. The result is a rather 'uncritical' political project, often difficult to distinguish from 'liberal' IR analyses. This is demonstrated by Linklater's (2000) favourable (if cautious) assessment of Western-led humanitarian interventions and human rights discourses; a position anything but idiosyncratic to Habermasian-influenced IR scholars (see, e.g. Lynch 2005), and similar to many of Habermas' own political interventions. Habermas (1999, 2002) endorsed the US-led interventions in the Gulf, Kosovo and (with some criticisms) Afghanistan. Habermas is also rather optimistic regarding the EU's emancipatory potential in developing into a 'cosmopolitan community of states' (2001: 55). Though, Habermas' proposal for a federated EU – internationalizing the Keynesian welfare state compromise of the post-Second World War 'Golden Age' – is actually much less radical than Linklater's universal communication community, as he remains sceptical as to the possibility of a globalized dialogic community, noting that international organizations lack the 'degree of legitimation even remotely approaching the requirements for procedures institutionalized via nation-states' (2001: 48). In all, Marx's 'ruthless criticism of all that exists' becomes, well, rather less ruthless.

If Habermas has been referred to as the 'new Hegel' of the German Federal Republic, conceiving the 'real as the rational' (Ross 2001), something similar could be said of his international politics. Indeed, in critiquing Habermas and other prominent 'Left-liberal' scholars' support of Western-led post-Cold War military interventions, Perry Anderson writes:

[T]he underlying wish is a philosophical version of a banal everyday inclination: to have one's cake and eat it too. Against criticisms pointing to the disgraced reality of inter-state relations, the ideal can be upheld as a normative standard untainted by such empirical shortcomings. Against charges that it is an empty utopia, the course of the world can be represented as an increasingly hopeful pilgrimage towards it. In this *va-et-vient* between ostensible justifications by universal morality and surreptitious appeals to a providential history, the upshot is never in doubt: a license for the American empire as placeholder for human progress.

(2005: 165)

And, if this 'storm', to repeat Walter Benjamin's words, is 'what we call progress' – and by 'we' we mean the Critical Theorist – any semblance of transcendence might indeed be lost.

Conclusion

The philosophy of Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno was surely one of despair. Yet, despite fearing the positivist tendencies within orthodox Marxism and lamenting the lack of revolutionary subjectivity within the advanced capitalist West, they never swayed from their commitment to Marx's materialist conception of history. They remained committed to a *critical realist* conception of science neither reducible to positivism nor those epistemological approaches most generally associated with 'post-positivism'. Thus, to collapse the early Frankfurt School into either category is to overlook the *differentia specifica* of Marxism as a unique tradition of Critique. If critical IR students of Habermas are to address the analytical shortcomings noted above, it is through a critical re-engagement with this tradition, not a flight from it.

Notes

- 1 The first reference to Habermas in IR was Ashley (1981).
- 2 Critical Theory is capitalized when referring explicitly to the Frankfurt School, a theoretical movement associated with the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research) founded in Frankfurt, Germany in 1922. Walter Benjamin is often identified with the Frankfurt School although he was only informally associated with the Institute.
- 3 Previously, the presuppositions or norms of discourse were captured in Habermas' 'ideal speech situation'.
- 4 'The concept of reaching an understanding suggests a rationally motivated agreement among participants that is measured against criticizable validity claims' (Habermas 1984: 75; see also 1979: 3).
- 5 In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, the labour/interaction distinction is restated through the lifeworld/system architecture. 'Marx's error stemmed in the end from dialectically clamping together system and lifeworld' (Habermas 1987b: 340). A differentiation of lifeworld and system is viewed by Habermas as both necessary and desirable; with it, a conception of the social world as a totality is rendered obsolete and politically problematic.
- 6 A prospect Linklater seemingly embraces with his repeated references to the 'zones of peace' within the West – an argument taken from the doyen of Kantian democratic peace theory, Michael Doyle (Linklater 1998: 215; similarly see Habermas 2001: 111–112).

14 Post-structuralism and the randomisation of history

The ‘taboo’ of historical materialism

Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton

Introduction

Since the interventions of Robert Cox (1981 and 1983), a set of distinctive, yet related approaches, drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci emerged within International Political Economy (IPE) to understand world order, globalisation and structural change (for an overview, see Bieler and Morton 2004; Morton 2007). Post-structuralist scholarship has accused such historical materialist approaches for taking ‘the economic and financial domains as unproblematic or material starting points to their enquiries’, thus failing ‘to enquire how financial knowledge, including statistics and indices, has been historically developed’ (de Goede 2003: 80). These historical materialist perspectives are therefore accused of economism in that class identity is deemed to be presented as preceding the political and, thus, driving explanation in a determinist way.

The point to be emphasised here is that in Gramscian IPE, culture, discourse and ideology remain largely in the domain of the superstructure, and of secondary importance to the study of the economic base which ultimately determines the objective economic interests of agents.

(de Goede 2003: 90)

In other words, there is supposedly an undue distinction ‘between the material sphere of the economic and the ideational sphere of the political’ (de Goede 2003: 90; see also de Goede 2005: 7).

The charge of economism has been similarly articulated by recent moves asserting attentiveness to modes of knowledge, dominant discourses and practices in delineating approaches to the financialisation of the economy, perceptions of risk and the governmentality of global civil society whilst eschewing any link to developments in the logic of capitalism held to be plaguing critical IPE (Amoore 2004; Amoore and Langley 2004; Langley 2004, 2008). However, such critics have neglected their own role in articulating economism in a manner that Richard Ashley described as a ‘taboo term’ that ‘has no other purpose than to secure the boundaries of disciplinary discourse when argument threatens to stray into alien terrain or by warning when alien argument threatens to penetrate

or subordinate the discipline's time-honoured rules of discourse' (1983: 463). The charge of economism and the use of it as a taboo term is therefore embedded within a wider set of disciplinary articulations that attempt to exclude questions and arguments from political discourse. Through the use of a taboo term, such critics charge that all reference to capitalism or class relations by historical materialists are economistic and

having so reduced them, they can find the arguments guilty of reductionism and reject them out of hand. They can regard the arguments as economistic theories that fail to respect disciplinary boundaries, neglect political causes of political outcomes, and bring their explanations to rest in 'economic causes'.

(Ashley 1983: 467)

What post-structuralists propose instead 'is a recognition of the contingency of present political forms and the discourses that we use to produce and describe them' (Edkins and Zehfuss 2005: 470; also see de Goede 2006). Hence, discourses establish the truth for a temporarily limited moment. 'Discourses provide criteria of intelligibility that establish the conditions of possibility for social being and, as such, cannot be considered as separate from, or secondary to, the material realm' (de Goede 2001: 152). The languid turn to the taboo term of economism is problematic on two counts. First, the disciplinary practice of using such a term fails to register the radical aspect of the critique of political economy that historical materialism claims, which is linked to 'the *intrinsic* deadliness of a system, of which capitalism is certainly the extreme case' and by doing so issues of class exploitation are immunised from political contestation (Ashley 1983: 469, original emphasis). Second, post-structuralist accounts of the contingency of political forms and the production of discourses lack any acceptance within social relationships of a notion of causality. The result is what Perry Anderson has recognised as the complete *randomisation of history* within the stress on absolute and final contingency. 'Language as a system furnishes the formal *conditions of possibility* of speech, but has no purchase on its actual *causes*' (Anderson 1983: 48).

This chapter has three main parts. First, through a direct engagement with different strands of historical materialism, a philosophy of internal relations is outlined that marks Marxism as a non-reductionist approach. Second, Gramsci's philosophy of praxis is given as an example of how historical materialism goes beyond both traditional idealism and materialism. Thus, it will be argued that 'it is not true that the philosophy of praxis "detaches" the structure from the super-structures when, instead, it conceives their development as intimately bound together and necessarily interrelated and reciprocal' (Gramsci 1995: 414). Third, this will enable us to demonstrate how ideas can be conceived from a historical materialist stance as material social processes through which signs become part of the socially created world without succumbing to the 'taboo' of economism. The philosophy of internal relations allows us here to emphasise the material structure of ideas instead of collapsing into a dualistic position of ideas separate

from material structures (see Bieler and Morton 2008 for a full exposition of this argument).

Historical materialism and the fetishism of commodities

Bob Jessop (1990: 295) has argued that if the only properties that entities have are the product of discourse then one could discursively turn base metal into gold. This line of argument is completely neglected in de Goede's attempt to clarify 'the precise ways in which value and entitlements are created and distributed in modern capitalist practices' (de Goede 2003: 82). For her, 'capital itself seems to be discursively constituted and contested' to the extent that capital is brought into being through historically grounded discourses, through 'money's discursivity' so that 'money, credit and capital are, quite literally, systems of writing' (de Goede 2003: 89; de Goede 2001: 151–152).

It seems highly appropriate to raise questions about the historical constitution of financial markets and how money, profit and value are generated in late-modern capitalist practices. In short by asking 'what *is* capital?' (de Goede 2003: 90, original emphasis). Yet, an immediate counter-response would be: does money *possess* discursivity? Further, is there not a lack of engagement here with historical materialist theory that has precisely grappled with modernity and the specific forms of social power deriving from the historical and social constitution of processes of capitalist development? In wanting to question the ways in which value and entitlements are created and distributed in modern capitalism, the role played by financial markets, money, profit and value therein, our argument is that there is a reinvention of the wheel here that expunges from the contours of debate and through the use of the taboo term of economism the contributions of historical materialism. In sum, the question that needs to be added to 'what *is* capital?' is quite simply 'where is *Capital*'?

Within the language of *Capital* there is a clear interrogation of the social constitution of the world linked to the 'life process of society' understood as the historically specific conditions of productive activity (Marx 1996 [1887]: 90). Marx wants to reveal the mystery, 'the magic and necromancy', that surrounds the products of labour that take the form of fetishised commodities. His central question is *why is labour represented by the value of its product and labour time by the magnitude of that value?*, which is tackled by demonstrating that categories of classical political economy take as given the objective appearance of the social characteristics of labour through the fetishism inherent in commodities (Marx 1996 [1887]: 93). 'The characters that stamp', he argues,

products as commodities, and whose establishment is a necessary preliminary to the circulation of commodities, have already acquired the stability of natural, self-understood forms of social life, before man [*sic*, as throughout] seeks to decipher, not their historical character, for in his eyes they are immutable, but their meaning.

(Marx 1996 [1887]: 86)

Fetishism, then, is an act that is attached to the products of labour in the commodity form, which is inseparable from the production of commodities. In the case of commodities, the value relation between the products of labour that create the commodities have no relation with physical properties nor with material relations. It is in this sense that Marx argued, in such cases of commodity production, that 'it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes ... the fantastic form of a relation between things'. He subsequently states that 'this fetishism of commodities has its origin ... in the peculiar social character of the labour that produces them' (Marx 1996 [1887]: 83). This is not an emphasis on objectified, reified institutions as they appear to us – as the properties of things, or as money possessing discursivity – but rather a focus on material relations between persons as the social relations between things.

Marx is also concerned here with dissipating 'the mist through which the social character of labour appears to us to be an objective character of the products themselves', which is linked to questions of value. In his view, 'the mystical character of commodities does not originate ... in their use value' (Marx 1996 [1887]: 82, 85). Moreover, to discuss solely the discursive categories of money, profit and value would be tantamount to abstracting from their inequalities. To concentrate on the discursive fixing of value would, after all, remain ignorant of the practices of inequality, exploitation and immiseration constitutive of such value. 'Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic', and to decipher this is crucial, 'for to stamp an object of utility as a value, *is just as much a social product as language*' (Marx 1996 [1887]: 85, emphasis added).

Further, when the proportions of specific products have attained a certain stability they *appear* as natural products,

so that, for instance, one ton of iron and two ounces of gold appear as naturally to be of equal value, as a pound of gold and a pound of iron, in spite of their different physical and chemical quantities, appear to be of equal weight.

(Marx 1996 [1887]: 85)

The character of having value therefore only obtains fixity through the ascription of value although it takes the appearance and form of the action of objects. But it would be mistaken to assume then that the base metal of iron can be discursively turned into gold. Rather, it is the labour time socially necessary for the production of such commodities alongside the inherent properties of objects that determine the ascription of value. 'The determination of the magnitude of value by labour time is therefore a secret, hidden under the apparent fluctuations in the relative value of commodities' (Marx 1996 [1887]: 86). Marx wishes to trace the 'cabalistic signs' of money within which the value relation is lost in the names of currencies (such as the dollar or euro), 'because these money names express both the values of commodities, and, at the same time, aliquot parts of the weight of the metal that was the standard of money' (1996 [1887]: 110). As Theodor

Adorno (2000: 32) warns, a naive acceptance of media such as money as a self-evident form of equivalence, a medium of exchange – or simply a discursive system of writing – relieves people of the need for reflection on the specific social relationships governing the system of exchange, or discursive writing, in the first place.

The relations through which the social world attains 'objectivity', whereby externalised products of human activity appear *as if* they are real, are therefore part of the above process known as objectivation or reification. Far from representing an economistic rendering of social reality, this awareness raises meaningful questions about the very objectivations of subjective processes in human activity, or the ways in which the socially constructed world is intersubjectively realised (Bieler and Morton 2001: 17–21). It thus offers an historical materialist mode of enquiry into the conditions and constitution of productive activity by suggesting a way in which the characteristic institutional forms and social practices of capitalism can be understood. Within a historical materialist theory of history, there is therefore a novel vantage point from which to consider factors, not as variables independent of one another, but as internally related. This *philosophy of internal relations* means that the character of capital is considered as a social relation in such a way that the internal ties between the means of production, and those who own them, as well as those who work them, as well as the realisation of value within historically specific conditions, are all understood as relations internal to each other (Ollman 1976: 47). This is distinct from viewing such relations as a set of external connections and treating capital as a simple variable. For as Bertell Ollman (2003: 69) attests, 'capital is itself a relation in which the ties of the material means of production to labour, value, commodity, et cetera, are interiorised as parts of what capital is'. In summarising this philosophy of internal relations he also states that 'the relations that come together to make up the whole get expressed in what are taken to be its parts' (Ollman 2003: 70). The appearance of relations as external – taken as simply discursively constructed by post-structuralists – arises precisely as a result of the process of reification and the alienation of labour under capitalism (Gould 1978: 93).

As a consequence of this philosophy of internal relations, the social ontology of historical materialism – that takes as primary the social organisation of production and the very process of objectivation through which human beings exist – is able to offer a non-economistic and open-ended view of capital (Rupert 1995: 16). After all, as Robert Cox (1987: 1) has stated, 'production creates the material basis for all forms of social existence, and the ways in which human efforts are combined in productive processes affect all other aspects of social life, including the polity'. This starting point, however, does not serve to establish a distinction between the economic and the political realms in an ahistoric way. Rather, it promotes a precise conceptualisation of the historical and social constitution of particular social relations of production and the emergence of related political and economic institutions. An historical materialist approach asks why is it that these two spheres appear to be separate in capitalism in the first place. In contrast to post-structuralists such as de Goede, who contends 'that

historically constructed discourses of the economy have made possible this separation between the domain of the economic and the domain of the political' (de Goede 2005: 2), the answer is sought through the philosophy of internal relations. This recognises that under capitalist property relations the direct extraction of surplus is accomplished through 'non-political' relations conducted through a contractual relation between those who maintain the power of appropriation as owners of the means of production over those who only have their labour to sell as expropriated producers (Burnham 1995; Rupert 1995: 21; Wood 1995: 31–36). On this basis, state and civil society, the political and the economic, are not understood as given or discursively constructed, separate entities, which are then externally related to each other, but as two expressions of the same configuration of capitalist social relations of production. Hence, an internal relationship is acknowledged that includes, for example, the way private property is legally ensured by the state, so that forms of power such as 'the law' may be seen as *both* an instrument through which definitions of property are imposed or maintained *and* an ideology in active relationship to social norms through which class relations are mediated. Productive relations are therefore in part meaningful in terms of their very definition in law in civil society, although 'the anatomy of this civil society ... has to be sought in political economy' (Marx 1987 [1859]: 262; Thompson 1975: 261; Wood 1995: 22).

It is this radicalised social ontology, as outlined by Mark Rupert (1995: 16), that is the basis for an historically specific understanding of the organisation of production. It is also closely related to Antonio Gramsci's own rejection of all kinds of economism, including the notion that economic crisis would result in an inevitable, automatic historical transformation of society (Gramsci 1971: 168). In more detail, Gramsci argued that economic crisis would not automatically give rise to political crisis, or that ideas can be read off as mere epiphenomena of material forces, because "'civil society" has become a very complex structure and one which is resistant to the catastrophic "incursions" of the immediate economic element (crises, depressions, etc.)' (1971: 235). Instead, the cultural sphere of socio-political class struggle through which hegemony is constructed tends to lag behind the thrust of economic events, slowing down the weight of economic crisis. 'It may be ruled out', Gramsci (1971: 184) stated, 'that immediate economic crises of themselves produce fundamental historical events; they can simply create the terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought.'¹ As Justin Rosenberg (1994: 53, original emphasis) has commented, 'the central thesis of historical materialism is not economic determinism; it is the centrality of those relations which organise material production to the wider institutional reproduction of social orders'.

Gramsci, historical materialism and the philosophy of praxis

Gramsci's outline of the philosophy of praxis highlights how, on the basis of such a philosophy of internal relations, historical materialism is in a position to overcome both one-sided idealist as well as materialist accounts of history.

Within a historical materialist frame of reference Gramsci speaks of a “‘maieutic” mentality” – bringing latent ideas into consciousness – that is embodied in institutions whose development and activity informs human society. In an article of his in July 1919 he states:

History is a continual process of becoming, and so it is essentially unforeseeable. But that does not mean that ‘everything’ is unpredictable in the process of historical becoming; that is that history is the domain of chance and irresponsible whim. History is, at one and the same time, freedom and necessity. (1994b: 111)

This was a continuation of his position outlined in an earlier article of June 1918, where he declares ‘history is an immanent necessity which finds its justification in the culture, the economic forms, and the ways of living of human society as determined by past developments’ (Gramsci 1975: 56). This emergent theory of history was continually developed throughout the *Prison Notebooks* to emphasise ways in which the social domain was structured by previous historical circumstances, residues or traces of the past that leave stratified deposits in popular philosophy (Gramsci 1971: 324, 409). Each individual is then ‘the synthesis not only of existing relations, but of the history of these relations. He [*sic*] is a précis of all the past’ (1971: 353; also see Bieler and Morton 2001).

What is significant in this unfolding theory of historical materialism – as a philosophy of praxis – is its explicit articulation against Benedetto Croce, the idealist philosopher who spearheaded liberalism in Italy. Gramsci argued that ‘one has to negate abstract or speculative “absolute philosophy” i.e. the philosophy born of the preceding philosophy’, by analysing the practical tendencies and the social class sentiments philosophers represent. This includes asking what is ‘social’ in a philosopher’s work, to address problems posed by historical development (Gramsci 1995: 387). Croce was emblematic here as he was regarded as ‘a sort of lay pope ... a very effective instrument of hegemony even if from time to time he comes into conflict with this or that government’ (Gramsci 1994a: 67). Croce was an intellectual ‘standard bearer’ or ‘high priest’ of the ideology of economic and political liberalism, presenting it as a ‘normal way of life’, so that his teachings produced, ‘the largest amount of “gastric juices” for the digestive process’ of liberal social order (Gramsci 1994a: 173, 181–182; Gramsci 1995: 396). In a prison letter dated 25 April 1932 addressed to his sister-in-law Tatiana Schucht, Gramsci continues:

To many people Croce’s thought does not present itself as a philosophical system ... Croce’s greatest quality has always been ... to spread without pedantry his conception of the world through a whole series of brief writings in which philosophy offers itself immediately and is absorbed as good sense or common sense ... so we have a great number of ‘Croceans’ who do not know that they are and perhaps do not even know that Croce exists.

(1994a: 167)

Crocean philosophy was thus representative of the worldwide movement of classical German philosophy, or Hegelianism, that upheld a solipsism of metaphysics within its concept of immanence and speculative history. The challenge, evoking Marx, was 'the problem of "putting man [*sic*] the right way up", of getting him to stand on his feet instead of his head' (Gramsci 1995: 356, 369–370). Most significantly, in this respect, the Crocean concept of ethico-political history was signalled as an arbitrary and mechanical hypostatisation of the moment of hegemony within the philosophy of praxis (Gramsci 1995: 329). Ethico-political history encapsulated the reduction of hegemony to the notion of spirit moving in history. For Gramsci, Croce left out the moment of struggle within his historical account of the rise of the *Risorgimento* and its subsequent impact on the cultural and social landscape of Italian politics. 'One must not think of "ideology" or doctrine as something artificial and mechanically superimposed ... but rather as something historically produced, as a ceaseless struggle' (Gramsci 1996: 56). Hence ethico-political history was 'an arbitrary and mechanical hypostasis of the moment of hegemony, of political leadership, of consent in the life and development of the activity of the state and civil society' (Gramsci 1995: 343–344). Yet, clearly, the philosophy of praxis does not exclude ethico-political history. Instead it asserts the moment of hegemony as essential to its conception of the state whilst attaching full weight to 'the economy of culture', meaning a political economy conception of historical development (Gramsci 1985: 183). Additionally, 'in history and the production of history the "individualised" presentation of states ... is merely metaphorical', due to vertical class divisions within, as well as horizontal stratifications between, states (Gramsci 1995: 344). The contrasting formulation of Gramsci's 'state-hegemony-moral consciousness conception' of history was therefore itself wedded to the association of socioeconomic content and political form (Gramsci 1995: 372–373, 357, 360). According to Gramsci, the conception of the state developed by dominant classes within capitalism itself derives from a separation of economics and politics. 'The state', as represented by the intellectual class supportive of dominant social forces, 'is conceived as a thing in itself, as a rational absolute'. Therefore, since the state is the concrete framework of a productive world and since intellectuals are the social element that identifies itself most clearly with governmental personnel, it is a characteristic of the function of the intellectuals to present the state as an absolute; thus the historical function of the intellectuals is conceived as absolute, and their existence is rationalised (Gramsci 1992: 229; on this theory of the state, see Bieler and Morton 2003). As a result of the separation of politics and economics, intellectuals thus come to represent the state as a rationalised, thing-like or reified entity. Hence 'what is "politics" for the productive class becomes "rationality" for the intellectual class ... What is strange is that some ... believe "rationality" to be superior to "politics", ideological abstraction superior to economic concreteness' (Gramsci 1992: 231).

In this reading of Gramsci, an understanding of the state as a social relation or ensemble of socially embedded institutions and class forces is present, which

offers an alternative focus to an attachment to contingency – or the randomisation of history – within post-structuralist approaches. Textuality is dissolved back into terms of cultural struggle or specific and conflictive social relationships within the structurally inscribed strategic selectivity of the state as a condition of emergence and existence (see Jessop 2008). This conception of the philosophy of praxis is also closely related to Gramsci's rejection of all kinds of 'economism', particularly those deemed to manifest within the writings of his contemporary Nikolai Bukharin. The latter's *Historical Materialism: A Popular Manual of Marxist Sociology* was regarded as the epitome of inferior Marxist arguments due to its reliance on a 'theological' or transcendental worldview (Bukharin 1965 [1925]; Gramsci 1995: 403–404). The 'Popular Manual' split Marxism in two: a doctrine of history and politics conceived as 'sociology' – constructed according to the methods of natural science – and 'philosophy proper' recognised as a variant of dialectical materialism. The problem, though, is the extraction of the dialectic – 'the marrow of historiography' – to a position separate from history and politics. Hence Gramsci's critique of materialism in the form of an 'Anti-Bukharin' to accompany his aforementioned contestation of liberal reformism in the form of an 'Anti-Croce'. Rather than developing a theory of integral history, which would go beyond both idealism and materialism within a new synthesis, Bukharin forwarded metaphysical extra-historical truths standing outside time and space that replaced the historical dialectic with a belief in extrinsic laws of causality. The variant of positivist science that resulted was erroneous because of assumptions about the predictability of historical events, the belief in mechanical causalism and the exteriorised understanding of theory and history (Gramsci 1971: 435, 437–438). Hence Gramsci's associated criticism of the notion that economic crisis would result in an inevitable historical transformation of society.

For the conception upon which the aversion is based can only be the iron conviction that there exist objective laws of historical development similar in kind to natural laws, together with a belief in a predetermined teleology like that of a religion: since favourable conditions are inevitably going to appear, and since these, in a rather mysterious way, will bring about paligenetic events, it is evident that any deliberate initiative tending to predispose and plan these conditions is not only useless but even harmful.

(Gramsci 1971: 168)

The unsettling point, then, is that in elaborating his philosophy of praxis Gramsci attempted to transcend the established poles of both traditional idealism and materialism. It was his aim to adumbrate, 'an integral and original philosophy which opens up a new phase of history and a new phase in the development of world thought ... [that] goes beyond both traditional idealism and traditional materialism ... while retaining their vital elements' (Gramsci 1971: 435). Not only was this philosophy of praxis aimed at absorbing the subjective

conception of reality (idealism) it was also aspiring to circumvent the vulgar 'economism' of Marxist orthodoxy (materialism). Hence the identification of a new moment of synthesis based on an historicisation of immanence linking classical German philosophy, French historical practice and British political economy (Gramsci 1971: 399–400). There is a return here, then, to the philosophical content of Marx's critique of political economy that set out to overcome the essential separation of philosophy, economics and politics. After all, in accord with Herbert Marcuse,

for Marx, essence and facticity, the situation of essential history and the situation of factual history, are no longer separate regions or levels independent of each other: the historical experience of man is *taken up into the definition of his essence*.

(1972 [1932]: 28, original emphasis)

This understanding of historical materialism as the philosophy of praxis can therefore be taken as a clear indication of what has been discerned by Peter Ives as the outflanking and 'double-pronged critique' of idealism and realism, which develops an epistemological position placing objectivity on a continuum with subjectivity.

For Gramsci, starting from materiality does not posit two realms – material versus non-material, material versus ideal, extra-linguistic versus linguistic – between which there could be 'correspondence'. This does not rule out making pragmatic distinctions between ideas and objects or between words and thoughts. It does mean, however, that the philosophy of praxis cannot rest on divisions between subjectivity and objectivity, reality and thought, nor can it exacerbate them, nor can it equate them with the linguistic and non-linguistic.

(Ives 2004: 7, 9, 122, 167)

It is this realisation that exposes, threatens and undoes the stable dismissal of historical materialism as 'economistic' as posited by some post-structuralists. The taboo term of economism charged against historical materialism works to ensure the dismissal of class identity as a feature in the management of capitalism. Once again invoking Ashley's critique, the result is that theorists 'uncritically take over as their own the advanced capitalist state's own public legitimations' to naturalise and universalise a given class order (Ashley 1983: 490).

The material structure of ideology

To highlight this philosophy of internal relations, Gramsci (1971: 365) also directly drew attention to the practices and designations that are linked to any wider class 'realisation of a hegemonic apparatus' within the state in four main

ways. First, he referred to the overarching importance of the 'material structure of ideology', which included issues such as architecture alongside street layouts (as well as street names), and the social function performed by libraries, schools, publishing houses, newspapers and journals, down to the local parish newsletter that could be analysed on a *national scale*, in relation to the built environment of a single city, or in producing a series of studies on a number of cities. Overall awareness of these aspects of social power 'would get people into the habit of a more cautious and precise calculation of the forces acting in society' (Gramsci 1995: 155–156; see Bieler and Morton 2008). This is a point that may strike one whether standing on Avenue de la Grande Armée, one of Haussmann's twelve grand avenues radiating from the Arc de Triomphe, or facing El Monumento de la Revolución in México City located on the Plaza de la República, or situated opposite the Republic Monument in Taksim Square in İstanbul and its sculpture to the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, or located on the more humble but still symbolic Viale Gramsci in Rome.² It is such a focus on the internal relation of the material structure of ideas that has been explored in the work of David Harvey, notably tracing transformations in the built environment of modernist architecture in the early twentieth century – embodied in the work of Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe or Frank Lloyd Wright – that unfolded 'less as a controlling force of ideas over production than as a theoretical framework and justification for what practically-minded engineers, politicians, builders, and developers were in many cases engaged upon out of sheer social, economic and political necessity' (Harvey 1989: 69). Likewise, within the postmodernism of the late twentieth century city, Harvey internally associates speculative land, property development and redevelopment in the built environment, to processes of capital accumulation, market and land-rent allocation, and money capital. Linking with this chapter's first part, 'the fetishism (direct concern with surface appearances that conceal underlying meanings) is obvious', according to Harvey (1989: 77–78), 'but it is here deployed deliberately to conceal, through the realms of culture and taste, the real base of economic distinctions', which are entailed in establishing enclosed and protected housing and leisure spaces as an expression of class power. Architecture, then, amidst a diverse array of other social condensations (such as cadastral mapping defining property rights over land, or the drawing of territorial boundaries for administration, social control and communication routes) provides an opportunity to question the role played by discursive productive meanings embedded within the economy through analysis of the internal relations within the 'material structure of ideology' (also see Scott 1998).

Second, these social condensations of hegemony are the means by which a "diffused" and capillary form of indirect pressure' becomes mediated through various organisations – or 'capillary intellectual meatuses' – to exercise hegemonic class relations (Gramsci 1971: 110; Gramsci 1985: 194). Gramsci is thus a paramount theorist of capillary power due to his attentiveness to the social class meatuses of 'capillary sources of capitalist profit' (Gramsci 1977: 82; Gramsci 1992: 230–231).³ Hegemony within the realm of civil society is grasped when

the citizenry come to believe that authority over their lives emanates from the self. Hegemony is therefore articulated through capillary power – akin to ‘an incorporeal government’ – when it is transmitted organically through various ‘social infusoria’ such as schools, street layout and names, architecture, the family, workplace or church (Gramsci 1977: 143–144). Hence ‘within the husk of political society a complex and well-articulated civil society’, is evident, ‘*in which the individual can govern himself* without his self-government thereby entering into conflict with political society – but rather becoming its normal continuation, its organic complement’ (Gramsci 1971: 268, emphasis added). It was this separation, outlined earlier, that Marx saw as characteristic of the structuring of societies leading to the naturalisation of the distinctive forms of modernity. Embedded within this process of naturalisation is therefore the struggle over hegemony. Hence, for historical materialism ‘ideologies are anything but arbitrary; they are real historical facts which must be combated and their nature as instruments of domination exposed ... precisely for reasons of political struggle’ (Gramsci 1995: 395).

Third, according to Gramsci, ‘ideology’ was neither artificial nor something mechanically superimposed. Rather, ideologies were viewed as historically produced through ceaseless struggle, taking on substance through practical activity bound up with systems of meaning embedded in the economy (Gramsci 1996: 56). ‘Ideas are realised when they find their justification – and the means to assert themselves – in economic reality’ (Gramsci 1994: 56). Importantly, not all ideas are relevant. ‘Ideas only become effective if they do, in the end, connect with a particular constellation of social forces. In that sense, ideological struggle is a part of the general social struggle for mastery and leadership – in short for hegemony’ (Hall 1986: 42). Consequently, ideas represent an independent force when maintained in dialectical connectivity, or internally related, with the social relations of production. Only those ideas can be regarded as ‘organic’ that ‘organise human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.’ (Gramsci 1971: 377). Related to this, is the twofold distinction drawn between ‘historically organic ideologies’ and those based on extemporary polemics that are ‘arbitrary, rationalistic, or “willed”’. Hence highlighting ‘real action on the one hand ... and on the other hand the gladiatorial futility which is self-declared action but modifies only the word, not things, the external gesture’ (Gramsci 1971: 307, 376–377). For Gramsci, ‘it is on the level of ideologies that men become conscious of conflicts in the world of the economy’ (Gramsci 1971: 162).

Fourth, it is here, in the struggle over hegemony between different class fractions, that Gramsci attributed an important role to intellectuals. Thus, ‘Gramsci’s investigation of the role of the intellectuals in modern society is part of his attempt to understand what actually links the world of production and civil or private society with the political realm’ (Vacca 1982: 37). Gramsci understood intellectuals as exercising an ideological social function in a broad sense across the social, political, economic and cultural fields in ways related to the class structuring of societies. Hence, according to Gramsci,

every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.

(1971: 5)

Such intellectuals have the function of organising the hegemony of social class forces, and thus capillary power, beyond the coercive apparatus of the state whether as direct members of an intelligentsia, as industrial technicians, as intellectuals of statecraft, as specialists in political economy (acting as organisers of 'the "confidence" of investors'), as journalists or as architects (Gramsci 1971: 5, 12; Gramsci 1995: 61–70; Gramsci 1996: 200–201).⁴ For Gramsci, organic intellectuals are engaged in active participation in everyday life, acting as agents or constructors, organisers and 'permanent persuaders' in forming social class hegemony, or by performing a valuable supporting role to subaltern groups engaged in promoting social change, that is then "mediated" by the whole fabric of society' (Gramsci 1971: 12, 52–55). Thus, organic intellectuals do not simply produce ideas, they also concretise and articulate strategies in complex and often contradictory ways, which is possible because of their proximity to the most powerful forces in society. It is through this process that the material structure of ideas plays a decisive role in shaping the terrain of class (-relevant) struggle.

What this amounts to is a conception of the 'necessary reciprocity' between ideas and material social conditions, in sustaining and possibly transforming state–civil society relations (Gramsci 1971: 12, 366). It is a focus that links the social function of intellectuals to the world of production within capitalist society, without succumbing to the taboo of 'economism', whilst still offering the basis for a materialist and social class analysis of intellectuals. Cultural aspects, from literature to architecture, clearly play a significant role within this conception of organic intellectuals where each activity is understood as a material social product having a social function endowed with political significance. The task therefore becomes one of revealing the social functions of organic intellectuals as representative of class fractions within the complex web of relations between rulers and ruled (Morton 2003: 29–33).

Conclusion

In his original survey of modes of 'economism' Richard Ashley argued that those critics relying on the use of such a taboo term nevertheless fail to engage with 'the capitalist state's material problematic' and the effects of state legitimations (Ashley 1983: 488–489). Further, in times of world crisis (past or present):

Today's statesmen can smile quaintly at Marxist exposés of the state's structural disposition to safeguard the capitalist accumulation process, for

statesmen proudly pronounce this disposition on their own. The state's performance as rational economic dysfunction manager is perhaps its premier justification.

(1983: 488)

Yet post-structuralist engagements in IPE with the 'taboo' of historical materialism are strangely silent in acknowledging the forms of class identity, or organic intellectuality, so intrinsic to capitalist accumulation on a global scale unless dismissing such a focus on capitalism as economistic. Drawing in spirit from Ashley, although he had a different target in mind, it can be said that contemporary post-structuralists in IPE end up scoffing at historical materialism's

warnings and sense limits, misstates its interests, deadens its ironies, empties its concepts, caricatures its rich insights, reduces practice to an endless serial performance of constrained economic choices on the part of one-dimensional characters, and casts the whole of it up before a flat historical backdrop devoid of perspective, contradiction and life.

(Ashley 1984: 281)

In contrast, we have demonstrated that the philosophy of internal relations that underpins historical materialism helps to avoid the false presupposition that there are distinct political and economic spheres. Instead of hegemony becoming a constant interplay between autonomous and indeterminate discourses, within the randomisation of history, it is instead linked to social interests and class identities that are internalised within the political forms of capitalist society. Post-structuralism fails to grasp the conditions of inequality and exploitation that confront social forces. The point that peoples' identities are constituted within the context of existing social relations, which are to some extent inherited from and shaped by historical relations of force, is largely ignored. Questions attempting to ascertain what aspects of social experience *make possible* the articulation of certain discourses, within the struggle over hegemony, are thus suppressed. Discourse does not simply act upon people; rather, people act through discourse, so the world cannot be reduced to discourse alone. As Stuart Hall (1997: 31) puts it, 'everything is within the discursive, but nothing is only discourse or only discursive'.

Notes

- 1 Also witness Gramsci stating that 'it is illusory to think that a well propagated "clear idea" enters diverse consciousness with the same "organising" effects of widespread clarity. It is an "enlightenment" error' (see Gramsci 1992: 128; Gramsci 1985: 417).
- 2 The political importance of street-naming practices outlined by Gramsci took an ironic turn in Rome in 2002 when a local council proposed the renaming of *Viale Gramsci* to *Viale Chiorboli*, in honour of Aldo Chiorboli who tried to rescue a Fascist fighter pilot from his blazing plane only to end up also dying in the process. The plan was thereby to displace *Viale Gramsci* to a more peripheral secondary location within the city, an

act regional councillor Carl Lucherini described as an attempt to cancel history through revisionism, see *Il Messaggero* (Rome), 'Gramsci "sfrattato" va in periferia: arriva il nuovo "eroe"', 28 September 2002: 39.

- 3 Whilst space restrictions limit full elaboration, this conception differs in marked ways from the focus on discursive formations and architecture in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault 1972), essentially because of the indeterminate determinism within Foucault's notion of capillary power (see Wight 1999: 121). This results in a focus on architecture as 'complex structures of discourse-practice in which objects, entities and activities are defined and constructed within the domain of a discursive formation' (Hirst 2005: 156).
- 4 Intellectuals of statecraft refers to 'a whole community of state bureaucrats, leaders, foreign policy experts and advisors throughout the world who comment upon, influence and conduct the activities of statecraft' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 193).

15 Regarding the pain of Susan Sontag

Stephen Chan

Introduction

Susan Sontag is not a thinker often associated with International Relations. She is regarded as a stylist, i.e. she styled the thought of others to impress literary and artistic people. It was the Nobel Prize for Literature that she sought to win, not the Nobel Peace Prize. If anything, she should be an icon in the field of Cultural Studies – not even English Literature, as her criticism was never deemed rigorously systematic, even if insightful and provocative. She achieved her ambition of being a celebrity intellectual. Her long relationship with Annie Liebovitz ensured that the myth of her incredible beauty, a white American version of Indira Ghandi, was sustained – although Liebovitz could not refrain from publishing photos of Sontag even as she lay dead on her hospital gurney.¹ In the celebrity stakes there is no respite. But Sontag's heroic and repeated battles against cancer helped her understand pain, and some of that inflects the writing at the end of her life. These writings have a character that is international and political. By that I mean political as in 'personal politics'. What is one's personal moral behaviour in the face of the pain of others in the world's blood-drenched conflicts? I take that as a key contemporary question. There is a certain spectacle whereby scholars of IR pronounce on the normative, ethical and emancipatory – while enacting the lives of learned and righteous voyeurs. The starting point of this chapter is that, for Sontag, this was something she refused.

Sontag had a long association with radical politics, and she was accomplished at brave symbolic gestures. Her early visits to Hanoi and Havana, at a time when this was a passport to excoriation in the United States, were deliberate exercises in defiance and solidarity, and led to spectacular writing. Her long report from Cuba, celebrating the country's artistic vibrancy and creativity (1969c), ranks alongside her breakthrough comments on what it means to be 'camp' (1967a) – so that, in the 1960s, she made her mark both as a radical cultural commentator and as an international activist and celebrant of international defiance. This was not without self-service. In several rather bitchy and sarcastic recollections of Sontag, there was always an over-current of 'what is there in this for me?', and this kind of controversy was good image-making (Field 2005).

However, there was considerable substance to her work. Although she later became a highly regarded novelist as well, it was her literary and cinematic criticism that brought her to attention. All the authors and directors in which she showed interest were radical and groundbreaking. When she branched out to write of politically theoretical figures, such as Georg Lukacs, it was his literary criticism that she showcased. It was as if she needed to be seen writing of all the radical greats. But there were two figures for whom she seemed to feel an especial early affinity, the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and the ultimate solidarist, Simone Weil – who allowed herself to die of starvation because, during World War Two, others were dying of starvation and she could not bring herself, morally, to live better than they and avoid the death they could not.

Her attitude to Levi-Strauss is complex but largely ignorant. She read *Tristes Tropiques* (Levi-Strauss 1955),² which took the world by storm on its release, as a memoir of heroic failure and redemption on the part of the anthropologist hero – a redemption accomplished by a melancholia, a ‘heroic, diligent, and a complex modern pessimism’, because of his failure to reconcile the urban intellectual milieu with the crystalline harmony of ‘primitive’ society. There is a lot of showing off in this early essay by Sontag (Sontag 1967c: 81). She can’t help but put Parisian intellectual and artistic life into categories. Opposed therefore to Sartre and Genet were the filmmaker, Alain Resnais, and Claude Levi-Strauss. This was a dazzling but wholly unsustainable comparison. She recognises that Levi-Strauss is talking about structure, but fails to appreciate the historical implications of his structuralism, and she concludes by noting that Levi-Strauss’s inaugural lecture at the College de France was a post-Marxist peroration about freedom from progress. Yet the later-published volume of his College de France lecture series (Levi-Strauss 1984) indicates a sober rendition of his anthropological findings³ and, even in his inaugural lecture, he was clearly talking about the mission of the social anthropologist rather than the future hope of humanity.

What Sontag took from Levi-Strauss was her own reading into him of heroic pessimism. This would prove an important attribute in her later view of international action. What she took from Simone Weil was a sense of ‘acute personal and intellectual extremity’ (Sontag 1967b: 49). It is perhaps not a random ordering of the contents of Sontag’s famous volume, *Against Interpretation* (1967a), that the essay on Weil follows one (on Cesare Pavese) entitled, ‘The artist as exemplary sufferer’. There is, Sontag finds in Pavese’s work, a spiritual and Christian dimension to suffering, and this she certainly was able to attribute to Weil. Again, Sontag feels a need to liken the life of Weil to the movements towards extremity in art. The appreciation of Weil, even in the fullness of her religiosity (to the point of bigotry), her genuine spirituality and the magnitude of her sacrifice, was not attempted by Sontag in this three-page essay – although it certainly was in David McLellan’s (1990) magisterial book which, Sontag might have noted with pleasure, was entitled *Utopian Pessimist*. What is important for Sontag is to establish a marker for herself, a model that in this case she could not follow, but who would serve as an impossible standard by which Sontag would later berate her own critics or those who had, in her standards of extremity, fallen short.

The religious dimension of Weil, the spiritual markers laid down by Levi-Strauss and the seemingly spiritual yearning of extreme art – the pared down bleakness of Resnais's films, for instance, until nothing was left except a recourse to a god who, pessimistically, might not be there – all established for Sontag a sense of universe beyond, a sense of language unspoken and unspeakable but able to be approximated, but the approximate speech of humans would not be answered by Who Could Speak On High. It is in this context that in her second collection of essays, *Styles of Radical Will* (1969), Sontag began to drop references to Hegel.

At a stroke she obliterates everything that International Relations finds valuable in Hegel. She does not talk about communitarianism, global civil society or settled norms (Frost 1986; Hardimon 1994; Wood 1990).⁴ She does not counterpose Kant to Hegel in any kind of cosmopolitan/communitarian debate. She counterposes Hegel to *The Story of O* (the pornographic novel on which, and other pornographic writings, Sontag herself wrote a thirty-eight page essay). Hegel was greater than the masochistic and submissive *O* because, although her sexual submission may have satisfied a primitive spiritual impulse, Hegel transformed religious language and the religious impulse into history's last attempt to make philosophy grandly passionate to the point of actual spirituality.

Hegel made perhaps the grandest attempt to create a post-religious vocabulary, out of philosophy, that would command the treasures of passion and credibility and emotive appropriateness that were gathered into religious vocabulary. But his most interesting followers steadily undermined the abstract meta-religious language in which he had bequeathed his thought, and concentrated instead on the specific social and practical applications of his revolutionary form of process-thinking, historicism. Hegel's failure lies like a gigantic disturbing hulk across the intellectual landscape. And no one has been big enough, pompous enough, or energetic enough since Hegel to attempt the task again.

(Sontag 1969a: 69)

Sontag may well have been attempting such pomposity. Besides, Hegel left a hugely successful legacy in exactly those debates on how to enact his thought socially and practically. And, even without grandeur, there were writers after Hegel who commanded spiritual language with a luminosity he never achieved – Levinas for instance. But Sontag couldn't leave her fixation with Hegel alone. Even on her (in)famous trip to Hanoi a year later, in 1968, she had to credit Hegel with her capacity to absorb what she saw in the country wracked by war with her own nation. 'As Hegel said, the problem of history is the problem of consciousness' (Sontag 1969b: 270). This was an entirely gratuitous piece of name-dropping, something with which to embellish the emergence from confusion of her own appreciation of the spectacle of destruction and resistance before her. But it set the scene for the play in which Sontag acted for most of her life – confronting the world by invoking thought and words. If resistance is achieved

by both guns and words, then Sontag was the warrior of words – the soldier in the most pompous, brightest red and gold uniform, marching straight ahead. The point is that she marched straight ahead and did not shrink back. In the end, even that red-uniformed warrior was doing her work in a dank room that offered shelter from Serb snipers and artillery. On an almost dark, candle-lit stage she entered the apotheosis of her youthful dreams: no grandeur in the siege of Sarajevo, but hers was a grand gesture nevertheless – especially when one compares what she did to the efforts of other ‘committed’ intellectuals.

International Relations knows of the terrors and constructions of this war from David Campbell (1998) but apart from him and Sontag, there were three other acts of commentary and efforts towards understanding that I would like to indicate. The first is the immensely knowing and acutely observed ‘graphic novel’ by Joe Sacco (2004). This cartoonist/writer catches perfectly the expressions, duplicities and raw competitive heroisms of dirty men who defended Sarajevo. It is the most unromantic of comic books. This was not a nice war and, in Sacco’s account, unconventional but brutal commanders – who had themselves been criminals – led much of the defence before the embarrassment of having such men in the limelight drove the Bosnian government to kill them. It was not just Bosnians against Serbs, but often Bosnians against Bosnians. The second is the compelling, but largely unknown *Letters to the Celestial Serbs* (Berić 2002), written by a Bosnian Serb who was appalled by the war and what his ‘fellow’ Serbs were doing. His accounts of the personnel involved in the battles are sparse and unsentimental. He has a different account of the criminals who fought – on both sides. But, as a Serb he was against the objectives of the Serbs who laid waste so much of Sarajevo in their siege. It was not just Serbs against Bosnians, but some Serbs took the side of their fellow Bosnians. The third is the impassioned set of essays by the French writer, Alain Finkielkraut (1997). He was not alone among his French intellectual colleagues but, while many impersonated passion, he sustained it at least in the fiery essays of his book. This is a European very angry with Europe. It was not just Serbs who defied the norms of Europe, but Europe who had set the norms and looked away.

As for the impersonations, I would like here to be unforgiving – as Sontag would have been. When Bernard Henri Levy flew in for one of his visits of solidarity, fleeting but photographed, and feigned the need for taking cover, as if bullets had been aimed at him – while just out of camera-shot UN troops were casually smoking cigarettes – this was a traducing of solidarity. The pretence of danger when others suffer real danger is obnoxious. Sontag was indeed excoriating of Levy’s Parisian colleague, Andre Glucksman, whose solidarity visits would last a mere few hours, allowing him to mutter about the necessity of winning the television war, before he returned to the safety of the Seine. He was right, said Sontag (2002a: 319), but what about those who suffered, died and bled real unfilmed blood?

It was in the midst of blood that the highly strung, self-obsessed Sontag arrived one day to live within the siege and to direct Samuel Beckett’s absurdist play, *Waiting for Godot*. Her actors nicknamed the production *Waiting for*

Clinton – who also never came. She had come to this via a personal history of much painful illness,⁵ and further meditations on the melancholy of great writers, and the *slowness* of waiting for things to bear fruit.⁶ This had seemed to mark the intersection of her life between young radical, striving for effect, and the mature but even more stringent woman who landed in the latest medieval siege of modern Europe.

As a siege it was terrible. Sarajevo is surrounded by mountains. Whoever controlled the mountains could shell the city and, more chillingly, set up sniper nests from where the Serbian marksmen would quite selectively shoot their victims. On what arbitrary whims they decided to shoot some people, while letting others live, is the stuff of the most morbid speculation. Perhaps International Relations should enter such morbid speculation. Is death earned because of the wrong colour of trouser or skirt? Is a child shot because she wears pig-tails? Does a sniper allow children to play football on waste ground because he likes football, but shoot them on their way to school? The battle for Sarajevo was for control of the mountains. Key hills and peaks changed hands as counter-assault followed assault, and counter-counter-assaults ensued. Quite frankly, it was the militarised criminal gangs who did most in the early days to keep the Serbs off their stride – while earning themselves tidy revenues among their own people. But the city became deprived of all normal amenities, especially electricity. Sontag rehearsed and performed *Waiting for Godot* by candlelight, while her actors quarrelled over whether to use a Serbian translation or a badly prepared, linguistically almost identical ‘Bosnian’ translation of the play, and while they were late to rehearsal because they were dodging snipers and having to take long ways round – and even Sontag had to do this – and no one could take hot baths or sit in the famous open squares for a drink and debate on theatre. The town was in ruins as artillery shells took their toll on the once-beautiful city. Communication with the outside world was via an armoured convoy’s ‘hell’s run’ to the airport – whenever Bosnian government or Bosnian criminal forces, or UN peacekeepers, had forced its usually temporary opening. There was the absurdist but, in itself, heroic sight of Nigerian peacekeepers attempting to keep warm amidst the winter snows that coated the devastation that had once been a European City of Culture.

Sontag describes all this with equanimity. She rightfully does not over-write her own deprivations and frustrations. Even Annie Leibovitz gave up her celebrities to join her for a short time. And audiences braved the hazards to attend the play. They recognised Sontag could not pick up a gun and fight. She would have been worse than useless. What they recognised was that *she* recognised that, in a siege when you are deprived of light and food and hope, the provision of *thought*, the *enactment* of thought is itself a relief. The most telling commentary on what she had been through comes in a separate essay from the one in which she described Sarajevo. She has just landed back in Zagreb, two hours’ flight away in neighbouring Croatia – a country itself marked by the war, although the Serbian advance had stopped at Zagreb’s outlying feeder-towns. Even so, Serbian commanders had boasted of being able to take Zagreb, but their political

overlords decided that Bosnia was the greater prize. In this project, the Croatian president colluded, either because he had expansionist nationalist plans of his own, or perhaps this was the price for saving Zagreb. The true history of all of this has yet to be written dispassionately. But Sontag, back in Zagreb, felt amazed and dazed by streets with working traffic lights, and even more so by cars that stopped for them; by being able to take a hot bath, flush a toilet, lie on clean linen (Sontag 2002c: 323) – all the paraphernalia of life that most of the world in fact does not have; but it is when you have it, and it is taken away from you, that you feel a deprivation greater than mere aspiration. Perhaps those who are spoilt suffer most. Whatever the case, Sontag was grateful. She also reflected on the nature of being spoilt, i.e. of solidarity from positions of comfort.

The morosely depoliticized intellectuals of today, with their cynicism always at the ready, their addiction to entertainment, their reluctance to inconvenience themselves for any cause, their devotion to personal safety, seem ... deplorable. (I can't count how many times I've been asked, each time I return to New York from Sarajevo, how I can go to a place that's so dangerous.) By and large, that handful of intellectuals who consider themselves people of conscience can be mobilized now solely for limited actions – against, say, racism or censorship – within their own countries. Only domestic political commitments seem plausible now. Among once internationally minded intellectuals, nationalist complacencies have renewed prestige ... There has been an implacable decay of the very notion of international solidarity.

(2002c: 328)

The criticism Sontag makes might be applied also to academics in International Relations who emancipate the world from the scholarship of their arm-chairs. As I wrote at the beginning of this chapter, there is a tendency to be learned and righteous voyeurs. The righteousness comes from expounding upon what is normative and how it might rightly be defined amidst a choice of appropriate discourses. The voyeurism comes from looking at the depredations in international politics and not lifting a finger to help, or risking a hair in exposure to danger, but using them as case examples in one's writing. It is in this light, and against the backdrop of Sontag's own exposure in Sarajevo that I want to contemplate her last little book, before cancer took her, entitled *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003). The cover carries a sketch by Goya. An executed person is hanging from the remains of a tree. Seated comfortably before him is a fusilier. He is silently, somewhat amusedly and distractedly contemplating the dead body as it hangs suspended. He seems to be examining the lifeless face that was clearly anguished as death choked out its life. There is no guilt or horror on the fusilier's face. To him it is another everyday corpse within the run-of-the-mill disasters of war. It is the perfect cover for Sontag's book.

The book effectively follows upon her earlier work *On Photography* (1979). It is a brief meditation on the portrayal of disaster, starting indeed with Goya,

but progressing through war photography (from the American civil war onwards), the images of the concentration camps, the work of Cartier-Bresson and depictions of slaughter in Rwanda and of course Bosnia. It is not just a treatment of how the images *depict* disaster, but the manner in which the viewer is able to *respond*. The viewer is able to be like the fusilier in Goya's sketch – or not. Or, more perniciously, as Sontag saw from her opening rendition of Virginia Woolf's least popular work, *Three Guineas* (1998), images of war establish consensus. We are, whether male and a warrior in war, or female and maternally revulsed by war, united in a conventional public distaste for the horrors of war. The pictures establish a consensus of public revulsion. This is awful. Something must be done. And then, the rhetoric of that consensus having been expressed, nothing is done. This is, to an extent, true of any narrative – literary as well as visual – because, even with the best of imaginations, few can imagine what war is actually *like*, what it *is*. Sontag concludes her book with a discussion of a concocted 'photograph' by Jeff Wall. The horrors are so extreme, and its survivors so casual, even though with their injuries they should be dead, it is as if Wall thought that ordinary war photographs could never shock enough. Sontag is impressed by it, but asks the simple question of what questions the dead ask of the living. The answer is that they ask us nothing.

What would they have to say to us? 'We' – this 'we' is everyone who has never experienced anything like what they went through – don't understand. We don't get it. We truly can't imagine what it was like. We can't imagine how dreadful, how terrifying war is; and how normal it becomes. Can't understand, can't imagine. That's what every soldier, and every journalist and aid worker and independent observer who has put in time under fire, and had the luck to elude the death that struck down others nearby, stubbornly feels. And they are right.

(Sontag 2003: 113)

Sontag, her time in Sarajevo under her belt, might have counted herself among those who *can* imagine. But, as she recounts in her own memoir of living and working in Sarajevo, it all does become 'normal'. It is the dislocation of coming back, the sudden arrival in the Zagrebs of our lives, that shakes us out of the atrocity of this normality. So that what she wants to say is not just that we cannot imagine, but we cannot imagine until we escape and arrive again at a place where imagination is possible. Those who have never escaped can never imagine the lives, and deaths, of those for whom escape was impossible. So that the preconditions for *effective* normative thought and action is a normative *imagination* that is made possible by immersion in the totally abnormative and horrible.

Now this is a pretty tall order for International Relations. And it had better not give rise to a new variant of disaster tourism – conflict tourism – been there, done that, can write about it now. What Sontag means is the *lived* reality of enduring pain and the pain of others. What then the price of a photo, an image? For that matter, what price a book, a piece of scholarship? Sontag writes that a

photograph, of itself, cannot repair ignorance. Examining the image of an atrocity will not lead to an understanding of who ordered it, for what reasons, on behalf of what cause, with what reservations or blood-lust in mind and with what foreign policy to discharge. The image simply makes us feel that what we see is horrible and should not have happened. And even moral indignation, which we feel as part of the consensus of revulsion, does not dictate a course of action – and mostly it doesn't. We leave the art gallery, have a drink and get on with life.

For a lover of photography, alongside her love of literature and cinema, this was a candid admission by Sontag at the end of her life. But she did leave us with a highly stringent caution.

A good rule before one goes marching or signing anything: Whatever your tug of sympathy, you have no right to a public opinion unless you've been there, experienced first hand and on the ground and for some considerable time the country, war, injustice, whatever, you are talking about. In the absence of such firsthand knowledge and experience: silence.

(Sontag 2002b: 298)

At a stroke Sontag destroys International Relations. We are all imposters working from images of things we cannot imagine. It is as if, in Sontag's case, all her early writing was premonition for these last statements. The terrifying stringency of Simone Veil – if others can't eat, I won't eat – was replicated in a lower register by Sontag's injunction that only those who have known pain themselves can regard the pain of others with sufficient understanding to know a true compassion, and only that true compassion is the justification for speech and action against the pain of others. The impossibility of speech for so many establishes a melancholia, a pessimism – even for a Sontag who, by her own rule, cannot speak of anything except Sarajevo.

Perhaps Sontag was a little disingenuous in how she spoke of Hegel. It was not just Hegel's failure that his sort of language did not capture our modern world. It was our own failure not to have a higher imagination in which we believed sufficiently to establish awe when we could imagine the pain of our terrestrial world no further. Sontag herself, for all her early affection for Veil and Hegel, never took any religious convictions or mysticisms of her own further forward. She never spoke to God. Her son wrote that she was terrified of death.⁷ Annie Liebovitz was at her side when she died and they said they loved each other. It was finally terrifyingly human. Perhaps it is only at the moments of our own deaths that we can imagine the deaths of others. Until then, Susan Sontag, a literateur, sometimes a pompous poseur, sometimes a brilliant critic, sometimes a person of great solidarity, always a person of stringent standards, has set a question that should fill International Relations with melancholia and pessimism.

Who are we who write about the world in conflict? How dare we?

It is 2008 as I write this. David Davies set about the foundations of the discipline in 1918. Ninety years have passed, one long lifetime. Perhaps we are mature enough to set about trying to answer Sontag's question?

Notes

- 1 The gurney shots, and some others, were reproduced in Annie Liebovitz (2006). The best shot of Sontag as a young woman was by Henri-Cartier Bresson, but the one by Peter Hujar is the pin-up wallpaper on innumerable computers.
- 2 This appeared in France in 1955. The English edition is Claude Levi-Strauss (1973).
- 3 Claude Levi-Strauss (1984).
- 4 The champion of which, in International Relations, is Frost (1986). But this is the same Hegel expounded in almost all contemporary political philosophy. See Hardimon (1994); Allen W. Wood (1990). Sontag will have none of this.
- 5 This was marked by her books: *Illness as Metaphor* (1978); and the only one step removed meditation, *AIDS and its Metaphors* (1989) – one step removed because the suffering, anxiety and senses of decay, bodily rebellion against the will, and death are there as in cases of cancer.
- 6 Susan Sontag (2002d) (this was originally published in 1980, as her third book of collected essays).
- 7 David Rieff (2005).

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