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\*\*\* A2: Representations/Language Critiques

A2: Reps/Language—Policymaking Should Precede Discourse

Focusing on discourse trades off with material change—the consequences of our plan are more important than our rhetorical choices.

Ward Churchill, Professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Colorado, 1996 (“Semantic Masturbation on the Left: A Barrier to Unity and Action,” *From A Native Son: Selected Essays in Indigenism*, 1985-1995, Published by South End Press, ISBN 0896085538, p. 460)

There can be little doubt that matters of linguistic appropriateness and precision are of serious and legitimate concern. By the same token, however, it must be conceded that such preoccupations arrive at a point of diminishing return. After that, they degenerate rapidly into liabilities rather than benefits to comprehension. By now, it should be evident that much of what is mentioned in this article falls under the latter category; it is, by and large, inept, esoteric, and semantically silly, bearing no more relevance in the real world than the question of how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. Ultimately, it is a means to stultify and divide people rather than stimulate and unite them. Nonetheless, such “issues” of word choice have come to dominate dialogue in a significant and apparently growing segment of the Left. Speakers, writers, and organizers of all persuasions are drawn, with increasing vociferousness and persistence, into heated confrontations, not about what they’ve said, but about how they’ve said it. Decisions on whether to enter into alliances, or even to work with other parties, seem more and more contingent not upon the prospect of a common agenda, but upon mutual adherence to certain elements of a prescribed vernacular. Mounting quantities of progressive time, energy, and attention are squandered in perversions of Mao’s principle of criticism/self-criticism – now variously called “process,” “line sharpening,” or even “struggle” – in which there occurs a virtually endless stream of talk about how to talk about “the issues.” All of this happens at the direct expense of actually understanding the issues themselves, much less ***doing*** something about them. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the dynamic at hand adds up to a pronounced avoidance syndrome, a masturbatory ritual through which an opposition nearly paralyzed by its own deeply felt sense of impotence pretends to be engaged in something “meaningful.” In the end, it reduces to a tragic delusion at best, cynical game playing or intentional disruption at worst. With this said, it is only fair to observe that it’s high time to get ***off*** this nonsense, and on with the real work of effecting positive social change.

A2: Reps/Language—Policymaking Should Precede Discourse

Policy analysis should precede discourse—it’s the most effective way to challenge power.

Jill Taft-Kaufman, Professor in the Department of Speech Communication And Dramatic Arts at Central Michigan University, 1995 (“Other ways: Postmodernism and performance praxis,” *The Southern Communication Journal*, Volume 60, Issue 3, Spring, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via ProQuest Research Library)

If the lack of consistency between postmodernism's self-styled allegiance to the oppositional and its collaboration with the existing state of academic practice were its only shortcoming, it should be enough to prevent us from unquestioningly embracing it as a theory. More disquieting still, however, is its postulation of the way the world around us works. Theory that presumes to talk about culture must stand the test of reality. Or, as Andrew King states, "culture is where we live and are sustained. Any doctrine that strikes at its root ought to be carefully scrutinized" (personal communication, February 11, 1994). If one subjects the premise of postmodernism to scrutiny, the consequences are both untenable and disturbing. In its elevation of language to the primary analysis of social life and its relegation of the de-centered subject to a set of language positions, postmodernism ignores the way real people make their way in the world. While the notion of decentering does much to remedy the idea of an essential, unchanging self, it also presents problems. According to Clarke (1991): Having established the material quality of ideology, everything else we had hitherto thought of as material has disappeared. There is nothing outside of ideology (or discourse). Where Althusser was concerned with ideology as the imaginary relations of subjects to the real relations of their existence, the connective quality of this view of ideology has been dissolved because it lays claim to an outside, a real, an extra-discursive for which there exists no epistemological warrant without lapsing back into the bad old ways of empiricism or metaphysics. (pp. 25-26) Clarke explains how the same disconnection between the discursive and the extra-discursive has been performed in semiological analysis: Where it used to contain a relation between the signifier (the representation) and the signified (the referent), antiempiricism has taken the formal arbitrariness of the connection between the signifier and signified and replaced it with the abolition of the signified (there can be no real objects out there, because there is no out there for real objects to be). (p. 26) To the postmodernist, then, real objects have vanished. So, too, have real people. Smith (1988) suggests that postmodernism has canonized doubt about the availability of the referent to the point that "the real often disappears from consideration" (p. 159). Real individuals become abstractions. Subject positions rather than subjects are the focus. The emphasis on subject positions or construction of the discursive self engenders an accompanying critical sense of irony which recognizes that "all conceptualizations are limited" (Fischer, 1986, p. 224). This postmodern position evokes what Connor (1989) calls "an absolute weightlessness in which anything is imaginatively possible because nothing really matters" (p. 227). Clarke (1991) dubs it a "playfulness that produces emotional and/or political disinvestment: a refusal to be engaged" (p. 103). The luxury of being able to muse about what constitutes the self is a posture in keeping with a critical venue that divorces language from material objects and bodily subjects. The postmodern passwords of "polyvocality," "Otherness," and "difference," unsupported by substantial analysis of the concrete contexts of subjects, creates a solipsistic quagmire. The political sympathies of the new cultural critics, with their ostensible concern for the lack of power experienced by marginalized people, aligns them with the political left. Yet, despite their adversarial posture and talk of opposition, their discourses on intertextuality and inter-referentiality isolate them from and ignore the conditions that have produced leftist politics—conflict, racism, poverty, and injustice. In short, as Clarke (1991) asserts, postmodern emphasis on new subjects conceals the old subjects, those who have limited access to good jobs, food, housing, health care, and transportation, as well as to the media that depict them. Merod (1987) decries this situation as one which leaves no vision, will, or commitment to activism. He notes that academic lip service to the oppositional is underscored by the absence of focused collective or politically active intellectual communities. Provoked by the academic manifestations of this problem Di Leonardo (1990) echoes Merod and laments: Has there ever been a historical era characterized by as little radical analysis or activism and as much radical-chic writing as ours? Maundering on about Otherness: phallocentrism or Eurocentric tropes has become a lazy academic substitute for actual engagement with the detailed histories and contemporary realities of Western racial minorities, white women, or any Third World population. (p. 530) Clarke's assessment of the postmodern elevation of language to the "sine qua non" of critical discussion is an even stronger indictment against the trend. Clarke examines Lyotard's (1984) The Postmodern Condition in which Lyotard maintains that virtually all social relations are linguistic, and, therefore, it is through the coercion that threatens speech that we enter the "realm of terror" and society falls apart. To this assertion, Clarke replies: I can think of few more striking indicators of the political and intellectual impoverishment of a view of society that can only recognize the discursive. If the worst terror we can envisage is the threat not to be allowed to speak, we are appallingly ignorant of terror in its elaborate contemporary forms. It may be the intellectual's conception of terror (what else do we do but speak?), but its projection onto the rest of the world would be calamitous....(pp. 2-27) The realm of the discursive is derived from the requisites for human life, which are in the physical world, rather than in a world of ideas or symbols.(4) Nutrition, shelter, and protection are basic human needs that require collective activity for their fulfillment. Postmodern emphasis on the discursive without an accompanying analysis of how the discursive emerges from material circumstances hides the complex task of envisioning and working towards concrete social goals (Merod, 1987). Although the material conditions that create the situation of marginality escape the purview of the postmodernist, the situation and its consequences are not overlooked by scholars from marginalized groups. Robinson (1990) for example, argues that "the justice that working people deserve is economic, not just textual" (p. 571). Lopez (1992) states that "the starting point for organizing the program content of education or political action must be the present existential, concrete situation" (p. 299). West (1988) asserts that borrowing French post-structuralist discourses about "Otherness" blinds us to realities of American difference going on in front of us (p. 170). Unlike postmodern "textual radicals" who Rabinow (1986) acknowledges are "fuzzy about power and the realities of socioeconomic constraints" (p. 255), most writers from marginalized groups are clear about how discourse interweaves with the concrete circumstances that create lived experience. People whose lives form the material for postmodern counter-hegemonic discourse do not share the optimism over the new recognition of their discursive subjectivities, because such an acknowledgment does not address sufficiently their collective historical and current struggles against racism, sexism, homophobia, and economic injustice. They do not appreciate being told they are living in a world in which there are no more real subjects. Ideas have consequences. Emphasizing the discursive self when a person is hungry and homeless represents both a cultural and humane failure. The need to look beyond texts to the perception and attainment of concrete social goals keeps writers from marginalized groups ever-mindful of the specifics of how power works through political agendas, institutions, agencies, and the budgets that fuel them.

A2: Reps/Language—Discourse Doesn’t Shape Reality

Discourse doesn’t shape reality—translation proves it’s the other way around.

Michelle Fram-Cohen, freelance translator and interpreter between Hebrew and English that has published articles on literature, translation theory, and philosophy, 1985 (“Reality, Language, Translation: What Makes Translation Possible,” Paper presented at the American Translators Association Conference, Available Online at http://enlightenment.supersaturated.com/essays/text/michelleframcohen//possibilityoftranslation.html, Accessed 07-31-2010)

The idea that language is created inside one's mind independently of outside experience eliminates the possibility that the external world is the common source of all languages. But a common source of all languages underlies any attempt to explain the possibility of translation. Chomsky suggests that the common basis of all languages is universal phonetics and semantics, with the result that "certain objects of human thoughts and mentality are essentially invariable across languages." (13) To the best of my knowledge Chomsky did not develop this idea in the direction of explaining the possibility of translation. In contrast, linguist Eugene Nida insists that outside experience is the common basis of all languages when he writes that "each language is different from all other languages in the ways in which the sets of verbal symbol classify the various elements of experience." (14) Nida did not provide the philosophical basis of the view that the external world is the common source of all languages. Such a basis can be found in the philosophy of Objectivism, originated by Ayn Rand. Objectivism, as its name implies, upholds the objectivity of reality. This means that reality is independent of consciousness, consciousness being the means of perceiving reality, not of creating it. Rand defines language as "a code of visual-auditory symbols that denote concepts." (15) These symbols are the written or spoken words of any language. Concepts are defined as the "mental integration of two or more units possessing the same distinguishing characteristic(s), with their particular measurements omitted." (16) This means that concepts are abstractions of units perceived in reality. Since words denote concepts, words are the symbols of such abstractions; words are the means of representing concepts in a language. Since reality provides the data from which we abstract and form concepts, reality is the source of all words--and of all languages. The very existence of translation demonstrates this fact. If there was no objective reality, there could be no similar concepts expressed in different verbal symbols. There could be no similarity between the content of different languages, and so, no translation. Translation is the transfer of conceptual knowledge from one language into another. It is the transfer of one set of symbols denoting concepts into another set of symbols denoting the same concepts. This process is possible because concepts have specific referents in reality. Even if a certain word and the concept it designates exist in one language but not in another, the referent this word and concept stand for nevertheless exists in reality, and can be referred to in translation by a descriptive phrase or neologism. Language is a means describing reality, and as such can and should expand to include newly discovered or innovated objects in reality. The revival of the ancient Hebrew language in the late 19th Century demonstrated the dependence of language on outward reality. Those who wanted to use Hebrew had to innovate an enormous number of words in order to describe the new objects that did not confront the ancient Hebrew speakers. On the other hand, those objects that existed 2000 years ago could be referred to by the same words. Ancient Hebrew could not by itself provide a sufficient image of modern reality for modern users.

A2: Bad Words—Apologies Solve The Impact

Retribution is unnecessary—accepting our apology for the use of objectionable language is a superior remedy.

Elizabeth Latif, Law Clerk with the United States District Court of Connecticut, 2001 (“Apologetic Justice: Evaluating Apologies Tailored Toward Legal Solutions," *Boston University Law Review*, Volume 81, February, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Lexis-Nexis)

In tandem with the above uses of apology, many legal scholars have been singing the praises of apologies in legal fora. Wagatsuma and Rosett compare apologies in Japan, and the United States, and argue that greater incorporation of apology into American legal culture would reduce litigation and shrink court dockets. n66 They maintain that there are some injuries, such as defamation, insult, degradation, loss of status, and emotional distress, "that can only be repaired by an apology."n67 "To the extent that a place may be found for apology in the resolution of such conflicts," Wagatsuma and Rosett assert, "American law would be enriched and better able to deal with" them. n68 Indeed, "society at large might be better off and better able to advance social peace if the law, instead of discouraging apologies in such situations by treating them as admissions of liability, encouraged people to apologize to those they have wronged and to compensate them for their losses."n69 David Hoffman, a partner at the Boston-based law firm of Hill & Barlow, stated in a recent lecture that "the need for apology is ubiquitous in our lives and in our work."n70 Hoffman argues that apologies are essential in mediation, [\*300] because "virtually all disputes have emotional components" and apologizing "can overcome emotional barriersto settlement" such as anger, betrayal and mistrust. n71 Apology is powerfulin a legal setting, Hoffman further asserts, because "when we apologize, we are simultaneously affirming two things[: w]e are affirming that we share the same values and beliefs as the other party and that we care about them."n72

A2: Bad Words—A2: Your Apology Is Not Genuine

Yes it is.

Even if our apology is coerced or feigned, it still has value—our action still engages in the power transfer that is key to rectifying the wrong.

Elizabeth Latif, Law Clerk with the United States District Court of Connecticut, 2001 (“Apologetic Justice: Evaluating Apologies Tailored Toward Legal Solutions," *Boston University Law Review*, Volume 81, February, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Lexis-Nexis)

While an apology is certainly not most effective when ordered or feigned, it may still be of some value. In this case, the apology may not be a "success" in the sense that it leads to forgiveness by the victim and a restoration of the moral order, but it nonetheless may heal the victim and/or the community in some way. Even a coerced apology can mitigate anger, shame or educate the offender, or improve prospects for settlements. A coerced apology can mitigate anger even if it is perceived as insincere, and regardless of the offender's level of responsibility. Two studies support this assertion. In a study by psychologists Mark Bennett and Christopher Dewberry, subjects were asked to indicate how they would respond in a hypothetical situation in which they received an unconvincing apology for a moderately serious transgression. n159 Though Bennett and Dewberry drafted the apology to be disingenuous, all of the subjects nonetheless indicated that they would accept it. n160 In another, related study, Bennett and Deborah Earwaker sought to fill the gaps to Bennett and Dewberry's study by identifying the conditions under which an apology is accepted or rejected. n161 [\*312] The experimenters found that the degree to which the apology would dissipate anger had no relation to the offender's degree of responsibility for the offense - though it was significantly related to the severity of the offense. n162 In both the high and the low responsibility conditions, subjects indicated that an apology would substantially mitigate their anger. n163 Furthermore, though the degree of responsibility did have an effect on whether the subjects would ultimately accept the apology, the "likelihood that an apology [would] be rejected is remarkably small, even when there is considerable provocation." n164 Indeed, coerced or ordered apologies can be valuable in their capacity to mitigate anger and move the victim and community closer to the resolution of a crime. As part of the remedy for the arson of a church in Kentucky founded by freed slaves, the district judge in the case ordered the offenders (all white) to apologize to the church's current congregation. n165 Bill Sircy, one of the arsonists, bowed his head in front of the congregation and exclaimed, "We're sorry, but I know that's not enough." n166 The congregation responded, "Amen!" n167 After each of the four persons involved gave an apology, the congregation responded with a round of applause. One member remarked, "I think what they did was a fantastic gesture." n168 Additionally, acourt-ordered or insincere apology can be effective as a shaming sanction. "Say your boss wrongfully accused you in front of the whole office. A fair reparation would require an apology – in front of the whole office. His questionable sincerity might be of secondary importance."n169 A punitive atmosphere surrounding an apology may force an exchange of shame and power between offender and victim, thus achieving what is at the heart of a successful apologetic ritual**.** n170 To be sure, several judges who have ordered apologies have done so in order to shame the offenders in front of their victims or their community. n171

A2: Bad Words—Rejecting Bad Words Is Bad

To call into question the status of a term is not to demand its rejection—their criticism is simply a foundation upon which to reconstruct rather than discard the contaminated language.

Judith Butler, Professor of Comparative Literature & Rhetoric at the University of California-Berkeley, 1998 (“Left Conservatism, II,” *Theory & Event*, Volume 2, Issue 2, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Project Muse)

I also want to make just a few remarks about Chris's introduction. He said that Left conservatism was an act and not an identity. I appreciated the citation of queer theory there. But I think that if that is true, then probably we ought not to be so concerned with the names of those who are exemplary of those concerns. Name-calling runs the risk of collapsing a complex body of scholarship and political work into a symptom, and I don't want to do that. On the other hand, it struck me coming in here that whereas I don't particularly like that part of the way in which this event is framed, I also thought that this interesting flyer that we received [from protesters of the workshop] was equally problematic. The flyer implies that if the organizers had their way, those who remain disinclined to accept poststructuralism, or rather, those who remain disinclined to be incorporated within something called "the postmodernist paradigm," would be excommunicated from the left, or denied tenure or job possibilities by those who work within such paradigms. This charge strikes me as off-base, offensive and sad, sad for all of us. If what worries those who wrote the flyer is that certain kinds of premises on the Left are being opened to inquiry, are being questioned, are being called into question, and are thus not being understood as foundational, does that mean that such terms are useless? To call into question the foundational status of such terms is not to claim that they are useless or that we ought not to speak that way, that terms like "objectivity," "rationality," "universality" are so contaminated that they ought not to be uttered any longer. A serious misunderstanding has taken place. Calling the foundational status of a term into question does not censor the use of the term. It seems to me that to call something into question, to call into question its foundational status, is the beginning of the reinvigoration of that term. What can such terms mean, given that there is no consensus on their meaning? How can they be mobilized, given that there is no way that they can be grounded or justified in any kind of permanent way. What is the task for politics when it invariably must use terms, must use the language of universality, for instance, precisely when the conventional usages of the term do not include the radical democratic uses of the term one has in mind for the term? Anybody who has worked in gay and lesbian human rights arenas knows that--you're stuck with the language of universality--you can't stay in a place where you're too pure to use the word. It seems to me that one is indeed inevitably contaminated by a language that is also invariably useful and invariably important. And then the question is: what is the strategic operation of such terms? How can they continue to be mobilized when they are no longer being supported by a foundationalist justification. I think that Gayatri Spivak puts this well. I paraphrase here: To deconstruct a category is not to eliminate it, it is precisely to make an inquiry into a category that we cannot do without. An inquiry into a category that we cannot do without--so it is something we absolutely need and we cannot do without, and yet it is open to a certain kind of inquiry that also is not finally suppressible. If we were to say there is a certain point at which intellectual interrogation of a category must stop because we must use it, what have we done? We have, at that moment, premised our politics on anti-intellectualism. We've paralyzed ourselves at that moment, because we make use of a category that we cannot possibly believe in, that we cannot possibly discuss, that we may not radically interrogate. That kind of self-censoriousness is a terrible, terrible move. And I'm afraid that sometimes anti-foundationalism is either figured as that censoriousness or subject to that very censoriousness. In any case, I would think that if the impulse, as I understand it, is to call things into question, then calling into question a vulgar formulation like "a postmodernist paradigm" would be fabulous. And that would be one of the things that a "postmodernist" would presumably most celebrate. It would be consistent with the principled inquiry that guides that self-critical enterprise. So I welcome it. Along the way, it will become possible, then, to distinguish forms of postmodernism and to distinguish postmodernism from poststructuralism. For what it is worth, I'm allied with the latter and not the former.

A2: Bad Words—Rejecting Bad Words Is Bad

Criticism alone is worthless—fighting about phrases trades off with material change.

Dana L. Cloud, Associate Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Texas, 2001 (“The Affirmative Masquerade," *American Communication Journal*, Volume 4, Issue 3, Spring, Available Online at http://acjournal.org/holdings/vol4/iss3/special/cloud.htm, Accessed 07-31-2010)

In this context of a real (and clearly bipolar) class divide in late capitalist society, the postmodern party is a masquerade ball, in which theories claiming to offer ways toward emancipation and progressive critical practice in fact encourage scholars and/as activists to abandon any commitment to crafting oppositional political blocs with instrumental and perhaps revolutionary potential. Instead, on their arguments, we must recognize agency as an illusion of humanism and settle for playing with our identities in a mood of irony, excess, and profound skepticism. Marx and Engels’ critique of the Young Hegelians applies equally well to the postmodern discursive turn: "They are only fighting against ‘phrases.’ They forget, however, that to these phrases they themselves are only opposing other phrases, and that they are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world" (1976/1932, p. 41).

A2: Bad Words—Rejecting Bad Words Is Bad

Their counterplan/alternative cannot contest dominant power relations—only material change solves.

Sanford F. Schram, Associate Professor of Political Science at Macalester College, former Visiting Professor at the La Follette Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin and Visiting Affiliate at the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin, 1995 (“Discourses of Dependency: The Politics of Euphemism,” *Words of Welfare: The Poverty of Social Science and The Social Science of Poverty*, Published by The University of Minnesota Press, ISBN 0816625778, p. 21-23)

The deconstruction of prevailing discursive structures helps politicize the institutionalized practices that inhibit alternative ways of constructing social relations.5 Isolated acts of renaming, however, are unlikely to help promote political change if they are not tied to interrogations of the structures that serve as the interpretive context for making sense of new terms.6 This is especially the case when renamings take the form of euphemisms designed to make what is described appear to be consonant with the existing order. In other words, the problems of a politics of renaming are not confined to the left, but are endemic to what amounts to a classic American practice utilized across the political spectrum.7 Homeless, welfare, and family planning provide three examples of how isolated instances of renaming fail in their efforts to make a politics out of sanitizing language. [end page 21] Reconsidering the Politics of Renaming Renaming can do much to indicate respect and sympathy. It may strategically recast concerns so that they can be articulated in ways that are more appealing and less dismissive. Renaming the objects of political contestation may help promote the basis for articulating latent affinities among disparate political constituencies. The relentless march of renamings can help denaturalize and delegitimate ascendant categories and the constraints they place on political possibility. At the moment of fissure, destabilizing renamings have the potential to encourage reconsideration of how biases embedded in names are tied to power relations.8 Yet isolated acts of renaming do not guarantee that audiences will be any more predisposed to treat things differently than they were before. The problem is not limited to the political reality that dominant groups possess greater resources for influencing discourse. Ascendant political economies, such as liberal postindustrial capitalism, whether understood structurally or discursively, operate as institutionalized systems of interpretation that can subvert the most earnest of renamings.9 It is just as dangerous to suggest that paid employment exhausts possibilities for achieving self-sufficiency as to suggest that political action can be meaningfully confined to isolated renamings.10 Neither the workplace nor a name is the definitive venue for effectuating self-worth or political intervention.11 Strategies that accept the prevailing work ethos will continue to marginalize those who cannot work, and increasingly so in a post­ industrial economy that does not require nearly as large a workforce as its industrial predecessor. Exclusive preoccupation with sanitizing names overlooks the fact that names often do not matter to those who live out their lives according to the institutionalized narratives of the broader political economy, whether it is understood structurally or discursively, whether it is monolithically hegemonic or reproduced through allied, if disparate, practices. What is named is always encoded in some publicly accessible and ascendent discourse. 12 Getting the names right will not matter if the names are interpreted according to the institutionalized insistences of organized society.13 Only when those insistences are relaxed does there emerge the possibility for new names to restructure daily practices. Texts, as it now has become notoriously apparent, can be read in many ways, and they are most often read according to how prevailing discursive structures provide an interpretive context for reading them.14 The meanings implied by new names of necessity [end page 22] overflow their categorizations, often to be reinterpreted in terms of available systems of intelligibility (most often tied to existing institutions). Whereas renaming can maneuver change within the interstices of pervasive discursive structures, renaming is limited in reciprocal fashion. Strategies of containment that seek to confine practice to sanitized categories appreciate the discursive character of social life, but insufficiently and wrongheadedly. I do not mean to suggest that discourse is dependent on structure as much as that structures are hegemonic discourses. The operative structures reproduced through a multitude of daily practices and reinforced by the efforts of aligned groups may be nothing more than stabilized ascendent discourses.15 Structure is the alibi for discourse. We need to destabilize this prevailing interpretive context and the power plays that reinforce it, rather than hope that isolated acts of linguistic sanitization will lead to political change. Interrogating structures as discourses can politicize the terms used to fix meaning, produce value, and establish identity. Denaturalizing value as the product of nothing more than fixed interpretations can create new possibilities for creating value in other less insistent and injurious ways. The discursively/structurally reproduced reality of liberal capitalism as deployed by power blocs of aligned groups serves to inform the existentially lived experiences of citizens in the contemporary postindustrial order.16 The powerful get to reproduce a broader context that works to reduce the dissonance between new names and established practices. As long as the prevailing discursive structures of liberal capitalism create value from some practices, experiences, and identities over others, no matter how often new names are insisted upon, some people will continue to be seen as inferior simply because they do not engage in the same practices as those who are currently dominant in positions of influence and prestige. Therefore, as much as there is a need to reconsider the terms of debate, to interrogate the embedded biases of discursive practices, and to resist living out the invidious distinctions that hegemonic categories impose, there are real limits to what isolated instances of renaming can accomplish.

A2: Bad Words—Renamings/Euphemisms Are Bad

Sanitizing language backfires—renaming neutralizes language, reifying the harm.

Sanford F. Schram, Associate Professor of Political Science at Macalester College, former Visiting Professor at the La Follette Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin and Visiting Affiliate at the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin, 1995 (“Discourses of Dependency: The Politics of Euphemism,” *Words of Welfare: The Poverty of Social Science and The Social Science of Poverty*, Published by The University of Minnesota Press, ISBN 0816625778, p. 24-25)

Renaming not only loses credibility but also corrupts the terms used. This danger is ever present, given the limits of language. Because all terms are partial and incomplete characterizations, every new term can be invalidated as not capturing all that needs to be said about any topic.22 With time, the odds increase that a new term will lose its potency as it fails to emphasize neglected dimensions of a problem. As newer concerns replace the ones that helped inspire the terminological shift, newer terms will be introduced to address what has been neglected. Where disabled was once an improvement over handicapped, other terms are now deployed to make society inclusive of [end page 24] all people, however differentially situated. The "disabled" are now "physically challenged" or "mentally challenged." The politics of renaming promotes higher and higher levels of neutralizing language.23 Yet a neutralized language is itself already a partial reading even if it is only implicitly biased in favor of some attributes over others. Neutrality is always relative to the prevailing context. As the context changes, what was once neutral becomes seen as biased. Implicit moves of emphasis and de-emphasis become more visible in a new light. "Physically" and "mentally challenged" already begin to look insufficiently affirmative as efforts intensify to include people with such attributes in all avenues of contemporary life.24

The counterplan/alternative reifies the dominant discourse—renaming trades off with structural change.

Sanford F. Schram, Associate Professor of Political Science at Macalester College, former Visiting Professor at the La Follette Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin and Visiting Affiliate at the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin, 1995 (“Discourses of Dependency: The Politics of Euphemism,” *Words of Welfare: The Poverty of Social Science and The Social Science of Poverty*, Published by The University of Minnesota Press, ISBN 0816625778, p. 34-35)

The politics of renaming highlights the relationships of discourse to structure and ideology to power.87 The limits of euphemisms suggest that these renamings often reinforce a broader, institutionalized, and structural context that is supported through the daily actions of aligned groupings exercising power to effect outcomes consistent with their interests. Yet the power plays reinforcing prevailing structures also operate to encourage selected interpretations of a wide variety of acts of signification. These structures help create a "social logic" that constrains interpretation of even the most imaginative of renamings. Whereas the structural conditions that constrain policy discourse are themselves discursively constituted, they in turn produce [end page 34] material constraints that limit notions of what is feasible and practical under the existing arrangements. Therefore, displacing the self-sufficiency of the "breadwinner" will not on its own make "dependents" more worthy. Even if "bread" itself is shown in good part, if not the whole loaf, to be symbolic, that will not by itself lead people to eat some other symbol. Gaining leverage for political change involves appreciating not just how material structures can be denaturalized. Political change comes with also appreciating how material practices serve to constrain seriously the extent to which discursive moves will have any tractability in public settings. Only when the power plays supporting such structural conditions are resisted can alternative discursive moves gain political salience.88 Action to improve the lives of poor people involves instituting changes in institutional practices so that people will be motivated to think more inclusively or be willing to entertain the idea that it is rational for them as well-meaning, if not self-interested, individuals to promote the well-being of marginal groups. The existing institutional infrastructure currently works against such thinking.

\*\*\* A2: Ontology Critiques

A2: Ontology—Permutation

Permute: Do Both

The plan is not mutually exclusive with the alternative. The permutation is best—pursuing an emancipatory agenda while placing ontological questioning in the background is key to meaningful change.

Molly Cochran, Assistant Professor of International Affairs at the Georgia Institute of Technology, 1999 (*Normative Theory in International Relations: A Pragmatic Approach*, Published by Cambridge U. Press, ISBN 0521639654, p. 272)

To conclude this chapter, while modernist and postmodernist debates continue, while we are still unsure as to what we can legitimately identify as a feminist ethical/political concern, while we still are unclear about the relationship of discourse and experience, it is particularly important for feminists that we proceed with analysis of both the material (institutional and structural) as well as the discursive. This holds not only for feminists, but for all theorists oriented towards the goal of extending further moral inclusion in the present social sciences climate of epistemological uncertainty. Important ethical/political concerns hang in the balance. We cannot afford to wait for the meta-theoretical questions to be conclusively answered. Those answers may be unavailable. Nor can we wait for a credible vision of an alternative institutional order to appear before an emancipatory agenda can be kicked into gear. Nor do we have before us a chicken and egg question of which comes first: sorting out the meta-theoretical issues or working out which practices contribute to a credible institutional vision. The two questions can and should be pursued together, and can be, ***via*** moral imagination. Imagination can help us think beyond discursive and material conditions which limit us, by pushing the boundaries of those limitations in though and examining what yields. In this respect, I believe international ethics as pragmatic critique can be a useful ally to feminists and normative theorists generally.

A2: Ontology—Theoretical Objection

The desirability of the plan should be evaluated before questions of ontology:

Ontological questioning is not competitive with the plan and is not a predictable framework for evaluating the debate.

1. Infinite Regression – there are an infinite number of ontological assumptions that the affirmative would be required to defend under their framework. The 1AC would have to prove that the world exists and that existence exists and would have to define what “is” is – this would be the death of debate – no one would participate in this kind of useless and unfair navel-gazing.
2. Resolutional Context – the resolution is a proposition of policy – ontological questions are not relevant to a debate about what the USFG should do. Preserving fairness and competitive equity comes before their substantive arguments about the importance of ontology – they need to win that ontology disproves the desirability of the plan, not just that it affects the way we approach the world.
3. Falsifiability – questions of ontology are fundamentally irresolvable and do not disprove the desirability of the plan.

Roger E. Solt, Debate Coach at the University of Kentucky, 2004 (“Debate’s Culture of Narcissism,” *Contemporary Argumentation & Debate*, Volume 25, September, Available Online via Communication & Mass Media Complete, p. 45-46)

Indeed, the things that we assume are those which it is most difficult, if not impossible, to convincingly establish. This is especially true of such basic ontological [end page 45] issues as the existence of an external world, of other minds, and of causal relationships. Because of this, in most cases, the affirmative can neither prove, nor the negative disprove, many of the assumptions at play in a given debate. Nor, in most cases, is this necessary to establish the desirability of the affirmative plan. The chance that an assumption may be true (i.e., causation may exist) will be enough to justify endorsing a certain course of action.

A2: Ontology—Political Responsibility Good

Turn—Political Responsibility:

A. Public policy-making requires suspension of academic unconstrained search for truth—if they want their ontological arguments to matter, they have to play the policy-making game.

Dan W. Brock, Professor of Philosophy and Biomedical Ethics at Brown University, 1987 ("Truth or Consequences: The Role of Philosophers in Policy-Making," *Ethics*, Volume 97, July, Available Online via JSTOR, p. 787)

When philosophers become more or less direct participants in the policy-making process and so are no longer academics just hoping that an occasional policymaker might read their scholarly journal articles, this scholarly virtue of the unconstrained search for the truth--all assumptions open to question and follow the arguments wherever they lead--comes under a variety of related pressures. What arises is an intellectual variant of the political problem of "dirty hands" that those who hold political power often face. I emphasize that I do not conceive of the problem as one of pure, untainted philosophers being corrupted by the dirty business of politics. My point is rather that the different goals of academic scholarship and public policy call in turn for different virtues and behavior in their practitioners. Philosophers who steadfastly maintain their academic ways in the public policy setting are not to be admired as islands of integrity in a sea of messy political compromise and corruption. Instead, I believe that if philosophers maintain the academic virtues there they will not only find themselves often ineffective but will as well often fail in their responsibilities and act wrongly. Why is this so? The central point of conflict is that the first concern of those responsible for public policy is, and ought to be, the consequences of their actions for public policy and the persons that those policies affect. This is not to say that they should not be concerned with the moral evaluation of those consequences—they should; nor that they must be moral consequentialists in the evaluation of the policy, and in turn human, consequences of their actions—whether some form of consequentialism is an adequate moral theory is another matter. But it is to say that persons who directly participate in the formation of public policy would be irresponsible if they did not focus their concern on how their actions will affect policy and how that policy will in turn affect people. The virtues of academic research and scholarship that consist in an unconstrained search for truth, whatever the consequences, reflect not only the different goals of scholarly work but also the fact that the effects of the scholarly endeavor on the public are less direct, and are mediated more by other institutions and events, than are those of the public policy process. It is in part the very impotence in terms of major, direct effects on people's lives of most academic scholarship that makes it morally acceptable not to worry much about the social consequences of that scholarship. When philosophers move into the policy domain, they must shift their primary commitment from knowledge and truth to the policy consequences of what they do. And if they are not prepared to do this, why did they enter the public domain? What are they doing there?

A2: Ontology—Political Responsibility Good

B. A focus on ontological questions condemns real people to death—their fascination with Being trades off with a focus on the human beings effected by government policies.

John D. Caputo, David R. Cook Professor of Philosophy at Villanueva University, 1993 (*Against Ethics: contributions to a poetics of obligation with constant reference to deconstruction*, Published by Indiana University Press, ISBN 0253208165, p. 70)

That would mean you cannot have an obligation to Being or the Spirit or the People, nor can Being or the Spirit oblige anything. Being, Spirit, History, Man: the playthings of Greco-German mythophilosophizing, which is my somewhat free translation of *die Sache des Denkens* (which I claim, as a translation, is *wahr* if not *richtig*). Nothing happens in or to Being and Spirit. What happens happens to beings that bear up or bend under what is happening. Being cannot suffer a disaster, or suffer oblivion, because it does not suffer at all. Being and Spirit are mytho-super-Subjects, the upshot of totalizing attempts to describe what is happening, which end up abandoning what is happening, leaving those of us with proper names to face the worst. History and Being, History and Spirit, the History of Being, the History of Spirit: so many tall tales and meta-narratives, gigantic6 stories that forsake the ***minima moralia*** of damaged lives,7 the minute scraps and remnants Being leaves behind. A disaster is a damaged life, damaged beyond repair. Being shows no interest in damaged lives; they are none of Being's business (*Sache*).8 Indeed, many bleeding bodies may well be a sign that Being or the Spirit is on the mend, or on the march, healing itself and making itself Whole or Holy, getting ready for the Other Beginning, while the dead are left to bury the dead.9 Forget Being. There is nothing to remember. Replace it with a mnemo-technique for remembering proper names.

A2: Ontology—Survival Outweighs Ontology

Survival comes first – questioning must stop in the face of human suffering.

Arnold I. Davidson, Professor of the Philosophy of Religion at the University of Chicago’s Divinity School, 1989 (“Questions concerning Heidegger: Opening the Debate,” *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 15, Number 2, Winter, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via JSTOR, p. 424-426)

I understand Levinas' work to suggest another path to the recovery of the human, one that leads through or toward other human beings: The dimension of the divine opens forth from the human face. . . . Hence metaphysics is enacted where the social relation is enacted—[end page 424] in our relations with men. . . . The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed. It is our relations with men . . . that give to theological concepts the sole signification they admit of.35 Levinas places ethics before ontology by beginning with our experience of the human face; and, in a clear reference to Heidegger's idolatry of the village life of peasants, he associates himself with Socrates, who preferred the city where he encountered men to the country with its trees.36 In his discussion of skepticism and the problem of others, Cavell also aligns himself with this path of thought, with the recovery of the finite human self through the acknowledgment of others: As long as God exists, I am not alone. And couldn't the other suffer the fate of God? . . . I wish to understand how the other now bears the weight of God, shows me that I am not alone in the universe. This requires understanding the philosophical problem of the other as the trace or scar of the departure of God. [CR, p. 47013' The suppression of the other, the human, in Heidegger's thought accounts, I believe, for the absence, in his writing after the war, of the experience of horror. Horror is always directed toward the human; every object of horror bears the imprint of the human will.38 So Levinas can see in Heidegger's silence about the gas chambers and death camps "a kind of consent to the horror."39 And Cavell can characterize Nazis as "those who have lost the capacity for being horrified by what they do.”40 Where was Heidegger's horror? How could he have failed to know what he had consented to? Hannah Arendt associates Heidegger with Pad Valery's aphorism, " *'Les henements ne sent que l'kcume des choses'* ('Events are but the foam of things').”41 I think one understands the source of her intuition. The mass [end page 425] extermination of human beings, however, does not produce foam, but dust and ashes; and it is here that questioning must stop.

A2: Ontology—Social Change Turn

Turn—their infatuation with ontology is politically debilitating – focusing on ontology divests politics of its emancipatory potential and devolves into a self-justifying cycle of never-ending critique.

Majid Yar, Ph.D. in the Department of Sociology at Lancaster University, 2000 (“Arendt's Heideggerianism: Contours of a `Postmetaphysical' Political Theory?,” *Cultural Values*, Volume 4, Issue 1, January, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Academic Search Complete)

Similarly, we must consider the consequences that this 'ontological substitution' for the essence of the political has for politics, in terms of what is practically excluded by this rethinking. If the presently available menu of political engagements and projects (be they market or social liberalism, social democracy, communitarianism, Marxism, etc.) are only so many moments of the techno-social completion of an underlying metaphysics, then the fear of 'metaphysical contamination' inhibits any return to recognisable political practices and sincere engagement with the political exigencies of the day. This is what Nancy Fraser has called the problem of 'dirty hands', the suspension of engagement with the existing content of political agendas because of their identification as being in thrall to the violence of metaphysics. Unable to engage in politics as it is, one either [a] sublimates the desire for politics by retreating to an interrogation of the political with respect to its essence (Fraser, 1984, p. 144), or [b] on this basis, seeks 'to breach the inscription of a wholly other politics'. The former suspends politics indefinitely, while the latter implies a new politics, which, on the basis of its reconceived understanding of the political, apparently excludes much of what recognizably belongs to politics today. This latter difficulty is well known from Arendt's case, whose barring of issues of social and economic justice and welfare from the political domain are well known. To offer two examples: [1] in her commentary on the U.S. civil rights movement in the 1950s, she argued that the politically salient factor which needed challenging was only racial legislation and the formal exclusion of African-Americans from the political sphere, not discrimination, social deprivation and disadvantage, etc.(Arendt, 1959, pp. 45-56); [2] Arendt's pronounceraent at a conference in 1972 (put under question by Albrecht Wellmer regarding her distinction of the 'political' and the 'social'), that housing and homelessness were not political issues, that they were external to the political as the sphere of the actualisation of freedom as disclosure; the political is about human self-disclosure in speech and deed, not about the distribution of goods, which belongs to the social realm as an extension of the oikos.[20] The point here is not that Arendt and others are in any sense unconcerned or indifferent about such sufferings, deprivations and inequalities. Rather, it is that such disputes and agendas are identified as belonging to the socio-technical sphere of administration, calculation, instrumentality, the logic of means and ends, subject-object manipulation by a will which turns the world to its purposes, the conceptual rendering of beings in terms of abstract and levelling categories and classes, and so on; they are thereby part and parcel of the metaphysical-technological understanding of Being, which effaces the unique and singular appearance and disclosure of beings, and thereby illegitimate candidates for consideration under the renewed, ontological-existential formulation of the political. To reconceive the political in terms of a departure from its former incarnation as metaphysical politics, means that the revised terms of a properly political discourse cannot accommodate the prosaic yet urgent questions we might typically identify under the rubric of 'policy'. Questions of social and economic justice are made homeless, exiled from the political sphere of disputation and demand in which they were formerly voiced. Indeed, it might be observed that the postmetaphysical formulation of the political is devoid of any content other than the freedom which defines it; it is freedom to appear, to disclose, but not the freedom to do something in particular, in that utilising freedom for achieving some end or other implies a collapse back into will, instrumentality, teleocracy, poeisis, etc. By defining freedom qua disclosedness as the essence of freedom and the sole end of the political, this position skirts dangerously close to advocating politique pour la politique, divesting politics of any other practical and normative ends in the process.[21]

A2: Ontology—Weak Ontology FYI

This is a good explanation of weak ontology from the introduction to White’s book.

Stephen K. White, James Hart Professor of Political Theory at the University of Virginia, 2002 (*Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory*, Published by Princeton University Press, ISBN 0691050325, p. ix-x)

Imagine yourself standing by a vacant lot watching children play. Debris lies about, for a building once stood here, until its foundation gave way. Chunks of the building remain here and there, as does the gaping hole left from the foundation. As the children clamber over the remains and jump in and out of the hole, you begin to think that they are playing a game, but it is one with which you are unfamiliar. In fact, the rules still seem to be emerging, and the children themselves are sometimes uncertain how to proceed. It would be pretty difficult, accordingly, to give a decent account of this game. Despite your doubts, you venture a speculation about the rules. But immediately your uncertainty increases again when another adult passes and, with an air of authority, informs you, “That's not really a game. Not enough coherence.” A second passerby curtly announces that the children ought not, in any case, to be playing in such a dangerous lot. A third passerby eyes you with some impatience before offering the rebuke, “Must one always try to foist some underlying structure onto what should be simply free play?” What to do? Aware of the risks, you decide to go ahead and reflect further about what still looks to you like a game, and a good one at that. A plausible start might be to focus on three or four kids who seem to be the most comfortable with the game, the closest to being competent in their negotiation of the still somewhat amorphous rules. Your hope is that in attending carefully to that competence, you can make the rules more palpable. If this can be done well, you will be satisfied for the moment. That, anyway, is what I have tried to do in this book. The new game being played is not, of course, children in a vacant lot, but contemporary ways of entwining ontological reflection with political affirmation. Call the game “weak ontology.” It is taking place on the terrain of what used to be called the “foundations” of ethics and politics, the sources from which affirmative gestures gain their strength. 1 Now obviously not every affirmation of a specific value or practice has to be traced back to such a source. A particular, discrete argument may be all that is necessary to defend our preference for, say, a given democratic practice. We are nevertheless sometimes pushed to articulate more extensively how we [end page ix] justify that affirmation. At those moments, we think of ourselves as enriching the persuasiveness of our claims. Political theory has traditionally understood this activity as one of having recourse to foundations. My aim in this book is to help rethink this “having recourse to,” both in terms of how one does it and the character of that to which recourse is had. My strategy is to clarify the coherence of the new game of “weak ontology” a bit further with the help of some philosophical players who have ventured onto the vacant lot. The four players I examine occupy, in conventional terms, very different perspectives: liberal, communitarian, feminist, and poststructuralist or postmodern. Without denying the importance of the differences, I want to draw out certain commonalities that emerge when one asks how each thinker configures the background that sustains his or her affirmative political gestures. Methodologically, I am continually engaged in the hermeneutically circular activity of using these participants to learn about the emergent rules, but then turning and using those rules to criticize one or another aspect of their play. I am painfully aware that some readers will remain deeply skeptical, like the bystanders in my story, concluding that there is nothing coherent enough in these gestures for a real game; or that if there is one, it is being played incorrectly; or that perhaps it should not be played at all. Finally, some will be irritated that my players make starkly different ethical-political claims, and yet I don't say much in regard to who, after all, is ultimately right. All I can say in my defense is that my main intention in this book is to give a taste of what good or felicitous play looks like; it is not to declare winners.

A2: Ontology—Weak Ontology Good

Turn—Weak Ontology:

A. Their calls for a *strong* ontology should be rejected in favor of *weak* ontology—we can contingently adopt an ontological foundation without resolving every underlying metaphysical question.

Stephen K. White, James Hart Professor of Political Theory at the University of Virginia, 2002 (*Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory*, Published by Princeton University Press, ISBN 0691050325, p. 6-8)

The first commonality emerges around the question: how is one to understand the epistemological status of such contemporary efforts at fundamental conceptualization of human being? Here I want to begin by drawing a distinction between two ideal types of ontology: strong and weak. The late modern ontologies in which I am interested typically exhibit at least some of the characteristics I refer to as “weak,” whereas premodern and modern ones have more typically exhibited the characteristics I refer to as “strong.” Strong are those ontologies that claim to show us “the way the world is,” or how God's being stands to human being, or what human nature is. It is by reference to this external ground that ethical and political life gain their sense of what is right; moreover, this foundation's validity is unchanging and of universal reach. For strong ontologies, the whole question of passages from ontological truths to moral-political ones is relatively clear. Some proponents do not, of course, assume that political [end page 6] principles or decisions can be strictly derived from their ontology; for example, there may be substantial discretionary space for the exercise of judgment. However, in contrast to weak ontologies, strong ones carry an underlying assumption of certainty that guides the whole problem of moving from the ontological level to the moral-political. But this very certainty—both about how things are and how political life should reflect it—allows such ontologies to provide what seem today (at least to some of us) to be answers to our late modern problems that demand too much initial forgetfulness of contingency and indeterminacy. Although terminology is extremely variable here, this last point could be stated thus, that strong ontologies involve too much “metaphysics.” Since World War II, there have been a number of prominent proponents of different forms of strong ontology in political theory. Such thinkers as Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, as well as adherents to the natural law tradition, have drawn on classical Greek or Christian models in order to contest the dominant modern ontology. Contemporary philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre have developed novel ways of carrying some of these sorts of arguments forward. 9 But the recent ontological turn that is the primary focus of my attention has taken place largely outside of this immediate sphere of influence. My term weak ontology is intended to highlight what is distinctive about this new phenomenon. 10 The thinking I am interested in resists strong ontology, on the one hand, and the strategy of much of liberal thought, on the other. The latter has generally ignored or suppressed ontological reflection, sometimes tacitly affirming the Teflon [end page 7] self, sometimes expressing neutrality toward it. Weak ontology finds the costs of such strategies to outweigh the claimed benefits. One might object that the distinction between strong and weak ontology is merely a relabeling of the familiar distinction between metaphysical and antimetaphysical or postmodern views, or between foundationalist and antifoundationalist ones. This suspicion is true to a degree. But I would claim that this relabeling serves a useful philosophical purpose. My intention in developing the notion of weak ontology is to call greater attention to the kind of interpretive-existential terrain that anyone who places herself in the “anti” position must explore at some point. In short, I want to shift the intellectual burden here from a preoccupation with what is opposed and deconstructed, to an engagement with what must be articulated, cultivated, and affirmed in its wake. My delineation of the characteristics of felicitous, weak ontologies is intended as a contribution toward this goal. Weak ontologies respond to two pressing concerns. First, there is the acceptance of the idea that all fundamental conceptualizations of self, other, and world are contestable. Second, there is the sense that such conceptualizations are nevertheless necessary or unavoidable for an adequately reflective ethical and political life. The latter insight demands from us the affirmative gesture of constructing foundations, the former prevents us from carrying out this task in a traditional fashion. One aspect of constructing such contestable foundations involves the embodiment within them of some signaling of their own limits. Felicitous weak ontologies cannot simply declare their contestability, fallibility, or partiality at the start and then proceed pretty much as before. The reason for this is that an ontology figures our most basic sense of human being, an achievement that always carries a propensity toward naturalization, reification, and unity, even if only implicitly. A weak ontology must possess resources for deflecting this propensity at some point in the unfolding of its dimensions. Its elaboration of fundamental meanings must in some sense fold back upon itself, disrupting its own smooth constitution of a unity. In a way, its contestability will thus be enacted rather than just announced.

A2: Ontology—Weak Ontology Good

B. This takes out and turns their impact—the negative’s *vertical* image of ontology should be replaced with a *horizontal* one that recognizes its own limitations.

Stephen K. White, James Hart Professor of Political Theory at the University of Virginia, 2002 (*Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory*, Published by Princeton University Press, ISBN 0691050325, p. 11-12)

How precisely do weak ontologies constitute a “foundation” of ethical-political life? Since such ontologies can make no strong claim to reflect the pure truth of being, one cannot derive any clear and incontestable principles or values for ethics and politics. The fundamental conceptualizations such an ontology provides can, at most, prefigure practical insight or judgment, in the sense of providing broad cognitive and affective orientation. Practice draws sustenance from an ontology in the sense of both a reflective bearing upon possibilities for action and a mobilizing of motivational force. If a critic presses for justification of a particular action or norm adopted in light of a weak ontology, the appropriate response is not a simple and conclusive recourse to the “foundation.” Vertical, one-way images of justification are misleading here (whether the path of justification is imagined as leading up to a skyhook or down to a foundation). An ontology certainly articulates our most fundamental intimations of human being, but it is best to think of such intimation as always part of a horizontal circuit of reflection, affect, and argumentation. The circuit is a three-cornered one, with critical energy and discrimination flowing back and forth to each corner. One corner is formed by the judgments and norms relevant to specific contexts of action; these, as I have said, receive a prefiguring influence from ontological concepts, which in turn constitute a second corner. But, as I also noted, such concepts are themselves not immune from pressures for revision arising out of insights gleaned from specific action contexts. [end page 11] And these two corners are in a similar, two-way relation with the third corner, which is constituted by one's broadest historical “we” claims and narratives. 13 Think for a moment about Lyotard's well-known notion that the “grand narratives” or “metanarratives” (focused around God, Nature, or Progress) of the modern West have increasingly lost their power to convince. 14 He extols instead a proliferation of “petits récits,” or “small narratives,” for our postmodern times. But perhaps this dichotomy is somewhat misleading. Lyotard is right in his critique of generalizing narratives fixed upon an unshakable philosophical foundation. But the simple image of proliferating small narratives neglects the unavoidable pressures toward generalization in a world where my or our narrative sooner or later runs up against yours. As Clifford Geertz has so nicely put it, “now … nobody is leaving anybody alone and isn't ever again going to.” 15 What sort of engagement there will be between one small narrative and another only takes shape within the construction, however implicit, of a “grand” or at least grander narrative.

A2: Ontology—Weak Ontology Good

Weak ontologies have superior explanatory potential – comparatively superior to the negative’s insistence on knowing for sure.

Stephen K. White, James Hart Professor of Political Theory at the University of Virginia, 2002 (*Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory*, Published by Princeton University Press, ISBN 0691050325, p. 8-10)

I have suggested that one quality evident in the ontological turn is resistance to the “disengaged self.” 11 One of the key notions in weak ontology is that of a stickier subject. This notion can take a variety of specific forms, [end page 8] as the following chapters will show, but I want to suggest that within this variety a certain style of argument is apparent. Weak ontologies do not proceed by categorical positings of, say, human nature or telos, accompanied by a crystalline conviction of the truth of that positing. Rather, what they offer are figurations of human being in terms of certain existential realities, most notably language, mortality or finitude, natality, and the articulation of “sources of the self.” 12 These figurations are accounts of what it is to be a certain sort of creature: first, one entangled with language; second, one with a consciousness that it will die; third, one that, despite its entanglement and limitedness, has the capacity for radical novelty; and, finally, one that gives definition to itself against some ultimate background or “source,” to which we find ourselves always already attached, and which evokes something like awe, wonder, or reverence. This sense of a background that can be both empowering and humbling is misconstrued when grasped either as something with a truth that reveals itself to us in an unmediated way or as something that is simply a matter of radical choice. I am borrowing the notion of sources from Charles Taylor, whose work is taken up in chapter 3. While this might appear to give the idea of weak ontology a necessarily theistic cast from the start, since Taylor is indeed a theist, such a conclusion would be incorrect. Perhaps the simplest way to demonstrate the philosophical richness of Taylor's notion of sources is to show how it helps in the interpretation of nontheistic thinkers, something I will try to do throughout the book. When I speak of “existential realities,” I mean to claim that language, finitude, natality, and sources are in some brute sense universal constitutives of human being, but also that their meaning is irreparably underdetermined in any categorical sense. There is, for example, simply no demonstrable essence of language or true meaning of finitude. Weak ontologies offer figurations of these universals, whose persuasiveness can never be fully disentangled from an interpretation of present historical circumstances. Fundamental conceptualization here thus means acknowledging that gaining access to something universal about human being and world is always also a construction that cannot rid itself of a historical dimension. For weak ontology, human being is the negotiation of these existential realities. But when this negotiation is imagined in the fashion of a Teflon self powering itself through the world, there has been an unacceptable impoverishment of figuration. Accepting such an image implies, for example, a figuration of language as, in essence, an instrument: in effect we always “have” language; it never “has” us. Of course, as I just emphasized [end page 9], such a claim of impoverishment can never be disentangled from historical claims; in this case, claims regarding, say, the various “costs” that Western modernity has had to pay for such a tight embrace of the disengaged self. So it is through their renewed figuration of these existential universals that weak ontologies compose portraits of human being that are “stickier”; ones, for example, that are more attuned to how language “has” us, and more attentive to vivifying our finitude.

A2: Ontology—Weak Ontology Good

Weak ontologies allow constant cultivation of new knowledges – comparatively superior.

Stephen K. White, James Hart Professor of Political Theory at the University of Virginia, 2002 (*Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory*, Published by Princeton University Press, ISBN 0691050325, p. 10-11)

To speak of “portraits” of human being and “figuration” is to begin calling attention to another characteristic of weak ontologies. They are not simply cognitive in their constitution and effects, but also aesthetic-affective. They not only reflect something that is the case about the reality of human being, but also engender a certain sensibility toward that reality. They disclose the world to us in such a way that we think and feel it differently than we might otherwise. Their appeal turns partially on how well they allow us to cope with the pressures and challenges of late modern life. Weak ontologies have an aesthetic-affective quality in another way as well. This relates to the issue of embracing or adopting them. Since such ontologies do not reflect clear, crystalline truth about the world, they do not entice us with any knockdown power to convince or convert. Within the ontological turn the notion of “cultivation” is continually evoked. The embrace of a weak ontology has a tentative, experimental aspect; one must patiently bring it to life by working it into one's life. In this sense, it is at least somewhat different from conversion (on some accounts) to a religious faith or the rational conviction that such and such is the categorically correct moral rule or code. Yet this emphasis on tentativeness does not imply that one's relation to an ontology is like that to a suit of new clothes taken home on approval. The cognitive and affective [end page 10] burdens entailed in revisioning the world ensure that when one seriously embraces an ontology, one does not do so in a “light and transient” way. The process of adoption is the initiation of a process of cultivation of oneself and one's disposition to the world. This cultivation unfolds through the measured pursuit of an array of related practices and selfdisciplines. In this sense, weak ontologies share similarities with traditional notions of cultivating virtues. But in the case of the latter, the framework of truth, or the telos, within which the virtues acquire their significance is the unshakable foundation on the basis of which the cultivation proceeds. Such is not the case with weak ontologies. The framework itself is never fully immune from the work of cultivation. Pressures for reconceptualizing or further articulating aspects of it continually arise in the ongoing activity of making specific ethical and political judgments and constructing historical interpretations of who “we” are.

A2: Ontology—Ontological Pluralism Good

Their insistence that ontology is a prior question creates artificial metaphysical hurdles to effective action-in-the-world—ontological pluralism provides a sufficient justification for the adoption of the plan.

David Owen, Reader on Political Theory at the University of Southampton, 2002 (“Re-orienting International Relations: On Pragmatism, Pluralism and Practical Reasoning,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Volume 31, Number 3, p. 655-657)

Commenting on the 'philosophical turn' in IR, Wæver remarks that '[a] frenzy for words like "epistemology" and "ontology" often signals this philosophical turn', although he goes on to comment that these terms are often used loosely.4 However, loosely deployed or not, it is clear that debates concerning ontology and epistemology play a central role in the contemporary IR theory wars. In one respect, this is unsurprising since it is a characteristic feature of the social sciences that periods of disciplinary disorientation involve recourse to reflection on the philosophical commitments of different theoretical approaches, and there is no doubt that such reflection can play a valuable role in making explicit the commitments that characterise (and help individuate) diverse theoretical positions. Yet, such a philosophical turn is not without its dangers and I will briefly mention three before turning to consider a confusion that has, I will suggest, helped to promote the IR theory wars by motivating this philosophical turn. The first danger with the philosophical turn is that it has an inbuilt tendency to prioritise issues of ontology and epistemology over explanatory and/or interpretive power as if the latter two were merely a simple function of the former. But while the explanatory and/or interpretive power of a theoretical account is not wholly independent of its ontological and/or epistemological commitments (otherwise criticism of these features would not be a criticism that had any value), it is by no means clear that it is, in contrast, wholly dependent on these philosophical commitments. Thus, for example, one need not be sympathetic to rational choice theory [end page 655] to recognise that it can provide powerful accounts of certain kinds of problems, such as the tragedy of the commons in which dilemmas of collective action are foregrounded. It may, of course, be the case that the advocates of rational choice theory cannot give a good account of why this type of theory is powerful in accounting for this class of problems (i.e., how it is that the relevant actors come to exhibit features in these circumstances that approximate the assumptions of rational choice theory) and, if this is the case, it is a philosophical weakness—but this does not undermine the point that, for a certain class of problems, rational choice theory may provide the best account available to us. In other words, while the critical judgement of theoretical accounts in terms of their ontological and/or epistemological sophistication is one kind of critical judgement, it is not the only or even necessarily the most important kind. The second danger run by the philosophical turn is that because prioritisation of ontology and epistemology promotes theory-construction from philosophical first principles, it cultivates a theory-driven rather than problem-driven approach to IR. Paraphrasing Ian Shapiro, the point can be put like this: since it is the case that there is always a plurality of possible true descriptions of a given action, event or phenomenon, the challenge is to decide which is the most apt in terms of getting a perspicuous grip on the action, event or phenomenon in question given the purposes of the inquiry; yet, from this standpoint, 'theory-driven work is part of a reductionist program' in that it 'dictates always opting for the description that calls for the explanation that flows from the preferred model or theory'.5 The justification offered for this strategy rests on the mistaken belief that it is necessary for social science because general explanations are required to characterise the classes of phenomena studied in similar terms. However, as Shapiro points out, this is to misunderstand the enterprise of science since 'whether there are general explanations for classes of phenomena is a question for social-scientific inquiry, not to be prejudged before conducting that inquiry'.6 Moreover, this strategy easily slips into the promotion of the pursuit of generality over that of empirical validity. The third danger is that the preceding two combine to encourage the formation of a particular image of disciplinary debate in IR—what might be called (only slightly tongue in cheek) 'the Highlander view'—namely, an image of warring theoretical approaches with each, despite occasional temporary tactical alliances, dedicated to the strategic achievement of sovereignty over the disciplinary field. It encourages this view because the turn to, and prioritisation of, ontology and epistemology stimulates [end page 656] the idea that there can only be one theoretical approach which gets things right, namely, the theoretical approach that gets its ontology and epistemology right. This image feeds back into IR exacerbating the first and second dangers, and so a potentially vicious circle arises.

A2: Ontology—Meditative Thought Causes Fascism

The pursuit of authenticity and the insistence on letting the world reveal itself results in fascist politics.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 128-132)

There is no explaining the "pure" experience. There is only the completely unwarranted presupposition that others should somehow "understand" that it has taken place. But the judgment of whether a "pure" rather than a secondary "experience" has actually occurred can, by definition, only be self-referential. And that would be in order if, simultaneously, there were not the presumption that something objectively meaningful about phenomenal reality had been illuminated. Or, putting it another way, the problem is not what James Joyce termed the "epiphany," the momentary glimpse of [end page 128] meaning experienced by an individual, but rather the refusal to define its existential "place" or recognize its explanatory limits. Within the existential tradition, Kierkegaard had probably the best appreciation for the paradoxical character of truth associated with the subjectivity of the subject. His rendering of the story about Abraham and Isaac in Fear and Trembling makes this clear. Kierkegaard describes how—having inwardly heard the word of God—the father stood ready to sacrifice his son. But intention was apparently enough for the Lord and so, just as Abraham was ready to strike down Isaac, He intervened. A lesser thinker would have left the matter at that. But Kierkegaard had a feeling for the ironic: he wrote for the individual in search of authentic experience and he knew the difficulties involved. But he also implicitly recognized the difference between public and private, and perhaps unintentionally the need for drawing that distinction, when he went on to ask what would have happened had Abraham actually struck down his son. He would then have had to bring the body back to his community, and tell its elders that the Lord had spoken to him and asked for a sacrifice. Here the more concrete experience of "fear and trembling" occurs: what the individual experiences as a "sacrifice" demanded by God can only be understood as "murder" by society. It becomes evident from Kierkegaard's discussion that, no matter what the good faith of the person hearing the divine word, the community cannot simply take the inner experience of the individual at face value. The discursive "truth" required by society is not the intense inner "truth" sought by the experiencing individual. Harboring a belief in the absolute character of revelatory truth obviously generates a division between the saved and the damned. There arises the simultaneous desire to abolish blasphemy and bring the heathen into the light. Not every person in quest of the "pure experience," of course, is a religious fanatic or obsessed with issues of identity. Making existential sense of reality through the pure experience, feeling a sense or belonging, is a serious matter and a legitimate undertaking. But the more the preoccupation with the purity of the experience, it only follows, the more fanatical the believer. In political terms, therefore, the problem is less the lack of intensity in the lived life of the individual than the increasing attempts by individuals and groups to insist that their own, particular, deeply felt existential or religious or aesthetic experience should be privileged in the public realm. Indeed, this runs directly counter to the Enlightenment. Its intellectuals did not insist that all should share the same religious, cultural, and personal interests and goals. Nor did cosmopolitans like Locke, [end page 129] Voltaire, or Kant offer a single road to truth. Few of the more important philosophes actually believed in the existence of a "truth"—mathematical or otherwise—capable of informing all the different realms of knowledge; but even if Helvetius did harbor such a belief,31 for example, he surely presupposed the right of others to challenge it. Most philosophes maintained that a diversity of interests and goals would enrich the public discourse and expand the possible range of experiences open to individuals. Agreement was demanded only on the right of each to pursue his or her beliefs or experiences and the need for institutions capable of guaranteeing that right. Different ideas have a different role in different spheres of social action. Subjectivity has a pivotal role to play in discussing existential or aesthetic experience while the universal subject is necessary for any democratic understanding of citizenship or the rule of law. From such a perspective, indeed, the seemingly irresolvable conflict between subjectivity and the subject becomes illusory: it is instead a matter of which should assume primacy in what realm. When it comes to political power, unfortunately, even the best believers in the "pure experience" are usually blinded by the light while the worst use their trans-historical categories to obscure the workings of social reality. That a tension exists between the experience of the particular, whose specific identity is grounded in empirical attributes and unique historical traditions, and the universal is undeniable: W.E.B. DuBois, for example, spoke of African-Americans retaining a "double consciousness" while Lion Feuchtwanger in his Josephus trilogy highlighted the conflict between ethnic loyalty and cosmopolitanism. From the standpoint of a socially constructed subjectivity, however, only members of the particular group can have the appropriate intuition or "experience," to make judgments about their culture or their politics. That is the sense in which Michel Foucault sought to substitute the "specific" for the "universal" intellectual.32 But this stance now embraced by so many on the left, however, actually derives from arguments generated first by the Counter-Enlightenment and then the radical right during the Dreyfus Affair. These reactionaries, too, claimed that rather than introduce "grand narratives" or "totalizing ambitions" or "universal" ideas of justice, intellectuals [end page 130] should commit themselves to the particular groups with whose unique discourses and experiences they, as individuals, are intimately and existentially familiar. The "pure"—or less contaminated—experience of group members was seen as providing them a privileged insight into a particular form of oppression. Criticism from the "outsider" loses its value and questions concerning the adjudication of differences between groups are never faced. Maurice Barrès, had already linked what he called the "cult of the self" with a fear of les déracinés. He and his comrades saw genuine interaction as taking place less between strangers confronting one another in a public sphere than between "brothers" or "sisters" or any group whose members shared a common background and "destiny." Only those experiencing themselves as members of the French community, for example, were considered capable of fully understanding why Dreyfus must be guilty: his defenders were simply deluded by universal notions of justice that derived— and this is crucial for the present discussion—more from the intellect and the democratic tradition than from the "experience" of being French. "Intellectuals" could now be derided for their critical rationalism and universalistic ambitions and for placing reason above experience, evidentiary truth above tradition, and human rights above the national community. "Authenticity" and cultural "roots"—what a genuine fascist, Mercea Eliade, termed the "ontological thirst" for primordial belonging—thus became the crucial criteria for judgment. Not every person who believes in the "pure experience"—again—was an anti-Semite or a fascist. But it is interesting how the "pure experience," with its vaunted contempt for the "public" and its social apathy, can be manipulated in the realm of politics. Utopia doesn't appear only in the idea of a former "golden age" located somewhere in the past or the vision of a future paradise. 33 Freedom also shimmers in the "pure experience" whether in the sophisticated critical version offered by Adorno or the revelatory unveiling of Being in the late Heidegger or the experiential insight of Nishida. Each expresses the longing for that moment untainted by the evils of reification or modernity. But history has shown the danger of turning "reason" into an enemy and condemning universal ideals in the name of some parochial sense of "place" rooted in a particular community. Or, put another way, [end page 131] where power matters the "pure" experience is never quite so pure and no "place" is sacrosanct. Better to be a bit more modest when confronting social reality and begin the real work of specifying conditions under which each can most freely pursue his or her existential longing and find a place in the sun.

A2: Ontology—Calculative Thought Key To Justice

Calculation is inevitable and good—their ethics justify the worst crimes against humanity.

David Campbell, Professor of International Politics at the University of Newcastle (England), 1999 (“The Deterritorialization of Responsibility: Levinas, Derrida, and Ethics after the End of Philosophy,” *Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics*, edited by David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro, Published by the University of Minnesota Press, ISBN 0816632758, p. 45-46)

That undecidability resides within the decision, Derrida argues, "that justice exceeds law and calculation, that the unpresentable exceeds the determinable cannot and should notserve as alibi for staying out of juridico-political battles, within an institution or a state, or between institutions [end page 45] or states and others."91 Indeed, "incalculable justice requires us to calculate." From where does this insistence come? What is behind, what is animating, these imperatives? It is both the character of infinite justice as a heteronomic relationship to the other, a relationship that because of its undecidability multiplies responsibility, and the fact that "left to itself, the incalculable and giving (*donatrice*) idea of justice is always very close to the bad, even to the worst, for it can always be reappropriated by the most perverse calculation."92 The necessity of calculating the incalculable thus responds to a duty, a duty that inhabits the instant of madness and compels the decision to avoid "the bad," the "perverse calculation," even "the worst." This is the duty that also dwells with deconstruction and makes it the starting point, the "at least necessary condition," for the organization of resistance to totalitarianism in all its forms. And it is a duty that responds to practical political concerns when we recognize that Derrida names the bad, the perverse, and the worst as those violences "we recognize all too well without yet having thought them through, the crimes of xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, religious or nationalist fanaticism."93

A2: Ontology—Calculative Thought Key To Justice

Calculation is key to justice—without engaging in political calculations, we cannot access the Other’s suffering.

Paul C. Santilli, Professor of Philosophy at Siena College, 2003 (“Radical Evil, Subjection, and Alain Badiou's Ethic of the Truth Event,” *World Congress of The International Society for Universal Dialogue*, May 18-22, Available Online at http://www.isud.org/papers/pdfs/Santilli.pdf, Accessed 12-05-2005)

From the standpoint of an ethics of subjection there is even something unnecessary or superfluous about the void of suffering in the subject bearers of evil. For Levinas, the return to being from the ethical encounter with the face and its infinite depths is fraught with the danger the subject will reduce the other to a "like-me," totalizing and violating the space of absolute alterity. As Chalier puts it, "Levinas conceives of the moral subject's awakening, or the emergence of the human in being, as a response to that pre-originary subjection which is not a happenstance of being."28 But if there really is something inaccessible about suffering itself, about the 'other' side of what is manifestly finite, subjected, and damaged, then to a certain extent it is irrelevant to ethics, as irrelevant as the judgment of moral progress in the subject-agent. Let me take the parent-child relation again as an example. Suppose the child to exhibit the symptoms of an illness. Are not the proper "ethical" questions for the parent to ask questions of measure and mathematical multiples: How high is the fever? How long has it lasted? How far is the hospital? Can she get out of bed? Has this happened before? These are the questions of the doctor, the rescue squads and the police. They are questions about being, about detail, causes and effects. Ethically our response to the needs of must be reduced to a positivity simply because we have access to nothing but the symptoms, which are like mine. Our primary moral responsibility is to treat the symptoms that show up in being, not the radically other with whom I cannot identify. Say we observe someone whose hands have been chopped off with a machete. How would we characterize this? Would it not be slightly absurd to say, "He had his limbs severed and he suffered," as though the cruel amputation were not horror enough. Think of the idiocy in the common platitude: "She died of cancer, but thank God, she did not suffer", as though the devastating annihilation of the human by a tumor were not evil itself. For ethics, then, the only [end page 20] suffering that matters are the visible effects of the onslaught of the world. All other suffering is excessive and inaccessible. Therefore, it is in being, indeed in the midst of the most elemental facts about ourselves and other people, that we ethically encounter others by responding to their needs and helping them as best we can. It is precisely by identifying being and not pretending that we know any thing about suffering, other than it is a hollow in the midst of being, that we can act responsibly. What worries me about Levinas is that by going beyond being to what he regards as the ethics of absolute alterity, he risks allowing the sheer, almost banal facticity of suffering to be swallowed in the infinite depths of transcendence. Indeed, it seems to me that Levinas too often over emphasizes the importance of the emergence of the subject and the inner good in the ethical encounter, as though the point of meeting the suffering human being was to come to an awareness of the good within oneself and not to heal and repair. I agree with Chalier's observation that Levinas's "analyses adopt the point of view of the moral subject, not that of a person who might be the object of its solicitude."29 Ethics has limits; there are situations like the Holocaust where to speak of a moral responsibility to heal and repair seems pathetic. But an ethics that would be oriented to the vulnerabilities of the subjected (which are others, of course, but also myself) needs to address the mutilation, dismemberment, the chronology of torture, the numbers incarcerated, the look of the bodies, the narratives, the blood counts, the mines knives, machetes, and poisons. Evil really is all that. When the mind does its work, it plunges into being, into mathematical multiples and starts counting the cells, the graveyards, and bullet wounds. Rational practical deliberation is always about the facts that encircle the void inaccessible to deliberation and practical reason.30

A2: Ontology—Problem-Solution Framework Good

Our problem-solution framework is good—their ontological criticism does nothing to confront the real harms of the status quo.

Darryl S. L. Jarvis, Director of the Research Institute for International Risk and Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Sydney, 2000 (*International Relations and the Challenge of Postmodernism: Defending the Discipline*, Published by the University of South Carolina Press, ISBN 1570033056, p. 128-129)

Perhaps more alarming though is the outright violence Ashley recommends in response to what at best seem trite, if not imagined, injustices. Inculpating modernity, positivism, technical rationality, or realism with violence, racism, war, and countless other crimes not only smacks of anthropomorphism but, as demonstrated by Ashley's torturous prose and reasoning, requires a dubious logic to make such connections in the first place. Are we really to believe that ethereal entities like positivism, modernism, or realism emanate a "violence" that marginalizes dissidents? Indeed, where is this violence, repression, and marginalization? As self-professed dissidents supposedly exiled from the discipline, Ashley and Walker appear remarkably well integrated into the academy—vocal, published, and at the center of the Third Debate and the forefront of theoretical research. Likewise, is Ashley seriously suggesting that, on the basis of this largely imagined violence, global transformation (perhaps even revolutionary violence) is a necessary, let alone desirable, response? Has the rationale for emancipation or the fight for justice been reduced to such vacuous revolutionary slogans as "Down with positivism and rationality"? The point is surely trite. Apart from members of the academy, who has heard of positivism and who for a moment imagines that they need to be emancipated from it, or from modernity, rationality, or realism for that matter? In an era of unprecedented change and turmoil, of new political and military configurations, of war in the Balkans and ethnic cleansing, is Ashley really suggesting that some of the greatest threats facing humankind or some of the great moments of history rest on such innocuous and largely unknown nonrealities like positivism and realism? These are imagined and fictitious enemies, theoretical fabrications that represent arcane, self-serving debates superfluous to the lives of most people and, arguably, to most issues of importance in international relations. More is the pity that such irrational and obviously abstruse debate should so occupy us at a time of great global turmoil. That it does and continues to do so reflects our lack of judicious criteria for evaluating theory and, more importantly, the lack of attachment theorists have to the real world. Certainly it is right and proper that we ponder the depths of our theoretical imaginations, engage in epistemological and ontological debate, and analyze the sociology of our knowledge.37 But to suppose that [end page 128] this is the only risk of international theory, let alone the most important one, smacks of intellectual elitism and displays a certain contempt for those who search for guidance in their daily struggles as actors in international politics. What does Ashley's project, his deconstructive efforts, or valiant fight against positivism say to the truly marginalized, oppressed, and destitute! How does it help solve the plight of the poor, the displaced refugees, the casualties of war, or the emigres of death squads? Does it in any way speak to those whose actions and thoughts comprise the policy and practice of international relations? On all these questions one must answer no. This is not to say, of course, that all theory should be judged by its technical rationality and problem-solving capacity as Ashley forcefully argues. But to suppose that problem-solving technical theory is not necessary—or is in some way bad—is a contemptuous position that abrogates any hope of solving some of the nightmarish realities that millions confront daily. As Holsti argues, we need ask of these theorists and their theories the ultimate question, "So what!" To what purpose do they deconstruct, problematize, destabilize, undermine, ridicule, and belittle modernist and rationalist approaches? Does this get us any further, make the world any better, or enhance the human condition? In what sense can this "debate toward [a] bottomless pit of epistemology and metaphysics" be judged pertinent, relevant, helpful, or cogent to anyone other than those foolish enough to be scholastically excited by abstract and recondite debate.38 Contrary to Ashley's assertions, then, a poststructural approach fails to empower the marginalized and, in fact, abandons them. Rather than analyze the political economy of power, wealth, oppression, production, or international relations and render an intelligible understanding of these processes, Ashley succeeds in ostracizing those he portends to represent by delivering an obscure and highly convoluted discourse. If Ashley wishes to chastise structural realism for its abstractness and detachment, he must be prepared also to face similar criticism, especially when he so adamantly intends his work to address the real life plight of those who struggle at marginal places.

A2: Ontology—Technology Inevitable/Good

Technology is inevitable and good—the way we *use* technology is up to us–technological thought is needed to determine our technology future.

Andrew Feenberg, Canada Research Chair in Philosophy of Technology in the School of Communication and Director of the Applied Communication and Technology Lab at Simon Fraser University, 1996 (“From Essentialism to Constructivism: Philosophy of Technology at the Crossroads,” Available Online at http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/talk4.html, Accessed 07-31-2010)

Essentialist theories of technology define the technical in terms of the primary instrumentalization alone. At that level it seems possible to abstract technology from society, while the secondary instrumentalizations are transparently social, with the exception of some types of systematization. They lie at the intersection of technique and the other action systems with which it is inextricably linked insofar as it is a social enterprise. As a result, socially specific configurations of the secondary instrumentalizations are as variable as the contexts to which technique is integrated, subject to transformations corresponding to distinct eras in the history of technical systems and technical rationalities. For example, a dimension of technology such as vocation may be central to technical life in one era and eliminated as much as possible through deskilling in another. From this anti-essentialist standpoint, our form of modern society cannot be the untranscendable horizon of technical possibilities, defining for modernity in general. But neither can we conceive of a general deglobalization of modern societies, a splitting up of modernity into incommunicable varieties. The shared technical heritage provides what might be called a "practical universality" that has imposed itself on a planetary scale. No modern society can forego basic technical discoveries such as antibiotics, plastics or electricity, and none can withdraw from worldwide communication networks. The cost of an entirely independent path of development is just too high. But both in the advanced and the developing countries, significant innovations are possible with respect to what has been the main line of progress up to now. The terrain of practical universality is accessible from many standpoints for many purposes. It is not a destiny, but the place on which destinies can be worked out. It first emerged in the capitalist West around a particular panoply of technologies and rational systems. These intentionally deemphasized most secondary instrumentalizations with consequences we now experience as cultural homogenization, social anomie and environmental crisis. The threat of technology is due to this particular realization of its potential. This conclusion invites us to consider the possibility of an alternative form of technical rationality that would integrate the secondary instrumentalizations more fully through new concretizations. On this basis, I have argued elsewhere for a reform of modern technology to incorporate workers' skills, human communication, and environmental limits into its very structure (Feenberg, 1991: chap. 8). Similar arguments could be made with respect to the possibility of culturally specific technological configurations (Feenberg, 1995: chap. 9). The scope and significance of such change is potentially enormous. Technical choices establish the horizons of daily life. These choices define a "world" within which the specific alternatives we think of as purposes, goals, uses, emerge. They also define the subject who chooses among the alternatives: we make ourselves in making the world through technology. Thus fundamental technological change is self-referential. At issue is becoming, not having. The goal is to define a way of life, an ideal of abundance, and a human type, not just to obtain more goods in the prevailing socio-economic system. As Terry Winograd argues, technological designing is ontological designing (Winograd and Flores, 1987: 163). Unexpected struggles over issues such as nuclear power, access to experimental treatment for AIDS patients, and user participation in computer design remind us that the technological future is by no means predetermined. To the extent that such struggles spread, we can hope to inhabit a very different future from the one projected by essentialist critique. In that future technology is not a fate one must chose for or against, but a challenge to political and social creativity.

A2: Ontology—A2: Technology Destroys Human Essence

Their argument is a caricature—Enlightenment values are not an attempt to remake human nature but to free individuals from oppressive forces.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 38)

Traditionalists have tended to understand progress as a linear development in terms of which humanity advances steadily in a definite and desirable direction.53 That made it easy for them to then identify the Enlightenment with unbounded optimism, teleological determinism, and a utopian belief in human perfectibility. But this is a caricature. It was generally assumed by the philosophes—for without such an assumption any serious notion of either moral development or democracy is impossible—that individuals can act responsibly and employ both "common sense" and critical reflection. But the Enlightenment did not seek to bring about a change in human nature, only in the judgment of human behavior. Its leading intellectuals refused to sanction any institutional attempts to impose belief by fiat or exercise power in an arbitrary fashion. They were concerned with expanding the realm of freedom, the range of choices available for the individual, and it was in order to mitigate the drudgery of existence that they stressed the liberating affects of technology.54

A2: Ontology—A2: Technology Dominates Nature

This is not intrinsic to technology.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 160-161)

Enlightenment thinking is not intrinsically committed to treating nature as an object for technical manipulation. But, if it were, the need would exist for a philosophical corrective. This would allow nature to be treated as a subject in its own right or, better, with pressing needs that underpin our own as a species. Revising narrow definitions of "evidence" will prove necessary to bring that about and it will prove necessary to revise existing standards of accountability for dealing with conditions in which human interaction [end page 160] with nature is becoming ever more specialized, bureaucratic, and complex. In theoretical terms, it may even be necessary to move a step further. Ernst Bloch, for example, sought to counter an unreflective mechanical materialism—empiricism and positivism—by making reference to what he considered the repressed tradition of the "Aristotelian left" that reaches back over Schelling, Spinoza, and Leibniz to Giordano Bruno and then to Avicenna, Averroes, and Plotinus.8 This philosophical tendency posits the existence of a "life-force" (natura naturans) beyond the stratum of nature (natura naturata) that vulgar materialists reduce to its constituent parts. With this vital and "living" notion of nature, which suggests that the whole is more than the sum of its empirical parts, the idea of an ecosystem takes on new meaning. Such a stance, in principle, is less a rejection than a logical outgrowth of Enlightenment thought. It is the same when considering cruelty to animals and other sentient beings.

\*\*\* A2: Epistemology Critiques

A2: Epistemology—Truth Exists And Is Good

The real world exists and so does Truth—their rejection of evidence and logic surrenders hope for effectively confronting all major impacts.

Alan Sokal, Professor of Physics at New York University, 1996 (“A Physicist Experiments With Cultural Studies,” *Lingua Franca*, May/June, Available Online at http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/9605/sokal.html, Accessed 07-31-2010)

Why did I do it? While my method was satirical, my motivation is utterly serious. What concerns me is the proliferation, not just of nonsense and sloppy thinking per se, but of a particular kind of nonsense and sloppy thinking: one that denies the existence of objective realities, or (when challenged) admits their existence but downplays their practical relevance. At its best, a journal like Social Text raises important issues that no scientist should ignore--questions, for example, about how corporate and government funding influence scientific work. Unfortunately, epistemic relativism does little to further the discussion of these matters. In short, my concern about the spread of subjectivist thinking is both intellectual and political. Intellectually, the problem with such doctrines is that they are false (when not simply meaningless). There is a real world; its properties are not merely social constructions; facts and evidence do matter. What sane person would contend otherwise? And yet, much contemporary academic theorizing consists precisely of attempts to blur these obvious truths. Social Text's acceptance of my article exemplifies the intellectual arrogance of Theory--postmodernist literary theory, that is--carried to its logical extreme. No wonder they didn't bother to consult a physicist. If all is discourse and "text," then knowledge of the real world is superfluous; even physics becomes just another branch of cultural studies. If, moreover, all is rhetoric and language games, then internal logical consistency is superfluous too: a patina of theoretical sophistication serves equally well. Incomprehensibility becomes a virtue; allusions, metaphors, and puns substitute for evidence and logic. My own article is, if anything, an extremely modest example of this well-established genre. Politically, I'm angered because most (though not all) of this silliness is emanating from the self-proclaimed Left. We're witnessing here a profound historical volte-face. For most of the past two centuries, the Left has been identified with science and against obscurantism; we have believed that rational thought and the fearless analysis of objective reality (both natural and social) are incisive tools for combating the mystifications promoted by the powerful—not to mention being desirable human ends in their own right. The recent turn of many "progressive" or "leftist" academic humanists and social scientists toward one or another form of epistemic relativism betrays this worthy heritage and undermines the already fragile prospects for progressive social critique. Theorizing about "the social construction of reality" won't help us find an effective treatment for AIDS or devise strategies for preventing global warming. Nor can we combat false ideas in history, sociology, economics, and politics if we reject the notions of truth and falsity.

A2: Epistemology—Truth Exists And Is Good

The fact that people say things that are wrong doesn’t mean that science and logic can’t bring us closer to the Truth—their criticism is the worst form of anti-intellectual relativism.

Alan **Sokal**, Professor of Physics at New York University, **1996** (“A Plea for Reason, Evidence and Logic,” Talk Presented at a Forum at New York University, October 26th, Available Online at http://www.physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/nyu\_forum.html, Accessed 07-31-2010)

I didn't write the parody for the reasons you might at first think. My aim wasn't to defend science from the barbarian hordes of lit crit or sociology. I know perfectly well that the main threats to science nowadays come from budget-cutting politicians and corporate executives, not from a handful of postmodernist academics. Rather, my goal is to defend what one might call a scientific worldview -- defined broadly as a respect for evidence and logic, and for the incessant confrontation of theories with the real world; in short, for reasoned argument over wishful thinking, superstition and demagoguery. And my motives for trying to defend these old-fashioned ideas are basically political. I'm worried about trends in the American Left -- particularly here in academia -- that at a minimum divert us from the task of formulating a progressive social critique, by leading smart and committed people into trendy but ultimately empty intellectual fashions, and that can in fact undermine the prospects for such a critique, by promoting subjectivist and relativist philosophies that in my view are inconsistent with producing a realistic analysis of society that we and our fellow citizens will find compelling. David Whiteis, in a recent article, said it well: Too many academics, secure in their ivory towers and insulated from the real-world consequences of the ideas they espouse, seem blind to the fact that non-rationality has historically been among the most powerful weapons in the ideological arsenals of oppressors. The hypersubjectivity that characterizes postmodernism is a perfect case in point: far from being a legacy of leftist iconoclasm, as some of its advocates so disingenuously claim, it in fact ... plays perfectly into the anti-rationalist -- really, anti-thinking -- bias that currently infects "mainstream" U.S. culture. Along similar lines, the philosopher of science Larry Laudan observed caustically that the displacement of the idea that facts and evidence matter by the idea that everything boils down to subjective interests and perspectives is -- second only to American political campaigns -- the most prominent and pernicious manifestation of anti-intellectualism in our time. (And these days, being nearly as anti-intellectual as American political campaigns is really quite a feat.) Now of course, no one will admit to being against reason, evidence and logic – that's like being against Motherhood and Apple Pie. Rather, our postmodernist and poststructuralist friends will claim to be in favor of some new and deeper kind of reason, such as the celebration of "local knowledges" and "alternative ways of knowing" as an antidote to the so-called "Eurocentric scientific methodology" (you know, things like systematic experiment, controls, replication, and so forth). You find this magic phrase "local knowledges" in, for example, the articles of Andrew Ross and Sandra Harding in the "Science Wars" issue of Social Text. But are "local knowledges" all that great? And when local knowledges conflict, which local knowledges should we believe? In many parts of the Midwest, the "local knowledges" say that you should spray more herbicides to get bigger crops. It's old-fashioned objective science that can tell us which herbicides are poisonous to farm workers and to people downstream. Here in New York City, lots of "local knowledges" hold that there's a wave of teenage motherhood that's destroying our moral fiber. It's those boring data that show that the birth rate to teenage mothers has been essentially constant since 1975, and is about half of what it was in the good old 1950's. Another word for "local knowledges" is prejudice. I'm sorry to say it, but under the influence of postmodernism some very smart people can fall into some incredibly sloppy thinking, and I want to give two examples. The first comes from a front-page article in last Tuesday's New York Times (10/22/96) about the conflict between archaeologists and some Native American creationists. I don't want to address here the ethical and legal aspects of this controversy -- who should control the use of 10,000-year-old human remains -- but only the epistemic issue. There are at least two competing views on where Native American populations come from. The scientific consensus, based on extensive archaeological evidence, is that humans first entered the Americas from Asia about 10-20,000 years ago, crossing the Bering Strait. Many Native American creation accounts hold, on the other hand, that native peoples have always lived in the Americas, ever since their ancestors emerged onto the surface of the earth from a subterranean world of spirits. And the Times article observed that many archaeologists, "pulled between their scientific temperaments and their appreciation for native culture, ... have been driven close to a postmodern relativism in which science is just one more belief system." For example, Roger Anyon, a British archaeologist who has worked for the Zuni people, was quoted as saying that "Science is just one of many ways of knowing the world. ... [The Zunis' world view is] just as valid as the archeological viewpoint of what prehistory is about." Now, perhaps Dr. Anyon was misquoted, but we all have repeatedly heard assertions of this kind, and I'd like to ask what such assertions could possibly mean. We have here two mutually incompatible theories. They can't both be right; they can't both even be approximately right. They could, of course, both be wrong, but I don't imagine that that's what Dr. Anyon means by "just as valid". It seems to me that Anyon has quite simply allowed his political and cultural sympathies to cloud his reasoning. And there's no justification for that: We can perfectly well remember the victims of a horrible genocide, and support their descendants' valid political goals, without endorsing uncritically (or hypocritically) their societies' traditional creation myths. Moreover, the relativists' stance is extremely condescending: it treats a complex society as a monolith, obscures the conflicts within it, and takes its most obscurantist factions as spokespeople for the whole. My second example of sloppy thinking comes from Social Text co-editor Bruce Robbins' article in the September/October 1996 Tikkun magazine, in which he tries to defend -- albeit half-heartedly -- the postmodernist/poststructuralist subversion of conventional notions of truth. "Is it in the interests of women, African Americans, and other super-exploited people," Robbins asks, "to insist that truth and identity are social constructions? Yes and no," he asserts. "No, you can't talk about exploitation without respect for empirical evidence" -- exactly my point. "But yes," Robbins continues, "truth can be another source of oppression." Huh??? How can truth oppress anyone? Well, Robbins' very next sentence explains what he means: "It was not so long ago," he says, "that scientists gave their full authority to explanations of why women and African Americans ... were inherently inferior." But is Robbins claiming that that is truth? I should hope not! Sure, lots of people say things about women and African-Americans that are not true; and yes, those falsehoods have sometimes been asserted in the name of "science", "reason" and all the rest. But claiming something doesn't make it true, and the fact that people – including scientists – sometimes make false claims doesn't mean that we should reject or revise the concept of truth. Quite the contrary: it means that we should examine with the utmost care the evidence underlying people's truth claims, and we should reject assertions that in our best rational judgment are false.

A2: Epistemology—Epistemological Pragmatism Good

The fact that “capital T truth” doesn’t exist doesn’t deny the necessity of logic and evidence—Incomplete knowledge is still a useful to guide action.

Rudra Sil, Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, 2000 (“Against Epistemological Absolutism: Toward a 'Pragmatic' Center?,” *Beyond Boundaries?: Disciplines, Paradigms, and Theoretical Integration in International Studies*, Edited by Rudra Sil and Eileen M. Doherty, Published by SUNY Press, ISBN 0791445976, p. 161)

In the end, there may be no alternative to relying on the judgment of other human beings, and this judgment is difficult to form in the absence of empirical findings. However, instead of clinging to the elusive idea of a uniform standard for the empirical validation of theories, it is possible to simply present a set of observational statements—whether we call it "data" or "narrative"—for the modest purpose of rendering an explanation or interpretation more plausible than the audience would allow at the outset. In practice, this is precisely what the most committed positivists and interpretivists have been doing anyway; the presentation of "logically consistent" hypotheses "supported by data" and the ordering of facts in a "thick" narrative are both ultimately designed to convince scholars that a particular proposition should be taken more seriously than others. Social analysis is not about final truths or objective realities, but nor does it have to be a meaningless world of incommensurable theories where anything goes. Instead, it can be an ongoing collective endeavor to develop, evaluate, and refine general inferences—be they in the form of models, partial explanations, descriptive inferences, or interpretations—in order to render them more "sensible" or "plausible" to a particular audience. In the absence of a consensus on the possibility and desirability of a full-blown explanatory science of international and social life, it is important to keep as many doors open as possible. This does not require us to accept each and every claim without some sort of validation, but perhaps the community of scholars can be more tolerant about the kinds of empirical referents and logical propositions that are employed in validating propositions by scholars embracing all but the most extreme epistemological positions.

A2: Epistemology—Epistemological Pragmatism Good

Epistemological pragmatism creates the best chance for dialogue and accurate knowledge – their criticism results in devastating academic balkanization.

Rudra Sil, Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, 2000 (“Against Epistemological Absolutism: Toward a 'Pragmatic' Center?,” *Beyond Boundaries?: Disciplines, Paradigms, and Theoretical Integration in International Studies*, Edited by Rudra Sil and Eileen M. Doherty, Published by SUNY Press, ISBN 0791445976, p. 166)

In the final analysis, it may be best to regard the entire process of social research as an ongoing collective search for meanings by a community of scholars. This search may not result in any definitive answers to theoretical or practical questions given the diverse foundations informing the puzzles, texts, and models that preoccupy members of this community. Nevertheless, thanks to the mediating role played by those subscribing to a pragmatic epistemological middle-ground, the process can still yield valuable insights, partial explanations, and even modest "lessons" and that can be judged as more or less convincing in the eyes of one's audience whether this audience consists of academic peers, the lay public at large, or the policy-making community. In an era of increasingly divided disciplines, scholars adopting a more pragmatic epistemological "middle ground," by virtue of their agnosticism, are likely to make the most critical contributions to whatever cumulation of knowledge is possible in the social sciences. These scholars are in a better position than those at the extreme ends for the purpose of generating and sustaining greater dialogue across different disciplines, theoretical approaches and intellectual movements precisely because their assumptions prevent them from hastily dismissing a study on grounds that are only meaningful to a subgroup within the wider community of scholars. In the absence of meaningful dialogue across different intellectual communities—whether delimited by disciplines, paradigms or methodological schools—the social sciences risk becoming permanently "balkanized" with scholars passing up opportunities to glean valuable insights from intellectual products developed on the basis of different foundational assumptions.

A2: Epistemology—Social Constructionism Bad

Their critique of Truth is self-evidently wrong—acknowledging the social context of knowledge does not mean that anything goes—their authors commit the genetic fallacy.

Mark Bauerlein, Professor of English at Emory University, 2001 (“Social Constructionism: Philosophy for the Academic Workplace,” *Partisan Review*, Volume LXVIII, Number 2, Available Online at http://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/archive/2001/2/bauerlein.html, Accessed 07-31-2010)

One can prove the institutional nature of social constructionism by noting how easy it is to question. The weakness of social constructionism as an epistemology lies in the fact that one can agree with the bare premise that knowledge is a construct, but disagree with the conclusion that objectivity is impossible and that the contents of knowledge are dependent upon the social conditions of the knower. Of course, knowledge is constructed. It must be expressed in language, composed methodically, conceived through mental views, all of which are historically derived. Constructionists extend the fact that knowledge materializes in cognitive and linguistic structures which have social determinants into the belief that knowledge has no claim to transcend them. That knowledge cannot transcend the conditions of its origination stems from the notion that cognition is never innocent, that cognition has designs and desires shaping its knowledge-building process, that knowing always has an instrumental purpose. This human dimension is local and situational, constructionists argue, a historical context for knowledge outside of which the knowledge has no general warrant. Even the most ahistorical kinds of knowledge, the principles of logic, mathematics, and science, have a social basis, one obscured by thinkers who have abstracted that knowledge from its rightful setting and used it for purposes of their own. Thus Martin Heidegger claims in a well-known illustration, "Before Newton’s laws were discovered, they were not ‘true’. . . .Through Newton the laws became true" (Being and Time). We only think the laws preceded Newton’s conception because, Heidegger explains, that is how entities "show themselves." But even though Newton’s laws arose at a particular historical moment, in one man’s mind, why assume that the laws are inextricable from that moment? There is abundant evidence for believing that the truth of Newton’s laws is independent of Newton’s mind, language, class, education, etc. The simple fact that persons of different languages and cultures implement those laws effectively implies their transhistorical and cross-cultural capacity. Engineers and physicists confirm the laws daily without any knowledge of Newton’s circumstances. Three hundred years of experimentation and theory have altered Newton’s laws only by restricting their physical purview. In short, Newton’s laws have been justified in vastly different times and places. Yes, scientists and engineers have de-historicized Newtonian knowledge, pared it down to a few set principles (nobody actually reads the Principia). But though abstract and expedient, the laws of Newtonian physics still have a truth-value, and that value is related not to Newton’s world, but to how well the laws predict outcomes, how reliably they stand up to testing, how useful they are in physical domains. To think otherwise is to deny the distinction between the contents of knowledge and the context of their emergence. This is an old logical mistake, namely, the genetic fallacy: the confusion of a theory’s discovery with its justification. Social constructionists overlook this distinction between discovery (the circumstances of a theory’s origin) and justification (the establishment of its truth). To them, the idea of separating truth from origin depletes thought of its historical reality, and ultimately smacks of formalist methods and mandarin motives. Constructionists grant that the discovery/justification point may be logically correct, but in slighting historical context, it can lead to a kind of neglect, whereby the abstract consideration of theories like Newton’s laws allows us to forget, say, the race, class, and gender privileges that freed Newton to excogitate upon falling bodies. Epistemologists counter by saying that historical inquiry is one thing, truth-determination is another, but for scholars raised on Foucault and Rorty, the division is never so neat and clear. The history of scholarship itself reveals too many instances of ideas once thought to be true later exposed as alibis for social inequities, as having more institutional-use value than abstract-truth value. Only a punctual inventory of a theory’s historical entanglements has saved scholars from misusing the theory, from fomenting its implicit and perhaps malignant politics. That is the real animus behind social constructionist commitments–not a philosophical belief about knowledge, but a moral obligation to social justice.

A2: Epistemology—Social Constructionism Bad

Their skepticism is just an excuse not to do the required research—prefer our scholarly evidence to their postmodern jive.

Mark Bauerlein, Professor of English at Emory University, 2001 (“Social Constructionism: Philosophy for the Academic Workplace,” *Partisan Review*, Volume LXVIII, Number 2, Available Online at http://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/archive/2001/2/bauerlein.html, Accessed 07-31-2010)

This is the bare and banal advantage of social constructionism: it saves time. Truth, facts, objectivity–those require too much reading, too many library visits, too much time soliciting interlibrary loan materials, scrolling through microfilm records, double-checking sources, and looking beyond academic trends that come and go. A philosophy that discredits the foundations of such time-consuming research is a professional blessing. It is the belief-system of inquirers who need an alibi for not reading the extra book, traveling to the other archives, or listening to the other point of view. This is why constructionism is the prevailing creed in the humanities today. It is the epistemology of scholarship in haste, of professors under the gun. As soon as the humanities embraced a productivity model of merit, empiricism and erudition became institutional dead ends, and constructionism emerged as the method of the fittest. Scholars may have initially embraced constructionism as a philosophical position, but the evolution of constructionism into a brash institutional maneuvering indicates that it now functions as a response to a changing labor environment. How unfortunate that humanities faculty did not fight back against the productivity standard as soon as it arose and insist that scholars need time to read, time to reflect, time to test ideas in the classroom and at conferences if they are to come up with anything lasting. What a shame that they were able to concoct a mode of thought that cooperated with the quantification system, a plan of survival that now stands as the academic wisdom of the age.

A2: Epistemology—Social Constructionism Bad

Just because something is social constructed doesn’t mean we don’t have to act politically – the plan is still a good idea.

Darryl S. L. Jarvis, Director of the Research Institute for International Risk and Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Sydney, 2000 (*International Relations and the Challenge of Postmodernism: Defending the Discipline*, Published by the University of South Carolina Press, ISBN 1570033056, p. 129-130)

If the relevance of Ashley's project is questionable, so too is its logic and cogency. First, we might ask to what extent the postmodern "emphasis on the textual, constructed nature of the world" represents "an unwarranted extension of approaches appropriate for literature to other areas of human practice that are more constrained by an objective reality."39 All theory is socially constructed and realities like the nation-state, domestic and international politics, regimes, or transnational agencies are obviously [end page 129] social fabrications. But to what extent is this observation of any real use? Just because we acknowledge that the state is a socially fabricated entity, or that the division between domestic and international society is arbitrarily inscribed does not make the reality of the state disappear or render invisible international politics. Whether socially constructed or objectively given, the argument over the ontological status of the state is of no particular moment. Does this change our experience of the state or somehow diminish the political-economic-juridical-military functions of the state? To recognize that states are not naturally inscribed but dynamic entities continually in the process of being made and reimposed and are therefore culturally dissimilar, economically different, and politically atypical, while perspicacious to our historical and theoretical understanding of the state, in no way detracts from its reality, practices, and consequences. Similarly, few would object to Ashley's hermeneutic interpretivist understanding of the international sphere as an artificially inscribed demarcation. But, to paraphrase Holsti again, so what? This does not make its effects any less real, diminish its importance in our lives, or excuse us from paying serious attention to it. That international politics and states would not exist without subjectivities is a banal tautology. The point, surely, is to move beyond this and study these processes. Thus, while intellectually interesting, constructivist theory is not an end point as Ashley seems to think, where we all throw up our hands and announce there are no foundations and all reality is an arbitrary social construction. Rather, it should be a means of recognizing the structurated nature of our being and the reciprocity between subjects and structures through history. Ashley, however, seems not to want to do this, but only to deconstruct the state, international politics, and international theory on the basis that none of these is objectively given but fictitious entities that arise out of modernist practices of representation. While an interesting theoretical enterprise, it is of no great consequence to the study of international politics. Indeed, structuration theory has long taken care of these ontological dilemmas that otherwise seem to preoccupy Ashley.40

A2: Epistemology—Expert Testimony Good

Expert testimony is good—complex issues require sophisticated solutions grounded in technocratic analysis.

Stephen Eric **Bronner**, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 77-78)

But praise for the amateur also has its limits. To ignore the need for critical disciplinary intellectuals with various forms of scientific expertise is to [end page 77] abdicate responsibility for a host of issues involving knowledge of fields ranging from physics and genetics to electronics and even environmentalism. There is surely an overabundance of jargon and mystification and, as has been mentioned before, the need exists for a new sensitivity to the vernacular.39 But it is also the case that complex issues sometimes require complex language and, often for good reasons, fields generate their own vocabularies. A judgment is undoubtedly necessary with respect to whether the language employed in a work is necessary for illuminating the issue under investigation: that judgment, however, can never be made in advance. There must be a place for the technocrat with a political conscience as surely as for the humanist with a particular specialty. The battle against oppression requires a multi-frontal strategy. Best to consider the words of Primo Levi who understands the critical intellectual as a "person educated beyond his daily trade, whose culture is alive insofar as it makes an effort to renew itself, and keep up to date, and who does not react with indifference or irritation when confronted by any branch of knowledge, even though, obviously, he cannot cultivate all of them."40

A2: Epistemology—Instrumental Scientific Rationality Good

Instrumental scientific rationality is a prerequisite for subverting arbitrary authority and fostering political equality—verification and falsifiability are key to effective resistance.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 159-160)

Much has been written about the need for a "new science" no longer defined by instrumental rationality and incapable of reifying the world. But these new undertakings always seem to ignore the need for criteria of verification or falsification; science without such criteria is, however, no science at all. Contempt for "instrumental" scientific rationality, moreover, undermines the possibility of meaningful dialogue between the humanities and the sciences. And that is a matter of crucial importance: popular debates are now taking place on issues ranging from the eco-system to cloning, the assumptions of western medicine to the possibilities of acupuncture, using animals for experiments to state support for space travel. This shows ethical progress, again perhaps not in the sense that people have become more "moral," but surely in the sense that more questions of everyday life have become open to moral debate. Science has not eroded ethics. The Frankfurt School misjudged the impact of science from the beginning. It is still the case that the science plays a crucial role in subverting religious authority, and fostering political equality by enabling each to judge the veracity of truth claims. There is also nothing exaggerated in the claim [end page 159] that "the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century was perhaps the single greatest influence on the development of the idea that political resistance is a legitimate act."6

Technological solutions based on scientific rationality are vital – the alternative is like using an umbrella to defend against a hurricane.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 160)

Critics of the Enlightenment may have correctly emphasized the price of progress, the costs of alienation and reification, and the dangers posed by technology and scientific expertise for nature and a democratic society. Even so, however, this does not justify romantic attempts to roll back technology. They conflate far too easily with ideological justifications for rolling back the interventionist state and progressive legislation for cleaning up the environment. Such a stance also pits the Enlightenment against environmentalism: technology, instrumental rationality, and progress are often seen as inimical to preserving the planet. Nevertheless, this is to misconstrue the problem. Technology is crucial for dealing with the ecological devastation brought about by modernity. A redirection of technology will undoubtedly have to take place: but seeking to confront the decay of the environment without it is like using an umbrella to defend against a hurricane. Institutional action informed by instrumental rationality and guided by scientific specialists is unavoidable. Investigations are necessary into the ways government can influence ecologically sound production, provide subsidies or tax-benefits for particular industries, fund particular forms of knowledge creation, and make "risks" a matter of public debate. It is completely correct to note that: "neither controversial social issues nor cultural concerns can be settled simply by scientific fiat, particularly in a world where experts usually disagree and where science can be compromised by institutional sponsors. No laboratory can dictate what industrial practices are tolerable or what degree of industrialization is permissible. These questions transcend the crude categories of technical criteria and slide-rule measurements."7

A2: Epistemology—Rejection Of Science Bad

Rejection of science and instrumental rationality is disastrous—it leaves us without grounds to choose between competing theories, it justifies racism, and it conflates the method of science with the context in which it is carried out.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 162-163)

Reclaiming the Enlightenment calls for clarifying the aims of an educated sensibility in a disenchanted world. But this requires science. The assault upon its "instrumental" character or its "method" by self-styled radicals trained only in the humanities or social sciences is a self-defeating enterprise. Criticizing "bourgeois" science" is meaningful only with criteria for verification or falsification that are rigorous, demonstrable, and open to public scrutiny. Without such criteria, the critical enterprise turns into a caricature of itself: creationism becomes as "scientific" as evolution, astrology as instructive as astronomy, prayer as legitimate a way of dealing with disease as medicine, and the promise of Krishna to help the righteous a way of justifying the explosion of a nuclear device by India.10 Striking is how the emphasis on "local knowledge"—a stance in which all science is seen as ethno-science with standards rooted in a particular culture11—withdraws objectivity, turns the abdication of judgment into a principle of judgment, [end page 162] and recalls what was once a right-wing preoccupation with "Jewish physics," "Italian mathematics," and the like. Forgotten is that those who do physics or biology or mathematics all do it the same way or, better, allow for open scrutiny of their own way of doing it. The validity of science does not rest on its ability to secure an "absolute" philosophical grounding, but rather on its universality and its salience in dealing with practical problems. There is a difference between the immanent method of science and the external context in which it was forged. The sociology of science is a completely legitimate endeavor. It only makes sense to consider, for example, how an emerging capitalist production process with imperialistic aspirations provided the external context in which modern science arose. But it is illegitimate to reduce science to that context or judge its immanent workings from the standpoint of what externally inspired its development.12

A2: Epistemology—A2: Critiques Of Scientific Progress

Science is not characterized by a grand march to progress – their caricature of Enlightenment values gets it exactly backward.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 21-23)

Something will always be missing: freedom will never become fully manifest in reality. The relation between them is asymptotic. Therefore, most [end page 21] philosophes understood progress as a regulative ideal, or as a postulate, rather than as an absolute or the expression of some divine plane or the foundation for a system.14 Even in scientific terms, progress retained a critical dimension insofar as it implied the need to question established certainties. In this vein, it is misleading simply to equate scientific reason with the domination of man and nature.15 All the great figures of the scientific revolution—Bacon, Boyle, Newton—were concerned with liberating humanity from what seemed the power of seemingly intractable forces. Swamps were everywhere; roads were few; forests remained to be cleared; illness was rampant; food was scarce; most people would never leave their village. What it implied not to understand the existence of bacteria or the nature of electricity, just to use very simple examples, is today simply inconceivable. Enlightenment figures like Benjamin Franklin, "the complete philosophe,"16 became famous for a reason: they not only freed people from some of their fears but through inventions like the stove and the lightning rod they also raised new possibilities for making people's lives more livable. Critical theorists and postmodernists miss the point when they view Enlightenment intellectuals in general and scientists in particular as simple apostles of reification. They actually constituted its most consistent enemy. The philosophes may not have grasped the commodity form, but they empowered people by challenging superstitions and dogmas that left them mute and helpless against the whims of nature and the injunctions of tradition. Enlightenment thinkers were justified in understanding knowledge as inherently improving humanity. Infused with a sense of furthering the public good, liberating the individual from the clutches of the invisible and inexplicable, the Enlightenment idea of progress required what the young Marx later termed "the ruthless critique of everything existing." [end page 22] This regulative notion of progress was never inimical to subjectivity. Quite the contrary: progress became meaningful only with reference to real living individuals. Enlightenment thinking did not mechanically identify progress with the chronological passing of time or, usually, mere technological development. It was instead always seen as entailing a moral commitment to expanding self-awareness and the possibilities for exercising judgment. This was as true for Immanuel Kant, who viewed progress from the standpoint of the species, as for Moses Mendelssohn, who identified it with the increasing capacities for self-reflection by the individual. Both saw the root of progress in the growing possibilities for criticism and the development of human capacities. Progress thus became the rallying cry for attacking the privileges and dogma associated with the status quo. It was undoubtedly what led Diderot to exclaim that freedom would only be realized when the last aristocrat had been strangled with the entrails of the last priest. The outburst was revealing but so were the words of Tom Paine who probably best expressed the general position of the philosophes when he noted in 1795 that "the vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has no property in man, neither has one generation a property in the generations that are to follow."

A2: Epistemology—A2: Examples Of Bad Science

Our defense of science does not preclude criticism of specific applications of science—they conflate the sociology of science with science itself.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 163-164)

Too much time has already been wasted on "deconstructing" the scientific method for what Foucault termed its "dogmatic approach" and its supposedly hermetic character. That is the case not simply because the "scientific revolution" was directed against a scholastic view of nature that constrained the possibilities of inquiry but because, in political terms, the issue is not the "method" of science but the type of scientific research that demands funding and, ultimately, the ends to which science is put. Again defined by what they oppose, ironically, those principally concerned with the scientific method reflect the establishmentarian tendency to isolate science from politics. Whatever the connection between this method and metaphysics, or the status of its original commitment to benefit humanity, there is no reason to believe that science in the age of globalization has lost its ability to question previous claims or established authority: neither from the standpoint of science nor ethics is it legitimate to maintain that "the enlightenment has lost any trace of its own self-consciousness."13 Critical theory in the future must, once again, become more modest: it needs to specify the practices to which its categories apply. The difference between history and nature, wrote Vico in The New Science, is that humanity has created one and not the other. His famous statement, which looked back to Kant and forward to Lukacs and the beginnings of critical theory, has serious implications. Science cannot be expected to meet either metaphysical [end page 163] or politically correct expectations: such concerns bring to mind the communist believers who in the 1920s attacked Einstein for promoting relativism. The point is not to get entangled in the immanent workings of science, which most critical theorists do not even understand, but instead illuminate the institutional complexes with their particular balance of forces wherein "science" receives its direction and its aims. The Enlightenment notion of science, in the main, mirrored the more general philosophical rejection of closure and absolute knowledge. Bacon and Boyle, with their concern for methodological flexibility and provisional truth, already projected less the obsession with positive certainty than the emphasis upon "falsifiability" advocated by Sir Karl Popper. But it was surely Lessing who best expressed this general trend within Enlightenment thinking when he wrote the famous words: "if God held the truth in his right hand and in his clenched left fist the quest for it, along with all my future errors, and then told me to choose, I should point to the left and humbly say: 'Father give! The pure truth belongs to You alone!' "14

\*\*\* Progress Good

Progress Good—Progress Results In A Better World

Abandoning Enlightenment notions of progress makes liberation impossible—their criticism forecloses the possibility of productive challenges to power.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 39-40)

Easy enough to criticize the pretensions of "progress," but without it the prospect for determining any liberating notion of social change vanishes.56 Walter Benjamin was surely correct when he noted that there is no document of civilization that is not also a document of barbarism. But this only begs the question: what is the degree to which any such document expresses the civilized in contrast to the barbaric and how is it possible to distinguish the one from that of another. Progress enables us to differentiate between ideologies and policies, expose the limits of each, and illuminate the interests they serve. It need not become enmeshed in utopian dogma or condone what [end page 39] Kierkegaard termed the "teleological suspension of the ethical." But it must reject the romantic yearning for simplicity, the organic, and the traditional. Progress shows its value when confronting the new existential and practical problems that history presents. It receives expression in the refinement of human sentiments: the disgust caused by cruelty to the infirm, to animals, to the weak, and the downtrodden. Progress appears in the growing recognition that there is something wrong about the arbitrary exercise of power and that there is something legitimate about contesting it. The Enlightenment showed how progress can both foster critique and serve a productive function. That is perhaps its greatest legacy. 57 The Enlightenment idea of progress militated against closure and perfection. It existed as a possibility, never a certainty, and—until Hegel—it lacked ontological foundations. Progress was always coupled with an attack on the refusal to question or judge change in terms of the freedom it might provide. That change is endless and that freedom can never be fully achieved does not invalidate progress. Quite the contrary: it renders the idea more important than ever.

Progress Good—Rejecting Progress Causes Hell On Earth

Denying progress leads to hell on earth.

Raymond Tallis, Professor of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Manchester, 1997 (*Enemies of Hope: A Critique of Contemporary Pessimism*, Published by Palgrave Macmillan, ISBN 0312173261, p. 407-409)

If we deny or rubbish the progress that mankind has already made, and at the same time are aware of the huge efforts mankind have made to ameliorate the human condition, we shall inevitably conclude that no progress is possible. Such 'principled' despair will be a thousand times worse in terms of quietism than the most arrant care-nothing, do-nothing conservatism. An attitude wavering between fatalism, cynicism and moral superiority may suit the purposes of humanist intellectuals who prefer the comfort of the seminar room to the relative discomfort of the places where the real work of bringing about a better future must take place. It lets them morally off the hook - just as does the idea that there is no truth (only the dominant rhetoric of particular interpretive communities) and no genuine agency (only passivity in the seas of history, discourse, the unconscious, or whatever). 'Drooping despondency' makes very little demands on one's free time. 60 But we must refute those for whom (to parody Keats) 'the miseries are the world are misery and let them rest.' For, as Medawar has pointed out, 61 although humans have been around for 500,000 years, it is only during the past 5,000 years that they have won any kind of reward for their special capabilities and only during the past 500 years have they begun to be, in the biological sense, a success. 'Only during the past 10 to 15 minutes of the human day has life on earth been anything but precarious.' Technology has been really effective - because driven by science and a fundamental understanding of natural laws - only in the last 50 years. Reason is a comparative newcomer in human affairs and a neonate in the history of living things. 62 Opposition in principle to the idea of progress, based upon assumptions about the nature of mankind - Original Sin, aggressive animal nature (ethology, Social-Darwinism), incurable irrationality (anthropology) - or about society (it is too deep to be understood, a collection of opaque forces rather than the summed actvity of human agents) - simply fails to see the whole story. None of the theoretical reasons for denying the hope of progress is decisive. Nor, it must be admitted, are there irrefutable reasons for assuming that progress is guaranteed or inevitable. One would have to be a Hegelian or a Marxist to be stupid enough to believe that progress will come about of its own accord. If we believe, as I believe, that it has to be brought about by human effort, human beings mobilising the abstract intelligence and universalizing goodwill that they uniquely possess, there is no certainty that the future will be better than the past. So we are left with a secular equivalent of Pascal's wager, which I commend to the reader. As Pascal pointed out, nobody can be absolutely certain that God exists. We are in the position of best-guessing gamblers, making absolute and irreversible decisions in the context of uncertainty. What, then, should we do? Pascal recommends believing in God, for this will place the believer in a no-lose situation. If he is right, then he will be appropriately rewarded when he meets his Maker face to face. If he is wrong, he will not suffer for his credulity in the after-life of total oblivion. If, on the other hand, he wagers on the non-existence of God, his reward, if there is no God after all, is to enjoy the same oblivion as the believer. But if God really does exist, then he will be condemned to Eternal Damnation as punishment for his error. Pascal's wager is not an entirely full or fair statement of the case, if only because there is quite a range of gods to choose from and the result of choosing the wrong one could be persecution on earth and damnation in the after-life. Nor does it take account of the psychology of religious beliefs: the true experience of God should be (as Nijinsky proclaimed) 'a fire in the head' rather than the outcome of a prudent calculation of probabilities. We can, however, usefully transpose Pascal's wager to the secular sphere and use it to think about the hope of progress. If we believe in the possibility of progress, we may or not be successful in bringing it about. But if we deny the possibility of progress, then, since it will not happen of its own accord, we shall ensure that progress shall most definitely not come about. For the sake of the hungry child in the dust, we should not allow those who prophesy doom and gloom to speak unopposed; otherwise their prophecies will help to bring about their own hideous fulfilment. And more hungry children will die in the dust, while the prophets of gloom, of course, continue to enjoy life in the library and the seminar room. And perhaps for our own sake as well. Once you throw away belief in progress and the desire to make progress - the passion to alleviate human suffering here and now and in the future, on a small scale and a large scale, locally and globally (and, as we denizens of the global village are aware, the distinction between these categories is not absolute) - then you have thrown away one of the deepest and most noble and fertile sources of goodness in human beings and, effectively, much of the underpinning of civilisation. For a truly human culture is always - though never exclusively - preoccupied with improving the lot of mankind and in modern times this has taken the form of concern about justice for all, about the rights of the many, about enrichment of the poor and empowerment of the powerless. Great, rich cultures have a generosity that is implicitly on the side of progress (even if it is not Utopian or explicitly progressive). The only question for such cultures is whether progress is pursued well or badly, effectively or ineffectively. As Medawar has said, 'The idea of improvement must be pretty well coeval with human speculative thought. In one form of another it embodies almost the whole spiritual history of mankind.' 63 The enemies of hope have found their own reasons for dismissing the Enlightenment dream, without, perhaps fully realising what they are doing - or what they would be doing if the world took them seriously. Hitherto, those who have rejected earthly happiness have had alternative, next-worldly, futures to look forward to. In the absence of such alternatives, to dispense with the hope of progress, to mock 'the grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment', is to lead humanity towards a collective despair perhaps unprecedented in articulate cultures. Or, more likely, since even the most articulate pessimists are not notably lacking in personal ambition and concern for self-advancement, to set an example to the well-heeled sections of the race that will encourage them to pursue their own happiness and forget that of humanity as a whole. For the sake of our humanity, then, as well as for the welfare of those whose lives would otherwise be Hell on earth, we must believe in, and strive for, progress, as did those noble philosophers of the Enlightenment. 64 'To deride the hope of progress', as Medawar says, 'is the ultimate fatuity, the last word in poverty of spirit and meanness of mind.' This book has been written in the hope that such poverty of spirit and meanness of mind will not have the last word.

Progress Good—A2: Progress Causes Technological Domination

The pursuit of progress is characterized by a commitment to individual freedom—it results in personal liberation, not technological domination.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 29-30)

Again it is a matter of sense and sensibility: Odysseus is not the only, or even necessarily the best, symbol of Enlightenment. There is also Prometheus, who paid dearly for stealing fire from the gods, and Icarus who dared to fly, and crashed to his death when his wings of wax melted in the sun. The Enlightenment identified progress less with some abstract notion of freedom—expressed in the interplay between subjectivity and system—than with fostering the will to know and the fight against prejudice, the insistence upon tolerance and reciprocity, the demand for a democratic public sphere, and the accountability of institutions. Its representatives sought a flowering of freedoms that the individual might actually employ: intellectual freedom and the right to hold views counter to those already established; economic freedom to pursue personal economic advantage beyond the limitations then still determined by birth; and, finally, the political freedom secured in institutions based on the liberal rule of law and popular sovereignty.34 Not to understand the Enlightenment idea of progress in terms of the struggle for these practical freedoms is not to understand it at all. The idea of progress was always—anthropologically as well as historically—less about the eradication of subjectivity and the domination of nature than the possibility of personal liberation, popular empowerment, and overcoming the spell of myth and nature. Progress is an inherently rational idea. But it does not call for belief in the omnipotence of reason, the superfluous character of passion, or the existence of an objective solution to every problem.35 Neither Condorcet nor Kant provided an ontological foundation for progress and even the most rabid believer in progress, an adamant atheist and technological enthusiast, like Holbach could write in his System de la nature that "it is not given man to know everything; it is not given him to know his origins; it is not given him to penetrate to the essence of things or to go back to first principles." The issue for the philosophes was not the discovery of absolute truth but the establishment of conditions in which truth might be pursued. Or, to frame the matter in terms of a new critical theory with [end page 29] some sense of the concrete, the extent to which progress manifested itself was the extent to which claims could be treated as provisional. Reason and knowledge were never the enemies of progress. But their enemies were also the enemies of progress. David Hume, in this vein, liked to say that "ignorance is the mother of devotion." Unreflective passion offers far better support than scientific inquiry for the claims of religion or the injunctions of totalitarian regimes. The scientific method projects not merely the "open society," but also the need to question authority. This was already evidenced in the Meno when Socrates showed that he could teach mathematics to a slave and in The Republic when, exhibiting the frustration of the anti-intellectual, Thrasymachus insisted that justice is the right of the stronger. On one point, however, the most famous adversary of Socrates was right: his position suggested that whether the moral possibilities of progress are realized is not the province of philosophy but of politics. This would have radical implications. Upsetting the divine structure of things marked the Enlightenment notion of progress. Its advocates privileged over liberty rather than order and the communicable power of discourse over the incommunicable experience of grace. These new values would serve as the points of reference for all other values: order would no longer be employed as an excuse to smother liberty, but rather be understood as the precondition for its pursuit.36 Order always preceded liberty for the philosophes: it was seen as providing the rules and procedures for "constituting" the liberty enjoyed by citizens through the protection of the state.37

\*\*\* Realism Good

Realism Good—1st Line—Key To Short-Term Solutions

Realism is necessary for short-term solutions—combining long-term visionary politics and short-term pragmatic action is the best strategy for sustainable reform.

Alastair J. H. Murray, Professor of Politics at the University of Wales Swansea, 1997 (“Part II: Rearticulating and Re-Evaluating Realism,” *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics*, Published by Keele University Press, ISBN 1853311960, p. 193-195)

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that realism cannot be located within either the conservative, rationalist orthodoxy, as is so often assumed, nor within the progressive, reflectivist alternative, but must be recognised as existing in its own space, detached from both rationalism and reflectivism, beholden to neither. It differs from rationalist approaches because it rejects the conservative premise on which they rely for a position which remains much more open to the possibility of change in the international system. If neorealism, for instance, reifies the historically specific Westphalian order into a universal pattern of international politics, realism, based upon the nature of individuals rather than on the structure of the international system, can resist this historical closure for a much more flexible perspective. Whereas neorealism is bound to a narrow physical-mechanical notion of the international system which elevates international constraints to the status of a natural necessity exogenous to human practice, realism can treat these constraints as social constructs created by, and malleable through, human practice. And, whereas neorealism must remain trapped within the particular historical epoch from which it draws its conception of structure, cut off from the possibility of transcending the relative modes of that time, realism, based upon a conception of human nature with universal applicability, is free from these constraints. 65 Consequently, realism is capable of appreciating the possibilities and trends contained within the contemporary international system, and of acting to exploit their potential. At the same time, however, realism no more fits into a reflectivist mould than it does a rationalist one. Whilst it joins the critique of contemporary resolutions of the problem of political authority, it also recognises that they provide an essential measure of order in a disorderly world. Whilst it remains open to the possibility of development towards more inclusive forms of community, it refuses to take the additional step of assuming that this development can necessarily be described as progress. Realism ultimately agrees that the 'necessitous' elements of the international system are largely social constructions generated by human practices, but it retains an ambivalence about human motivations which dictates a sceptical position towards the possibility of overcoming estrangement. For every example of progress created by man's ability to transcend 'learned responses', for every case of his 'inherent self-developing capacity', we have examples of regression as he employs this for purposes other than promoting self-determination. For realism, man remains, in the final analysis, limited by himself. As such, it emphasises caution, and focuses not merely upon the achievement of long-term objectives, but also upon the resolution of more immediate difficulties. Given that, in the absence of a resolution of such difficulties, longer-term objectives are liable to be unachievable, realism would seem to offer a more effective strategy of transition than reflectivism itself. Whereas, in constructivism, such strategies are divorced from an awareness of the immediate problems which obstruct such efforts, and, in critical theoretical perspectives, they are divorced from the current realities of international politics altogether, realism's emphasis on first addressing the immediate obstacles to development ensures that it at least generates strategies which offer us a tangible path to follow. If these strategies perhaps lack the visionary appeal of reflectivist proposals, emphasising simply the necessity of a restrained, moderate diplomacy in order to ameliorate conflicts between states, to foster a degree of mutual understanding in international relations, and, ultimately, to develop a sense of community which might underlie a more comprehensive international society, they at least seek to take advantage of the possibilities of reform in the current international system without jeopardising the possibilities of order. Realism's gradualist reformism, the careful tending of what it regards as an essentially organic process, ultimately suggests the basis for a more sustainable strategy for reform than reflectivist perspectives, however dramatic, can offer.

Realism Good—2nd Line—Key To Short-Term Solutions

Extend our Murray evidence—

Realism is a necessary short-term strategy because it focuses on actually existing problems with the international system. Even if the long-term vision of the critique is desirable, its outright rejection of IR will fail—only a combination of criticism and pragmatic politics can effectively sustain reform.

Realism takes their criticism into account and forms a viable synthesis.

Alastair J. H. Murray, Professor of Politics at the University of Wales Swansea, 1997 (“Part II: Rearticulating and Re-Evaluating Realism,” *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics*, Published by Keele University Press, ISBN 1853311960, p. 195)

For the realist, then, if rationalist theories prove so conservative as to make their adoption problematic, critical theories prove so progressive as to make their adoption unattractive. If the former can justifiably be criticised for seeking to make a far from ideal order work more efficiently, thus perpetuating its existence and legitimating its errors, reflectivist theory can equally be criticised for searching for a tomorrow which may never exist, thereby endangering the possibility of establishing any form of stable order in the here and now. Realism's distinctive contribution thus lies in its attempt to drive a path between the two, a path which, in the process, suggests the basis on which some form of synthesis between rationalism and reflectivism might be achieved. Oriented in its genesis towards addressing the shortcomings in an idealist transformatory project, it is centrally motivated by a concern to reconcile vision with practicality, to relate utopia and reality. Unifying a technical and a practical stance, it combines aspects of the positivist methodology employed by problem-solving theory with the interpretative stance adopted by critical theory, avoiding the monism of perspective which leads to the self-destructive conflict between the two. Ultimately, it can simultaneously acknowledge the possibility of change in the structure of the international system and the need to probe the limits of the possible, and yet also question the proximity of any international transformation, emphasise the persistence of problems after such a transformation, and serve as a reminder of the need to grasp whatever semblance of order can be obtained in the mean time. Indeed, it is possible to say that realism is uniquely suited to serve as such an orientation. Simultaneously to critique contemporary resolutions of the problem of political authority as unsatisfactory and yet to support them as an attainable measure of order in an unstable world involves one in a contradiction which is difficult to accept. Yet, because it grasps the essential ambiguity of the political, and adopts imperfectionism as its dominant motif, realism can relate these two tasks in a way which allows neither to predominate, achieving, if not a reconciliation, then at least a viable synthesis. 66

Their criticism makes the perfect the enemy of the good—err on the side of solving short-term problems.

Alastair J. H. Murray, Professor of Politics at the University of Wales Swansea, 1997 (“Part II: Rearticulating and Re-Evaluating Realism,” *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics*, Published by Keele University Press, ISBN 1853311960, p. 185-186)

It is this inability to articulate practical strategies which suggests the central difficulty with such critical theoretical approaches. The progressive urge moves a stage further here, leading them to abandon almost entirely the problem of establishing some form of stable international order at this level in favour of a continuing revolution in search of a genuine cosmopolis. It generates such an emphasis on the pursuit of distant, ultimate objectives that they prove incapable of furnishing us with anything but the most vague and elusive of strategies, such an emphasis on moving towards a post-Westphalian, boundary-less world that they are incapable of telling us anything about the problems facing us today. If, for theorists such as Linklater, such a difficulty does not constitute a failure for critical theory within its own terms of reference, this position cannot be accepted uncritically. Without an ability to address contemporary problems, it is unable to provide strategies to overcome even the immediate obstacles in the way of its objective of a genuinely cosmopolitan society. And, without a guarantee that such a cosmopolitan society is even feasible, such a critical theoretical perspective simply offers us the perpetual redefinition of old problems in a new context and the persistent creation of new problems to replace old ones, without even the luxury of attempting to address them.

Realism Good—1st Line—Key To Speak The Language

Realism is the language of the establishment—learning to speak it effectively is a prerequisite to engagement with policymaking.

Stefano Guzzini, Assistant Professor of Political Science and IR at the Central European University, 1998 (“Conclusion: the fragmentation of realism," *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold*, Published by Routledge, ISBN 0415144027, p. 212)

Therefore, in a third step, this chapter also claims that it is impossible just to heap realism onto the dustbin of history and start anew. This is a non-option. Although realism as a strictly causal theory has been a disappointment, various realist assumptions are well alive in the minds of many practitioners and observers of international affairs. Although it does not correspond to a theory which helps us to understand a real world with objective laws, it is a world-view which suggests thoughts about it, and which permeates our daily language for making sense of it. Realism has been a rich, albeit very contestable, reservoir of lessons of the past, of metaphors and historical analogies, which, in the hands of its most gifted representatives, have been proposed, at times imposed, and reproduced as guides to a common understanding of international affairs. Realism is alive in the collective memory and self-understanding of our (i.e. Western) foreign policy elite and public, whether educated or not. Hence, we cannot but deal with it. For this reason, forgetting realism is also questionable. Of course, academic observers should not bow to the whims of daily politics. But staying at distance, or being critical, does not mean that they should lose the capacity to understand the languages of those who make significant decisions, not only in government, but also in firms, NGOs, and other institutions. To the contrary, this understanding, as increasingly varied as it may be, is a prerequisite for their very profession. More particularly, it is a prerequisite for opposing the more irresponsible claims made in the name, although not always necessarily in the spirit, of realism.

Realism Good—2nd Line—Key To Speak The Language

Extend the Guzzini evidence—

Realism is here to stay – it is the philosophy of the policymaking establishment and it is part and parcel of international relations. Even if they win the criticism, we can’t just heap realism into the dustbin of history – it is an inevitable part of discussions about policy. Rather, we should engage it and learn to speak its language – only through this understanding can we hope to effectively confront its excesses in favor of more emancipatory political strategies.

Realism is not incompatible with the criticism. We should learn to speak its language in order to leverage it as a hermeneutic bridge into international relations.

Stefano Guzzini, Assistant Professor of Political Science and IR at the Central European University, 2001 (“The enduring dilemmas of realism in International Relations,” Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, December, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Columbia International Affairs Online at http://www.ciaonet.org/ wps/gus02/gus02.pdf, p. 34-35)

The negative implications of seeing realism on the level of observation differently defined than on the level of practice, double and not only simple negation, stem from the curious assumption that the language of observation has to imitate the language of practice for understanding it.111 This does not follow, however. It is perfectly possible to be proficient in more than one language. This implies that future scholars should be well-versed in both the life-worlds of world politics, be it the language of the diplomat, the military, the international businessperson, and/or transnational civil right movements, as well as in the life-world of academia where truth claims have to be justified in a scholarly (and not necessarily politically) coherent manner.112 This is a task of tall proportions for which our usual education is not well prepared. But it is a task, we cannot avoid facing, if on the one hand, we want to produce sensible explanations, and on the other hand, we want to retain a hermeneutic bridge to world politics.

The rejection that their alternative calls for is wrong-headed – it only reproduces the worst kinds of realism. Instead, we should engage realism and use its historical insights as a hermeneutical bridge to better understandings of world politics.

Stefano Guzzini, Assistant Professor of Political Science and IR at the Central European University, 1998 (“Conclusion: the fragmentation of realism," *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold*, Published by Routledge, ISBN 0415144027, p. 235)

Third, this last chapter has argued that although the evolution of realism has been mainly a disappointment as a general causal theory, we have to deal with it. On the one hand, realist assumptions and insights are used and merged in nearly all frameworks of analysis offered in International Relations or International Political Economy. One of the book's purposes was to show realism as a varied and variably rich theory, so heterogeneous that it would be better to refer to it only in plural terms. On the other hand, to dispose of realism because some of its versions have been proven empirically wrong, ahistorical, or logically incoherent, does not necessarily touch its role in the shared understandings of observers and practitioners of international affairs. Realist theories have a persisting power for constructing our understanding of the present. Their assumptions, both as theoretical constructs, and as particular lessons of the past translated from one generation of decision-makers to another, help mobilizing certain understandings and dispositions to action. They also provide them with legitimacy. Despite realism's several deaths as a general causal theory, it can still powerfully enframe action. It exists in the minds, and is hence reflected in the actions, of many practitioners. Whether or not the world realism depicts is out there, realism is. Realism is not a causal theory that explains International Relations, but, as long as realism continues to be a powerful mind-set, we need to understand realism to make sense of International Relations. In other words, realism is a still necessary hermeneutical bridge to the understanding of world politics. Getting rid of realism without having a deep understanding of it, not only risks unwarranted dismissal of some valuable theoretical insights that I have tried to gather in this book; it would also be futile. Indeed, it might be the best way to tacitly and uncritically reproduce it.

Realism Good—2nd Line—Key To Speak The Language

Criticism alone inevitably fails. Only realism can provide the reformist strategies necessary for real alternatives to emerge.

Alastair J. H. Murray, Professor of Politics at the University of Wales Swansea, 1997 (“Part II: Rearticulating and Re-Evaluating Realism,” *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics*, Published by Keele University Press, ISBN 1853311960, p. 179)

Yet, an examination of the arguments put forward from each of these perspectives suggests not only that the effort to locate realism within a conservative, rationalist camp is untenable, but, beyond this, that realism is able to provide reformist strategies which are superior to those that they can generate themselves. The progressive purpose which motivates the critique of realism in these perspectives ultimately generates a bias which undermines their own ability to generate effective strategies of transition. In constructivism, this bias appears in its most limited version, producing strategies so divorced from the obstacles presented by the current structure of international politics that they threaten to become counter-productive. In critical theory it moves a stage further, producing strategies so abstract that one is at a loss to determine what they actually imply in terms of the current structure of international politics. And, in post-modernism, it reaches its highest form, producing an absence of such strategies altogether, until we reach the point at which we are left with nothing but critique. Against this failure, realism contains the potential to act as the basis of a more constructive approach to international relations, incorporating many of the strengths of reflectivism and yet avoiding its weaknesses. It appears, in the final analysis, as an opening within which some synthesis of rationalism and reflectivism, of conservatism and progressivism, might be built.

Realism Good—1st Line—Realism Is Inevitable

Realism is inevitable: the international system is anarchic; states have offensive military capabilities, states can never be sure of other states’ intentions, survival is the primary goal of states, and states are rational actors.

John J. Mearsheimer, Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, 2001 (*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Published by W. W. Norton & Company, ISBN 0393020258, p. 30-31)

How important is it that these assumptions be realistic? Some social scientists argue that the assumptions that underpin a theory need not conform to reality. Indeed, the economist Milton Friedman maintains that the best theories "will be found to have assumptions that are wildly inaccurate descriptive representations of reality, and, in general, the more significant the theory the more unrealistic the assumptions."2 According to this view, the explanatory power of a theory is all that matters. If unrealistic assumptions lead to a theory that tells us a lot about how the world works, it is of no importance whether the underlying assumptions are realistic or not. I reject this view. Although I agree that explanatory power is the ultimate criterion for assessing theories, I also believe that a theory based on unrealistic or false assumptions will not explain much about how the world works.3 Sound theories are based on sound assumptions. Accordingly, each of these five assumptions is a reasonably accurate representation of an important aspect of life in the international system. Bedrock Assumptions The first assumption is that the international system is anarchic, which does not mean that it is chaotic or riven by disorder. It is easy to draw that conclusion, since realism depicts a world characterized by security competition and war. By itself, however, the realist notion of anarchy has nothing to do with conflict; it is an ordering principle which says that the system comprises independent states that have no central authority above them.4 Sovereignty, in other words, inheres in states because there is no higher ruling body in the international system.5 There is no "government over governments.”6 The second assumption is that great powers inherently possess some offensive military capability which gives them the wherewithal to hurt and possibly destroy each other. States are potentially dangerous to each other, although some states have more military might than others and are therefore more dangerous. A state’s military power is usually identified with the particular weaponry at its disposal, although even if there were no weapons, the individuals in those states could still use their feet and hands to attack the population of another state. After all. for every neck, there are two hands to choke it. The third assumption is that states can never be certain about other states’ intentions. Specifically, no state can be sure that another state will not use its offensive military capability to attack the first state. This is not to say that states necessarily have hostile intentions. Indeed, all of the states in the system may be reliably benign, but it is impossible to be sure of that judgment because intentions are impossible to divine with 100 percent certainty.7 There are many possible causes of aggression, and no state can be sure that another state is not motivated by one of them.8 Furthermore, intentions can change quickly, so a state's intentions can be benign one day and hostile the next. Uncertainty about intentions is unavoidable, which means that states can never be sure that other states do not have offensive intentions to go along with their offensive capabilities. The fourth assumption is that survival is the primary goal of great powers. Specifically, states seek to maintain their territorial integrity and the autonomy of their domestic political order. Survival dominates other motives because once a state is conquered it is unlikely to be in a position to pursue other aims. Soviet leader Josef Stalin put the point well during a war scare in 1927: “We can and must build socialism in the [Soviet Union]. But in order to do so we first of all have to exist.”9 States can and do pursue other goals, of course, but security is their most important objective. The fifth assumption is that great powers are rational actors. They are aware of their external environment and they think strategically about how to survive in it. In particular, they consider the preferences of other states and how their own behavior is likely to affect the behavior of those other states, and how the behavior of those other states is likely to affect their own strategy for survival. Moreover, states pay attention to the long term as well as the immediate consequences of their actions.

Realism Good—2nd Line—Realism Is Inevitable

Realism is inevitable—

Mearsheimer concludes that in order for a theory to be valuable it must be grounded in reality - "sound theories are based on sound assumptions." He isolates five reasons that realism is inevitable: the first is that the international system is anarchic in the sense that there is no government over governments - the state is the primary ordering principle in IR. Second, states possess offensive military capabilities - even those without advanced weaponry possess the human power necessary to wage war. Third, the intentions of states can never be absolutely known. As a result, states are obligated to expect the worst in order to protect their security in the face of ever-evolving threats. Fourth, survival is the primary goal of the state. It dominates other interests because it is a necessary prerequisite for the realization of those interests. Finally, states are rational actors that evaluate their environments and act strategically to survive in it.

Realism has been the dominant discourse for seven centuries—their alternative is hopeless.

John J. Mearsheimer, Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, 2001 (*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Published by W. W. Norton & Company, ISBN 0393020258, p. 368-369)

Social constructivists provide another perspective on how to create a world of states with benign intentions that are readily recognizable by other states.17 They maintain that the way states behave toward each other is not a function of how the material world is structured—as realists argue—but instead is largely determined by how individuals think and talk about international politics. This perspective is nicely captured by Alexander Wendt’s famous claim that “anarchy is what states make of it.”18 Discourse, in short, is the motor that drives international politics. But unfortunately, say social constructivists, realism has been the dominant discourse for at least the past seven centuries and realism tells states to distrust other states and to take advantage of them whenever possible. What is needed to create a more peaceful world is a replacement discourse that emphasizes trust and cooperation among states, rather than suspicion and hostility. One reason to doubt this perspective is the simple fact that realism ***has*** dominated the international relations discourse for the past seven centuries or more. Such remarkable staying power over a lengthy period that has seen profound change in almost every other aspect of daily life strongly suggests that the basic structure of the international system—which has remained anarchic over that entire period—largely determines how states think and act toward each other. But even if we reject my materialist interpretation, what is going to cause the reigning discourse about world politics to change? What is the causal mechanism that will delegitimize realism after seven hundred years and put a better substitute in its place? What determines whether the replacement discourse will be benign or malign? What guarantee is there that realism will not rise from the dead and once again become the hegemonic discourse? The social constructivists provide no answers to these important questions, which makes it hard to believe that a marked change in our discourse about international politics is in the offing.19

Realism Good—2nd Line—Realism Is Inevitable

Realism has been the dominant discourse for more than a thousand years—there’s only a chance the alternative results in fascism.

John J. Mearsheimer, Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, 1995 (“A Realist Reply,” *International Security*, Volume 20, Number 1, Summer, Available Online via Academic Search Elite, p. 91-92)

Realists believe that state behavior is largely shaped by the material structure of the international system. The distribution of material capabilities among states is the key factor for understanding world politics. For realists, some level of security competition among great powers is inevitable because of the material structure of the international system. Individuals are free to adopt non-realist discourses, but in the final analysis, the system forces states to behave according to the dictates of realism, or risk destruction. Critical theorists, on the other hand, focus on the social structure of the international system. They believe that "world politics is socially constructed," which is another way of saying that shared discourse, or how communities of individuals think and talk about the world, largely shapes the world. Wendt recognizes that "material resources like gold and tanks exist," but he argues that "such capabilities . . . only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded." Significantly for critical theorists, discourse can change, which means that realism is not forever, and that therefore it might be possible to move beyond realism to a world where institutionalized norms cause states to behave in more communitarian and peaceful ways. The most revealing aspect of Wendt's discussion is that he did not respond to the two main charges leveled against critical theory in "False Promise." The first problem with critical theory is that although the theory is deeply concerned with radically changing state behavior, it says little about how change comes about. The theory does not tell us why particular discourses become dominant, and others fall by the wayside. Specifically, Wendt does not explain why realism has been the dominant discourse in world politics for well over a thousand years, although I explicitly raised this question in "False Promise" (p. 42). Moreover, he sheds no light on why the time is ripe for unseating realism, nor on why realism is likely to be replaced by a more peaceful, communitarian discourse, although I explicitly raised both questions. Wendt's failure to answer these questions has important ramifications for his own arguments. For example, he maintains that if it is possible to change international political discourse and alter state behavior, "then it is irresponsible to pursue policies that perpetuate destructive old orders [i.e., realism], especially if we care about the well-being of future generations." The clear implication here is that realists like me are irresponsible and do not care much about the welfare of future generations. However, even if we change discourses and move beyond realism, a fundamental problem with Wendt's argument remains: because his theory cannot predict the future, he cannot know whether the discourse that ultimately replaces realism will be more benign than realism. He has no way of knowing whether a fascistic discourse more violent than realism will emerge as the hegemonic discourse. For example, he obviously would like another Gorbachev to come to power in Russia, but he cannot be sure we will not get a Zhirinovsky instead. So even from a critical theory perspective, defending realism might very well be the more responsible policy choice. The second major problem with critical theory is that its proponents have offered little empirical support for their theory. For example, I noted in "False Promise" that critical theorists concede that realism has been the dominant discourse in international politics from about 1300 to 1989, a remarkably long period of time. Wendt does not challenge this description of the historical record by pointing to alternative discourses that influenced state behavior during this period. In fact, Wendt's discussion of history is obscure. I also noted in "False Promise" that although critical theorists largely concede the past to realism, many believe that the end of the Cold War presents an excellent opportunity to replace realism as the hegemonic discourse, and thus fundamentally change state behavior. I directly challenged this assertion in my article, but Wendt responds with only a few vague words about this issue. Wendt writes in his response that "if critical theories fail, this will be because they do not explain how the world works, not because of their values." I agree completely, but critical theorists have yet to provide evidence that their theory can explain very much. In fact, the distinguishing feature of the critical theory literature, Wendt's work included, is its lack of empirical content. Possibly that situation will change over time, but until it does, critical theory will not topple realism from its commanding position in the international relations literature.

Realism Good—2nd Line—A2: History Supports Alternative

Prefer our evidence—empirical data supports our claims.

John J. Mearsheimer, Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, 1994/1995 (“The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security*, Volume 19, Number 4, Winter, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Academic Search Elite, p. 42-44)

Critical theorists have offered little empirical support for their theory.161 It is still possible to sketch the broad outlines of their account of the past. They appear to concede that realism was the dominant discourse from about the start of the late medieval period in 1300 to at least 1989, and that states and other political entities behaved according to realist dictates during these seven centuries. However, some critical theorists suggest that both the discourse and practice of international politics during the preceding five centuries of the feudal era or central medieval period (800-1300) was not dominated by realism and, therefore, cannot be explained by it.162 They believe that European political units of the feudal era did not think and therefore did not act in the exclusive and selfish manner assumed by realism, but instead adopted a more communitarian discourse, which guided their actions. Power politics, so the argument goes, had little relevance in these five hundred years. Furthermore, most critical theorists see the end of the Cold War as an important watershed in world politics. A few go so far as to argue that "the revolutions of 1989 transformed the international system by changing the rules governing superpower conflict and, thereby, the norms underpinning the international system."163 Realism, they claim, is no longer the hegemonic discourse. "The end of the Cold War . . . undermined neorealist theory."164 Other critical theorists are more tentative in their judgment about whether the end of the Cold War has led to a fundamental transformation of international politics.165 For these more cautious critical theorists, the revolutions of 1989 have created opportunities for change, but that change has not yet been realized. Three points are in order regarding the critical theorists' interpretation of history. First, one cannot help but be struck by the sheer continuity of realist behavior in the critical theorists' own account of the past. Seven centuries of security competition and war represents an impressive span of time, especially when you consider the tremendous political and economic changes that have taken place across the world during that lengthy period. Realism is obviously a human software package with deep-seated appeal, although critical theorists do not explain its attraction. Second, a close look at the international politics of the feudal era reveals scant support for the claims of critical theorists. Markus Fischer has done a detailed study of that period, and he finds "that feudal discourse was indeed distinct, prescribing unity, functional cooperation, sharing, and lawfulness." More importantly, however, he also finds "that while feudal actors observed these norms for the most part on the level of form, they in essence behaved like modern states." Specifically, they "strove for exclusive territorial control, protected themselves by military means, subjugated each other, balanced against power, formed alliances and spheres of influence, and resolved their conflicts by the use and threat of force."167 Realism, not critical theory, appears best to explain international politics in the five centuries of the feudal era. Third, there are good reasons to doubt that the demise of the Cold War means that the millennium is here. It is true that the great powers have been rather tame in their behavior towards each other over the past five years. But that is usually the case after great-power wars. Moreover, although the Cold War ended in 1989, the Cold War order that it spawned is taking much longer to collapse, which makes it difficult to determine what kind of order or disorder will replace it. For example, Russian troops remained in Germany until mid-1994, seriously impinging on German sovereignty, and the United States still maintains a substantial military presence in Germany. Five years is much too short a period to determine whether international relations has been fundamentally transformed by the end of the Cold War, especially given that the "old order of realist discourse has been in place for at least twelve centuries. A close look at the sources of this purported revolutionary change in world politics provides further cause for skepticism. For critical theorists, "the Cold War was fundamentally a discursive, not a material, structure."168 Thus, if the United States and the Soviet Union had decided earlier in the Cold War that they were no longer enemies, it would have been over sooner.169 Mikhail Gorbachev, critical theorists argue, played the central role in ending the Cold War. He challenged traditional Soviet thinking about national security, and championed ideas about international security that sounded like they had been scripted by critical theorists.170 In fact, critical theorists argue that Gorbachev's "new thinking" was shaped by a "transnational liberal internationalist community [epistemic community] comprising the U.S. arms control community, Western European scholars and center-left policy makers, as well as Soviet institutchiks."171 These new ideas led Gorbachev to end the Soviet Union's "imperial relationship with Eastern Europe," which led to a fundamental change in "the norms of bloc politics and thereby the rules governing superpower relations."172 In essence, "the changed practices of one of the major actors . . . [had] system-wide repercussions."173 Both superpowers "repudiated the notion of international relations as a self-help system and . . . transcended the consequences of anarchy as depicted by realism."174 Gorbachev surely played the key role in ending the Cold War, but there are good reasons to doubt that his actions fundamentally transformed international politics. His decision to shut down the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe can very well be explained by realism. By the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union was suffering an economic and political crisis at home that made the costs of empire prohibitive, especially since nuclear weapons provided the Soviets with a cheap and effective means of defense. Many empires collapsed and many states broke apart before 1989, and many of them sought to give to dire necessity the appearance of virtue. But the basic nature of international politics remained unchanged. It is not clear why the collapse of the Soviet Union is a special case. Furthermore, now that Gorbachev is out of office and has little political influence in Russia, the Russians have abandoned his "new thinking."175 In fact, they now have an offensively-oriented military doctrine that emphasizes first use of nuclear weapons. More importantly, since the end of 1992, the Russians have been acting like a traditional great power toward their neighbors. The former Soviet Union seems to be an arena for power politics, and Boris Yeltsin's Russia appears to be fully engaged in that enterprise. 17(j Regarding the more modest claim that the end of the Cold War presents an opportunity to move to a world where states are guided by norms of trust and sharing, perhaps this is true. But since critical theorists acknowledge that their theory cannot predict the future, why should we believe their claim, especially when it means choosing against realism, a theory that has at least 1200 years of staying power? Critical theorists have ambitious aims. However, critical theory also has important flaws, and therefore it will likely remain in realism's shadow. Specifically, critical theory is concerned with affecting fundamental change in state behavior, but it says little about how it comes about. Critical theorists do occasionally point to particular causes of change, but when they do, they make arguments that are inconsistent with the theory itself. Finally, there is little empirical evidence to support the claims of critical theorists, and much to contradict them.

Realism Good—1st Line—Alternatives Fail

Their alternative is all talk and no action—“opening space” doesn’t challenge the dominant discourse.

Jef Huysmans, Lecturer in Politics in the Department of Government at Open University, 2002 (“Defining Social Constructivism in Security Studies: The Normative Dilemma of Writing Security," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, Volume 27, Issue 1, February (Supplemental Issue), Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Academic Search Elite, p. 50-51)

Although the critical edge of this literature cannot be ignored, denaturalizing security fields is not necessarily successful in moderating the normative dilemma. The research continues to map the security discourses, therefore repeating, in an often highly systematic way, a security approach to, for example, migration or drugs. Demonstrating the contingent character of the politicization does question the foundational character of this contingent construction, but it does not necessarily undermine the real effects. It does this only when these discourses rely heavily for their effects on keeping the natural character of its foundations unquestioned. This points to a more general issue concerning this kind of analysis. Although it stresses that language makes a difference and that social relations are constructed, it leaves underdeveloped the concept of security formation that heavily prestructures the possibilities to "speak" differently through rarifying who can speak security, what security can be spoken about, how one should speak about security, and so on. 27 Another related problem is that the approach assumes that indicating the mere existence of alternative practices challenges the dominance of the dominant discourse. This is problematic since the alternative constructions do not exist in a vacuum or in a sheltered space. To be part of the game, they must, for example, contest political constructions of migration. Alternative practices are thus not isolated but engage with other, possibly dominant, constructions. This raises the question of how the "engagement" actually works. It involves relations of power, structuring and restructuring the social exchanges. Staging alternative practices does not necessarily challenge a dominant construction. The political game is more complex, as Foucault's interpretation of the "sexual revolution" - the liberation from sexual repression - of the second half of the twentieth century showed. 28 In a comment on human-rights approaches to migration, Didier Bigo raises a similar point - that opposing strategies do not necessarily radically challenge established politicizations: "It is often misleading to counterpose the ideology of security to human rights because they sometimes have more in common than their authors would like to admit. They often share the same concept of insecurity and diverge only in their solutions." 29 The main point is that alternative discourses should not be left in a vacuum. The way they function in the political struggle should be looked at. How are the alternative discourses entrenched in a specific political game? Are they possibly a constitutive part of the mastery of the dominant construction?

Realism Good—2nd Line—Alternative Fails

The alternative is politically impotent—

Our Huysmans evidence contends that security *prestructures* possibilities to speak differently—the mere existence of an alternative is not enough to displace dominant discourses.

Problem-solving theory is essential—only realism can actualize criticism of international relations.

Alastair J. H. Murray, Professor of Politics at the University of Wales Swansea, 1997 (“Part II: Rearticulating and Re-Evaluating Realism,” *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics*, Published by Keele University Press, ISBN 1853311960, p. 195-196)

Perhaps the most famous realist refrain is that all politics are power politics. It is the all that is important here. Realism lays claim to a relevance across systems, and because it relies on a conception of human nature, rather than a historically specific structure of world politics, it can make good on this claim. If its observations about human nature are even remotely accurate, the problems that it addresses will transcend contingent formulations of the problem of political order. Even in a genuine cosmopolis , conflict might become technical, but it would not be eliminated altogether. 67 The primary manifestations of power might become more economic or institutional rather than (para)military, but, where disagreements occur and power exists, the employment of the one to ensure the satisfactory resolution of the other is inevitable short of a wholesale transformation of human behaviour. Power is ultimately of the essence of politics; it is not something which can be banished, only tamed and restrained. As a result, realism achieves a universal relevance to the problem of political action which allows it to relate the reformist zeal of critical theory, without which advance would be impossible, with the problem-solver's sensible caution that, before reform is attempted, whatever measure of security is possible under contemporary conditions must first be ensured.

Realism Good—2nd Line—Alternative Fails

Simply wishing away the problems of the status quo won’t solve—their alternative increases the risk of violence.

Alastair J. H. Murray, Professor of Politics at the University of Wales Swansea, 1997 (“Part II: Rearticulating and Re-Evaluating Realism,” *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics*, Published by Keele University Press, ISBN 1853311960, p. 181-182)

This highlights the central difficulty with Wendt's constructivism. It is not any form of unfounded idealism about the possibility of effecting a change in international politics. Wendt accepts that the intersubjective character of international institutions such as self-help render them relatively hard social facts.17 Rather, what is problematic is his faith that such change, if it could be achieved, implies progress. Wendt's entire approach is governed by the belief that the problematic elements of international politics can be transcended, that the competitive identities which create these elements can be reconditioned, and that the predatory policies which underlie these identities can be eliminated. Everything, in his account, is up for grabs: there is no core of recalcitrance to human conduct which cannot be reformed, unlearnt, disposed of. This generates a stance that so privileges the possibility of a systemic transformation that it simply puts aside the difficulties which it recognises to be inherent in its achievement. Thus, even though Wendt acknowledges that the intersubjective basis of the self-help system makes its reform difficult, this does not dissuade him. He simply demands that states adopt a strategy of 'altercasting', a strategy which 'tries to induce alter to take on a new identity (and thereby enlist alter in ego's effort to change itself) by treating alter as if it already had that identity'.18 Wendt's position effectively culminates in a demand that the state undertake nothing less than a giant leap of faith. The fact that its [182] opponent might not take its overtures seriously, might not be interested in reformulating its own construction of the world, or might simply see such an opening as a weakness to be exploited, are completely discounted. The prospect of achieving a systemic transformation simply outweighs any adverse consequences which might arise from the effort to achieve it. Wendt ultimately appears, in the final analysis, to have overdosed on 'Gorbimania'. 19 This is not merely to indulge in yet another interminable discourse on the 'lessons of Munich', rejecting all strategies of assurance for more familiar policies of deterrence. A realist perspective does not, as Wendt seems to assume, require worst-case forecasting, nor does it adopt an ethic of 'sauve qui peut'.20 But it is to suggest that, when realism emphasises the need for a cautious, gradual approach to attempts to transform the nature of the system, it has a point. In Wendt's analysis, change ultimately becomes as privileged as the status quo in rationalist perspectives. If he does not hold that history is progressive, he does hold that change is. If he is not idealistic about the possibilities of effecting a transformation of the system, he is with regard to the way in which it might be accomplished. Yet, even if we acknowledge that a transformation in the structure of international politics would be beneficial, this does not imply the acceptance of a desperate gamble to accomplish it. And, at the end of the day, if we can accept that the current structure of international politics contains many injustices, there is no guarantee that its transformation would remove such iniquities anyway. The only thing that the quest to overthrow the status quo does guarantee to do is to undermine those fragments of order that we currently possess. Ultimately, constructivism can be seen to rest upon a value judgement which sacrifices the safe option of remaining within the current situation for the attempt to explore its possibilities. It can be seen to rest on a progressive philosophy which privileges the possible over the extant and sacrifices stability on the altar of transformation.

Realism Good—2nd Line—Alternative Fails

The alternative is wishful thinking—there’s no basis for their assertion that it results in a better world.

John J. Mearsheimer, Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, 1994/1995 (“The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security*, Volume 19, Number 4, Winter, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Academic Search Elite, p. 42-44)

The main goal of critical theorists is to change state behavior in fundamental ways, to move beyond a world of security competition and war and establish a pluralistic security community. However, their explanation of how change occurs is at best incomplete, and at worst, internally contradictory.155 Critical theory maintains that state behavior changes when discourse changes. But that argument leaves open the obvious and crucially important question: what determines why some discourses become dominant and others lose out in the marketplace of ideas? What is the mechanism that governs the rise and fall of discourses? This general question, in turn, leads to three more specific questions: 1) Why has realism been the hegemonic discourse in world politics for so long? 2) Why is the time ripe for its unseating? 3) Why is realism likely to be replaced by a more peaceful communitarian discourse? Critical theory provides few insights on why discourses rise and fall. Thomas Risse-Kappen writes, "Research on . . . 'epistemic communities' of knowledge-based transnational networks has failed so far to specify the conditions under which specific ideas are selected and influence policies while others fall by the wayside."156 Not surprisingly, critical theorists say little about why realism has been the dominant discourse, and why its foundations are now so shaky. They certainly do not offer a well-defined argument that deals with this important issue. Therefore, it is difficult to judge the fate of realism through the lens of critical theory. Nevertheless, critical theorists occasionally point to particular factors that might lead to changes in international relations discourse. In such cases, however, they usually end up arguing that changes in the material world drive changes in discourse. For example, when Ashley makes surmises about the future of realism, he claims that "a crucial issue is whether or not changing historical conditions have disabled longstanding realist rituals of power." Specifically, he asks whether "developments in late capitalist society" like the "fiscal crisis of the state," and the "internationalization of capital," coupled with "the presence of vastly destructive and highly automated nuclear arsenals [has] deprived statesmen of the latitude for competent performance of realist rituals of power?"157 Similarly, Cox argues that fundamental change occurs when there is a "disjuncture" between "the stock of ideas people have about the nature of the world and the practical problems that challenge them." He then writes, "Some of us think the erstwhile dominant mental construct of neorealism is inadequate to confront the challenges of global politics today."158 It would be understandable if realists made such arguments, since they believe there is an objective reality that largely determines which discourse will be dominant. Critical theorists, however, emphasize that the world is socially constructed, and not shaped in fundamental ways by objective factors. Anarchy, after all, is what we make of it. Yet when critical theorists attempt to explain why realism may be losing its hegemonic position, they too point to objective factors as the ultimate cause of change. Discourse, so it appears, turns out not to be determinative, but mainly a reflection of developments in the objective world. In short, it seems that when critical theorists who study international politics offer glimpses of their thinking about the causes of change in the real world, they make arguments that directly contradict their own theory, but which appear to be compatible with the theory they are challenging.159 There is another problem with the application of critical theory to international relations. Although critical theorists hope to replace realism with a discourse that emphasizes harmony and peace, critical theory per se emphasizes that it is impossible to know the future. Critical theory, according to its own logic, can be used to undermine realism and produce change, but it cannot serve as the basis for predicting which discourse will replace realism, because the theory says little about the direction change takes. In fact, Cox argues that although "utopian expectations may be an element in stimulating people to act . . . such expectations are almost never realized in practice."160 Thus, in a sense, the communitarian discourse championed by critical theorists is wishful thinking, not an outcome linked to the theory itself. Indeed, critical theory cannot guarantee that the new discourse will not be more malignant than the discourse it replaces. Nothing in the theory guarantees, for example, that a fascist discourse far more violent than realism will not emerge as the new hegemonic discourse.

Realism Good—1st Line—Realism Solves The Critique

Realism is key to effective criticism—we can incorporate their gripes without discarding our framework.

Murielle Cozette, John Vincent Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University College of Asia and the Pacific, M.A. from King's College London, M.A. from Sciences Po Paris, and Ph.D. from the London School of Economics, 2008 (“Reclaiming the critical dimension of realism: Hans J. Morgenthau on the ethics of scholarship,” *Review of International Studies*, Volume 34, Issue 1, January, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Cambridge Journals Online, p. 27)

That the simplistic account usually provided of realism by these so called ‘critical’ approaches has gradually become common sense is both quite extraordinary and most detrimental to the debates that take place within the discipline. As a result, realism has indeed become what other approaches have made of it, an impoverished theoretical account supposedly relying on simplistic assumptions which are then easily attacked, and equally easily dismissed. Rediscovering the voices of realists themselves is badly needed: they directly challenge the common interpretation of realism as a crude theory of power politics and demonstrate, if need be, the richness, variety and subtlety of the insights realism as a whole provides in the analysis of international politics. Indeed, realists themselves, not their critics, should be listened to when it comes to define what realism is, or is not. For Morgenthau, the founding father of the school, realism is most definitely not a paradigm, least of all a problem solving theory which rests content with the given order of things. It may be defined as a theory revolving around core assumptions, but it is much more than this. In fact, realism is best conceived as an intellectual attitude towards the world one lives in, which accepts its constraints, does not negate its ambiguities, constantly highlights its complexities, and does uphold a profound normative commitment to some fundamental values. The very least that recent approaches can do is to acknowledge this, which should logically lead to more productive and fruitful dialogues between realists and non-realists. To consider Morgenthau’s views on ethics of scholarship has one last implication: while one may disagree with his conception of truth, for example, or challenge his views about the relation between truth and power, his conception of the role and function of academics within any society can be accepted by many different perspectives within IR. What Morgenthau upholds is the duty, for intellectuals, to practice an ethos of permanent criticism.95 His definition of what this entails may be debated, but not his commitment to promote this ethos, regardless of how each scholar may understand it. This is why in the end, being a realist means being critical in the broadest sense of the term: realism recognises the commitment it shares with other approaches to practice this ethos of permanent criticism. It is hoped that critical approaches in IR will soon return the favour.

Realism Good—2nd Line—Realism Solves The Critique

Their argument is totalizing and reductionist—realism is key to speak truth to power.

Murielle Cozette, John Vincent Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University College of Asia and the Pacific, M.A. from King's College London, M.A. from Sciences Po Paris, and Ph.D. from the London School of Economics, 2008 (“Reclaiming the critical dimension of realism: Hans J. Morgenthau on the ethics of scholarship,” *Review of International Studies*, Volume 34, Issue 1, January, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Cambridge Journals Online, p. 10)

A realist theory is particularly well equipped to unmask Power and its claims to Truth, as it contains two intrinsically linked dimensions. First, it analyses power for what it is – social relations characterised by a will to dominate others. As Morgenthau writes, ‘the truth of political science is the truth about power, its manifestations, its configurations, its limitations, its implications, its laws’.21 This is the explanatory side of realism: it wants to understand what power is, how it works, what it seeks. Stemming from this explanatory dimension is the critical one: from this understanding of power, realism can then unmask power’s claims to truth and morality by permanently emphasising their instrumental dimension to disguise power politics. It can never be, therefore, as some present it, a defence of power qua power. By permanently reminding Power that it lies when it pretends to embody Truth or Justice, a realist theory is in essence a critical weapon turned against power.

Realism is key to effective criticism of status quo institutions and power relations—their critique attacks a strawperson.

Murielle Cozette, John Vincent Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University College of Asia and the Pacific, M.A. from King's College London, M.A. from Sciences Po Paris, and Ph.D. from the London School of Economics, 2008 (“Reclaiming the critical dimension of realism: Hans J. Morgenthau on the ethics of scholarship,” *Review of International Studies*, Volume 34, Issue 1, January, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Cambridge Journals Online, p. 25)

In conclusion, if one takes into account Morgenthau’s view on truth, power and the scholar’s responsibility, it is obvious that the realist project is openly normative and critical. For Morgenthau, the role of IR scholars is to seek truth, against power if needed, and then to speak this truth to power. A realist theory of international politics, far from supporting the status quo and from promoting social and political conservatism, is on the contrary to be conceived as a first-rate critical weapon to unmask power and its claims to truth. To present realism as a conservative theoretical outlook signals a fundamental misunderstanding of the realist project, as it only focuses on its explanatory dimension which needs to be related to the critical one. The foundations of the now classic distinction that is made, within the discipline, between ‘orthodox’ approaches (which is where realism is consistently located) and critical ones appear particularly shaky in this respect. They tellingly only rests upon an analysis of Waltz’s ideas, and fails to engage with realism as a whole. In the end, highlighting the critical dimension that lies at the core of the realist project as formulated by Morgenthau demonstrates that the meaning of the adjective ‘critical’ as it is currently used in IR should not simply be used to denote an opposition to realist views. This high-jacking of the adjective critical is most detrimental to the debates that take place within the discipline: it signals an impoverishment of the word itself, and all too often prevents really engaging with realism.

Realism Good—2nd Line—Realism Solves The Critique

Realism incorporates other theories and makes them spokes in a larger wheel—key to pragmatic change.

Alastair J. H. Murray, Professor of Politics at the University of Wales Swansea, 1997 (“Part II: Rearticulating and Re-Evaluating Realism,” *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics*, Published by Keele University Press, ISBN 1853311960, p. 202-203)

Realism would seem to hold out the possibility of a more constructive path for international relations theory. The fact that it is engaged in a normative enquiry is not to say that it abandons a concern for the practical realities of international politics, only that it is concerned to bridge the gap between cosmopolitan moral and power political logics. Its approach ultimately provides an overarching framework which can draw on many different strands of thought, the 'spokes' which can be said to be attached to its central hub, to enable it to relate empirical concerns to a normative agenda. It can incorporate the lessons that geopolitics yields, the insights that neorealism might achieve, and all the other information that the approaches which effectively serve to articulate the specifics of its orientation generate, and, once incorporated within its theoretical framework, relate them both to one another and to the requirements of the ideal, in order to support an analysis of the conditions which characterise contemporary international politics and help it to achieve a viable political ethic. Against critical theories which are incomprehensible to any but their authors and their acolytes and which prove incapable of relating their categories to the issues which provide the substance of international affairs, and against rationalist, and especially neorealist, perspectives which prove unconcerned for matters of values and which simply ignore the relevance of ethical questions to political action, realism is capable of' formulating a position which brings ethics and politics into a viable relationship. It would ultimately seem to offer us a course which navigates between the Scylla of defending our values so badly that we end up threatening their very existence, and the Charybdis of defending them so efficiently that we become everything that they militate against. Under its auspices, we can perhaps succeed in reconciling our ideals with our pragmatism.

Realism Good—2nd Line—A2: Can’t Combine Realism With K

Their argument is politically debilitating—it relies on a caricature of realism and undermines the possibility of transformative change.

Murielle Cozette, John Vincent Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University College of Asia and the Pacific, M.A. from King's College London, M.A. from Sciences Po Paris, and Ph.D. from the London School of Economics, 2008 (“Reclaiming the critical dimension of realism: Hans J. Morgenthau on the ethics of scholarship,” *Review of International Studies*, Volume 34, Issue 1, January, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Cambridge Journals Online, p. 25-27)

Indeed, while scholars are keen to point (quite rightly) that the very word ‘realism’ is ‘value laden’, and implicitly leads to label those who do not adopt a realist approach as day-dreamers or idealists, which is a very potent way to discredit their position in the first place, it is equally true that the very expression ‘critical theory’ [end page 25] is extremely value-laden itself, and operates through radical exclusions, something upon which its main proponents consistently fail to reflect. By labelling themselves critical in opposition to realism, critical theorists deny realism any critical dimension, and by contrast provide an extremely appealing picture of what they stand for. Such a picture, however, is distorted by the very fact that they do not seriously engage with what they are so prompt to reject. In fact, the simplistic account they provide of realism, and their logical rejection of it, do these approaches a complete disservice. First, it discredits their claims: while debating realist ideas is perfectly legitimate, some of the major arguments of ‘critical approaches’ against what they portray as a conservative theoretical outlook are highly problematic: they display a striking misunderstanding of what they are supposedly critical. It becomes therefore hard, for anyone who read Morgenthau at length (or indeed, E.H Carr or Raymond Aron), to take these claims seriously. Second, and perhaps most importantly, by failing to engage with realists arguments and by missing their critical potential, critical approaches weaken their own case. While Morgenthau’s formulation of realism is certainly radically at odds with the post-structuralist vein of critical theory, it shares some important assumptions with the ‘modernist’ wing, and in particular with scholars who work along the lines of the Frankfurt school.92 In the struggle against conservative forces to envisage new, more emancipatory forms of political organisation, realism, far from being the archetypal conservative foe as it is usually portrayed, is a valuable and rather strong ally of the ‘modernist’ critical theory. Third, taking realist arguments seriously – which means, among other things, recognising the critical dimension – would also actualise the commitment of ‘critical approaches’ to ‘pluralism’ and ‘diversity’ in the study of IR, something they are usually so keen to advocate, but which more often than not remains a pious mantra never implemented in practice. It is indeed most striking that numerous calls for more ‘inclusionary’ practices in IR or for increased ‘pluralism’ have in fact resulted in new exclusionary practices, which ended up in a domination of the discipline, at least in the United Kingdom, by these ‘critical’ approaches, to the detriment of other approaches which are flatly denied any critical potential and thereby automatically castigated as conservative. Mearsheimer made this point clear in the E. H. Carr memorial lecture he delivered at Aberystwyth in 2004. Mearsheimer claimed that in the UK, the discipline is dominated by what he calls ‘idealism’ (the term referring to what the article defines as ‘critical approaches’), which created a new ‘hegemonic discourse’ with the result of wiping realists out of the discipline.93 Lamenting that he ‘cannot identify a single realist theorist in Albion’, he goes to explain that ‘the idealist enterprise is all about domination, not peaceful coexistence, and certainly not about an open debate designed to advance our understanding of contemporary policy problems or enduring historical tendencies’.94 His diagnosis is unfortunately mostly correct, and the domination of ‘idealist’ thinking has been greatly eased by the use [end page 26] and misuse of the adjective ‘critical’, and by the subsequent relegation of realism to ‘conservatism’ – the word being too often employed against anyone who simply disagrees with the views promoted by ‘critical’ approaches.

Realism Good—2nd Line—A2: Can’t Combine Realism With K

Their totalizing distinction between ‘critical theory’ and ‘problem-solving theory’ is arbitrary—realism is just as critical as their alternative.

Murielle Cozette, John Vincent Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University College of Asia and the Pacific, M.A. from King's College London, M.A. from Sciences Po Paris, and Ph.D. from the London School of Economics, 2008 (“Reclaiming the critical dimension of realism: Hans J. Morgenthau on the ethics of scholarship,” *Review of International Studies*, Volume 34, Issue 1, January, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Cambridge Journals Online, p. 7-8)

Cox’s distinction clearly echoes the now classic one between ‘orthodox’ and ‘critical’ approaches (a label broad enough to include the self-named Critical Theory, Feminism, Normative theory, Constructivism and Post-Structuralism). The diversity of critical approaches should not obscure the fact that crucially, what allows them [end page 7] to think of themselves as critical is not simply a set of epistemological (usually ‘post-positivist’) or ontological assumptions they may share. It is also, fundamentally, the image they think lies in the mirror when they turn it to realism. In most cases then, it seems to be enough to oppose a simplistic picture of realism like that provided by Cox to deserve the much coveted label ‘critical’. This leads to the idea that it is impossible to be at the same time a realist scholar and critical, as the two adjectives are implicitly presented as antithetical. This clearly amounts to an insidious high-jacking of the very adjective ‘critical’, which more often than not merely signals that one does not adopt a realist approach. The meaning of the adjective is therefore presented as self-evident, and realism is denied any critical dimension. This is highly problematic as this reinforces a typical ‘self-righteousness’ from these ‘critical’ approaches, which tend to rely on a truncated and misleading picture of what realism stands for and conveniently never properly engage with realists’ arguments. The fact that Waltz is always the primary target of these approaches is no coincidence: this article demonstrates that realism as expressed by Morgenthau is at its very core a critical project.

Realism Good—2nd Line—A2: Realism Is Warmongering

They have it totally backward—realists are overwhelmingly opposed to the use of military force.

David M. Edelstein, Associate Professor of International Affairs and Government and Core Faculty Member at the Center for Peace and Security Studies at Georgetown University, 2010 (“Why realists don't go for bombs and bullets,” Guest Post at Stephen Walt’s *Foreign Policy* Blog, July 21st, Available Online at http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/07/20/why\_realists\_don\_t\_go\_for\_bombs\_and\_bullets, Accessed 07-31-2010)

Thanks to Steve Walt for inviting me to contribute to his blog while he is away on vacation. I have been a regular reader of Steve's blog since it launched, and for my first post, I wanted to pick up on a motif that I have seen running through Steve's posts: Will realists ever again support the use of military force by the United States? Followers of this blog will by now have little doubt about how Walt felt about the Iraq War or how he views the prospects for U.S. success in Afghanistan. In fact, throughout the history of his blog, I can only recall one case in which Walt advocated the use of U.S. military force (and I think the realist credentials in that case are rather dubious). There is a common perception in the field of political science that realists are war-mongering Neanderthals anxious to use military force at the drop of a hat. Attend any meeting (if you must) of the American Political Science Association or the International Studies Association, and one will find realists derided as the "bombs and bullets guys" as if we were all direct descendants of Curtis LeMay. What is notable about this -- and what has been notable about Steve's blog -- is just how infrequently realists have supported the use of American military force. Take the U.S. interventions of the post-Cold War period: Panama, the Gulf War, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Of those interventions, Afghanistan was the only one that received anything close to strong support from most realists. Others, most notably the Iraq War, received vehement opposition from the vast majority of realists. Even in the case of Afghanistan, realists expressed trepidation about the prospects for ultimate success despite early victories. Go back to the Cold War, and realists like Kenneth Waltz and Hans Morgenthau were famously opposed to the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Lest one think this is an academic phenomenon, realist policymakers like Brent Scowcroft were equally critical of the Bush administration's actions in Iraq, and George F. Kennan was skeptical of the U.S. interventions in both Korea and Vietnam. Today, should anyone dare to suggest the use of military force in new contexts such as Iran, they are summarily dismissed by prominent realists. Not a single (self-proclaimed or attributed) realist I know of has advocated the use of military force against Iran in response to its apparent development of nuclear weapons, and most are adamantly opposed to it. From one perspective, this opposition is surprising. It is realists, after all, who so value material power, in particular military capabilities. It is not difficult to understand why so many would assume that realists are anxious to use military force because realists are anxious to focus on military capabilities as a primary explanatory variable for international politics. But it is precisely because realists have spent so much time studying military force that they are also so reluctant to use military force. Though realists themselves are divided on the question, many have concluded that the use of military force is often counterproductive, inviting balancing coalitions that simply make life more difficult. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, using military force to reorder societies is very difficult and unlikely to succeed except in uncommon circumstances. At a deeper level, realists also understand that the most potent use of military force is the threat of the use of military force. Perhaps the greatest contribution of Nobel laureate Thomas Schelling to the field of strategic studies is the understanding that military force is at its coercive best when it is credibly threatened in a way that either deters or compels another actor. Realists have taken this to heart. Realists have spilled more ink in recent decades on questions of how to coerce an adversary without using overwhelming military force than on how to use that military force most effectively. The writing that has been done on the use of military focuses on how to use military force to coerce without having to resort to sheer destruction. Finally, there is a personal element of this that should not be underestimated. The most prominent realists today came of age as scholars either during or immediately after the Vietnam War. For many of them -- as with so many Americans -- the war had a searing effect, rendering them exceedingly cautious about the use of U.S. military force in the far corners of the globe. Political science tells itself a useful myth about the foundational importance of deductive theory, but personal experience colors scholars in a way that is hard to ignore. So this is why realists today are typically anything but warmongers. They are prudential in the use of force and more eager to try to coerce without employing military force than to overwhelm by using it. If all this is true, though, it prompts a number of significant questions for further debate and discussion. Have realists been too timid in their views of the utility of military force? Are there other contexts, perhaps short of conquest and occupation, in which military force becomes a "wasting asset" if it is not used to further a country's interests? At its core, realism proclaims that states act to maximize (often ill-defined) national interests. If military force promises the best way to achieve some, if not all, of those interests, then why do realists remain so gun shy, and under what conditions might realists again endorse the use of abundant American military force overseas? And if the answers to these questions are hard to locate, then how effective a coercive instrument can the enormous U.S. military continue to be? Would the threat of U.S. force ultimately lose its credibility if the military were never actually used?

\*\*\* State Good

State Good—Better Than All Other Alternatives

Even if the State does bad things, any alternative is more violent—only the State can provide peace and liberation.

Neil A. Englehart, Assistant Professor of Government and Law at Lafayette College, 2003 (“In Defense of State Building: States, Rights, and Justice,” *Dissent*, Fall, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Academic Search Elite, p. 18)

State failure has become an increasingly important policy concern since 9/11. Strengthening or reconstructing failed states has even become an explicit goal of American foreign policy. Yet many Americans across the political spectrum regard states with deep suspicion and abiding hostility, as instruments of oppression. In truth, states are more likely to protect human rights than any other form of political organization. Acknowledging that potential is today a moral and political imperative. The evil that states do is well known. There are abundant examples: from the brutality of the Thirty Years War to the Stalinist purges, the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, and the Rwandan genocide. Because its repressive capacities are so clear, political theorists seek to protect us from the state (Locke), to divide and limit its power (Madison), to liberate us from it (Marx), or to dissolve it entirely (Foucault). Yet Hobbes’s picture of life without the state— poor, nasty, brutish, and short—still resonates. States can only be called oppressive if there is an alternative available, a more promising political order. States dominate our minds as much as they dominate the globe. The conceptual hegemony of the state is so great that there has been little serious thinking about alternative arrangements. Anarchist visions may sound liberating, but only because they assume that life under anarchy would be much like it is now—only better. In fact, anarchists depend on the very order they seek to abolish, assuming that people will be treated as free and equal, able to make uncoerced choices outside the protection of the state. Their utopian visions set the parameters of critiques of the state, but they seldom recognize that the necessary substructure of their utopia doesn’t exist “nowhere”— it exists only where states have established law and order. In real life, the alternatives to the state are more violent, more coercive social and political orders dominated by warlords and gangs. Not quite the Hobbesian war of all against all, they are rather wars of group against group, dividing society and destroying the possibility of a peaceful public sphere, of civil society, rights, and social justice. The corollary to the oppressiveness of non-state politics is that, contrary to our commonsense understanding, states are relatively liberating and egalitarian. Compared to actually existing alternatives, states have more potential for protecting human rights, human security, and international peace than any other political order. That’s why state building is so important.

State Good—Rejection Cedes The Political

Rejection of the state cedes the political sphere and forecloses opportunities for meaningful change.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 151-153)

Enlightenment thinkers wished neither to abolish the state nor to bring about some utopian alternative. Seeking to constrain the institutional use of arbitrary power, they sought to protect the free exercise of subjectivity and promote the free pursuit of scientific knowledge. The state became the anchor for that enterprise; it was seen as the best institution for securing civil [end page 151] liberties and for furthering social justice. That remains the case. Transnational organizations are, to be sure, required in order to contest emerging transnational economic structures. New ways of establishing and expressing the common interest and a more cosmopolitan outlook will also prove necessary not just in the United States or Europe but also in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Solidarity must surely be reconceived to meet new conditions. But this still does not justify simply dismissing the state or fantasizing about its future disappearance. Confronting an increasingly global society is impossible when indulging in a misplaced romantic nostalgia for the traditional, the organic, and the parochial. The left must overcome its more naïve populist inclinations. This means looking beyond the polis, the town meeting, and even the workers' council.1 Their partisans actually share much in common with the religious and traditional advocates of the organic community. Both seem blind to the dangers involved in dismissing "mechanical" notions of representative democracy with its mass parties, interest group pluralism, separation of powers, and checks and balances. Neither seems willing to confront practical questions of economic coordination, the disappearance of a homogenous citizenry or proletariat, and the implications of an increasingly complex division of labor. Rarely does either consider how local politics fosters patronage, provincialism, and corruption. Bureaucracy is despised for the routine and hierarchy it generates; the importance of an independent judiciary for the preservation of civil liberties is ignored, and little time is wasted on how to maintain acceptable investment or reproduce the conditions for participation in the modern world. Much easier then to condemn the Enlightenment for "severing the organic links that bind humans to their social nature," maintain that all communities should be "left alone," and insist that freedom is not the insight into but rather "the rejection of necessity."2 Arguments of this sort, of course, retreat from engaging the actual conflicts between real movements that continue to shape our world. They are instead content to rest on the belief that "the whole is false," and that the true pursuit of freedom requires an [end page 152] anti-political politics. It is the same with even with more serious radicals who insist that socialism can be conceived only as a utopian "other" in which alienation has been abolished and a world of direct democracy has been achieved.

State Good—Rejection Cedes The Political

Alternatives to the state only make sense in a world where the state exists—rejecting it won’t solve.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 59-60)

The liberal republic has lost a good deal of its radical cachet. Much of the left intelligentsia now criticizes the state and institutional politics in the name of "radical democracy" and "new social movements." The radical democratic alternative is usually seen in terms of atavistic organizational forms like the town meeting or the workers council. It is also usually forgotten that these movements have always presupposed the existence of a state with liberal norms and that their success has been largely dependent upon their ability to use the courts and pressure for legislation. The liberal state remains the point of reference for movements committed to social change and for those interested in the protection of civil liberties. Talk about introducing what Richard Rorty has called a "new language" for the left has been going on now for more than twenty-five years. Especially with the introduction of provincial notions like "ethno-solidarity" and the refusal to employ liberal [end page 59] values outside the liberal context, however, the promise of a new language turns into the reality of a new jargon. It is ultimately not a matter of the language anyway, but what the left has to say: what aims it projects, what values it embraces, and whether it can render meaningful judgments on its enemies and itself. There is hardly a single ideal of the left that does not derive from the Enlightenment. That is surely the case for a view of socialism in which class action against the market requires a coherent relation between means and ends and seeks to bring about a situation in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. It is the same across the board. Political theory cannot help but distinguish left from right: the fashionable rejection of this distinction goes nowhere. It was the liberal political theory of the Enlightenment, indeed, which generated the division between left and right in the first place.

Alternatives to the state cannot replace it—their naïve populism is doomed to fail.

Stephen Eric Bronner, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and a Member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature and German Studies at Rutgers University, 2004 (*Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, Published by Columbia University Press, ISBN 9780231126090, p. 154-155)

The radical left has never formulated an adequate substitute for the liberal republic in theory and it has certainly never offered any sustainable institutional alternative in practice. Some still speak about a "socialist democracy" or long for what is usually a romantic image of the Paris Commune and the workers' council. But the idea of a "socialist republic" generated by the Revolutions of 1848 was still to have been predicated on liberal principles rather than their abolition. With the failure of these revolutions, moreover, the great majority of the European working class came to believe that the liberal republic must serve as the precondition for socialism, and not the other way around. As for the Paris Commune, whose understanding of "revolutionary" justice was often as arbitrary as that of the "popular tribunals," which arose in France and Italy in the immediate aftermath of World War II, it had already become anachronistic by 1921 with the passing of "the heroic years" of the Russian Revolution. Workers' councils and other "secondary associations," which might foster democratic participation, surely have a place in modern political life. But supplanting the state with them is simply not a feasible option. Tensions are unavoidable between the imperatives of bureaucracy and public demands for accountability, centralization and decentralization, representation and participation. They cannot be resolved—once and for all—as the radical followers of Rousseau and the young Marx would care to think. The concern with direct democracy stood at the fringes of Enlightenment politics for the same reason that the "workers' council" remained at the fringes of proletarian politics. Both perspectives believe in the repressed desire of everyone to participate all the time and neither provides a trace of what institutional arrangements should be implemented when "the masses" become exhausted and leave the barricades. The philosophes thought about politics in a different way: they generally understood government as [end page 154] less an end unto itself than as a means for securing liberty and making society less miserable.

State Good—Stateless Utopias Are Empirically Denied

History is on our side: when states collapse, the alternatives are always worse for ordinary citizens. Only the state system can effectively provide for peaceful governance.

Neil A. Englehart, Assistant Professor of Government and Law at Lafayette College, 2003 (“In Defense of State Building: States, Rights, and Justice,” *Dissent*, Fall, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Academic Search Elite, p. 19-20)

No one who has lived in a failed state will feel any attraction to stateless utopias. State collapse in places such as Somalia and Afghanistan quickly gives rise to extremely unattractive forms of power and dominance, based on the localized command of violence. In Somalia, the state fell as the result of a multiparty civil war, which is still unresolved twelve years after the central government’s demise. People have been forced to rely for protection on lineage networks that sponsor armed gangs. These small-scale networks are dominated by male elders, headed by warlords. They dispense traditional justice or sharia law, often inflicting summary or exemplary punishment with little regard to issues of due process. Conflicts outside the lineage are resolved through force at least as often as through negotiation, with weaker groups forced into subordination by stronger ones. Individuals who cannot secure the protection of one or another network are exposed to severe oppression. In Afghanistan, the United States and Pakistan armed several mujahideen groups against the Soviet-supported regime. After the regime fell, the United States lost interest in the country, and the various armed groups drifted into civil war. Ordinary citizens were forced to make peace as best they could with locally, often temporarily, dominant groups, but the conditions of the civil war were such that most were exposed to violence and extortion from more than one. Out of this catastrophe the Pakistani-supported Taliban emerged dominant. Yet the Taliban never actually reconstituted the Afghan state. Its members never controlled the entire country, and in the areas they did control they never attempted to rebuild the civil service or to provide basic services such as health and education. Although they were able to enforce a few radical and repressive policies—the sub-ordination of women, for example—their capacity to formulate and enact policy in any systematic way was weak. The demands of the Clinton and Bush administrations for the surrender of Osama bin Laden rested on the assumption that the Taliban had the capacity to deliver him, if they so chose. We will never know if this assumption was correct, but it is likely that one of the reasons bin Laden chose Afghanistan as a refuge was precisely because it lacked a state structure capable of disciplining its own citizens, much less a wealthy guest with an armed retinue. Such collapsed states rarely recover spontaneously. Some regions of Somalia have begun to stabilize, but it remains unclear whether there will ever again be a Somali state. There is little evidence that Afghanistan was beginning to stabilize as a state prior to the U.S. invasion. At the extreme, in some African countries characterized by what William Reno calls “warlord politics,” rulers incapable of creating states by monopolizing violence or building bureaucracies have abandoned any pretense of serving a greater public good or enlisting popular support. Instead, they exploit fictive legal sovereignty to contract with buccaneer capitalists and foreign mercenaries. They maintain their power with a steady flow of revenue from embezzled development aid and natural-resource exploitation by foreign companies, privatizing the public sphere and abandoning their own populations. The typical result of state failure is the creation of hierarchical and exploitative protection networks. These are oppressive social orders, dangerous to their own people, to their neighbors, and to the international system.

State Good—Stateless Utopias Are Empirically Denied

This is empirically proven—failed and collapsed states are comparatively worse.

Robert I. Rotberg, Director of the Kennedy School’s Program on Intrastate Conflict and President of the World Peace Foundation, 2002 (“The New Nature of Nation-State Failure,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Volume 25, Number 3, Summer, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Lexis-Nexis)

Nation-states exist to deliver political goods -- security, education, health services, economic opportunity, environmental surveillance, a legal framework of order and a judicial system to administer it, and fundamental infrastructural requirements such as roads and communications facilities -- to their citizens. Failed states honor these obligations in the breach. They increasingly forfeit their function as providers of political goods to warlords and other nonstate actors. In other words, a failed state is no longer able or willing to perform the job of a nation-state in the modern world. Failed states are unable to provide security -- the most central and foremost political good -- across the whole of their domains. Citizens depend on states and central governments to secure their persons and free them from fear. Because a failing state is unable to establish an atmosphere of security nationwide and is often barely able to assert any kind of state power beyond a capital city, the failure of the state becomes obvious even before rebel groups and other contenders threaten the residents of central cities and overwhelm demoralized government contingents, as in contemporary Liberia and recent Sierra Leone. Failed states contain weak or flawed institutions -- that is, only the executive institution functions. If legislatures exist at all, they are rubber-stamp machines. Democratic debate is noticeably absent. The judiciary is derivative of the executive rather than being independent, and citizens know that they cannot rely on the court system for significant redress or remedy, especially against the state. The bureaucracy has long ago lost its sense of professional responsibility and exists solely to carry out the orders of the executive and, in petty ways, to oppress citizens. The military is possibly the only institution with any remaining integrity, but the armed forces of failed states are often highly politicized, without the esprit that they once exhibited. Deteriorating or destroyed infrastructures typify failed states. Metaphorically, the more potholes (or main roads turned to rutted tracks), the more likely a state will exemplify failure. As rulers siphon funds from the state, so fewer capital resources are available for road crews, and maintaining road or rail access to distant provinces becomes less and less of a priority. Even refurbishing basic navigational aids along arterial waterways, as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), succumbs to neglect. Where the state still controls the landline telephone system, that form of political and economic good also betrays a lack of renewal, upkeep, investment, and bureaucratic interest. Less a metaphor than a daily reality is the index of failed connections, repeated required dialing, and interminable waits for repair or service. If state monopolies have permitted private entrepreneurs to erect cell telephone towers and offer mobile telephone service, cell telephones may already have rendered the government's landline monopoly obsolete. In a state without a government, such as Somalia, the overlapping system of privately provided cell telephone systems is effective. In failed states, the effective educational and health systems have either been privatized (with a resulting hodgepodge of shady schools and medical clinics in the cities) or have slowly slumped to increasingly desperate levels of decrepitude. Teachers, physicians, nurses, and orderlies are paid late or not at all, and absenteeism rises. Textbooks and essential medicines become scarce. X-ray machines cannot be repaired. Reports to the relevant ministries go unanswered; and parents, students, and patients -- especially rural ones -- slowly realize that the state has abandoned them to the forces of nature and to their own devices. Sometimes, where a failed state is effectively split (Sudan), essential services are still provided to the favored half (northern Sudan) but not to the half engulfed by war. Most of the time, however, the weakened nation-state completely fails to perform. Literacy falls, infant mortality rises, the AIDS epidemic overwhelms any health infrastructure that exists, life expectancies plummet, and an already poor and neglected citizenry becomes even poorer and more immiserated. Failed states provide unparalleled economic opportunity, but only for a privileged few. Those close to the ruler or the ruling oligarchy grow richer while their less-fortunate brethren starve. Immense profits can be made from currency speculation, arbitrage, and knowledge of regulatory advantages. But the privilege of making real money when everything else is deteriorating is confined to clients of the ruling elite or to especially favored external entrepreneurs. The responsibility of a nation-state to maximize the well-being and personal prosperity of all of its citizens is conspicuously absent, if it ever existed. Corruption flourishes in failed states, often on an unusually destructive scale. Petty or lubricating corruption is widespread. Levels of venal corruption escalate, especially kickbacks on anything that can be put out to bid, including medical supplies, textbooks, bridges; unnecessarily wasteful construction projects solely for the rents they will generate; licenses for existing and nonexisting activities; the appropriating by the ruling class of all kinds of private entrepreneurial endeavors; and generalized extortion. Corrupt ruling elites invest their gains overseas, not at home. A few build numerous palaces or lavish residences with state funds. Military officers always benefit from these corrupt regimes and feed ravenously from the same illicit troughs as their civilian counterparts. An indicator, but not a cause, of failure is declining real national and per capita levels of gross domestic product (GDP). The statistical foundations of most states in the developing world are shaky, most certainly, but failed states -- even, or particularly, failed states with abundant natural resources -- show overall worsening GDP figures, slim year-to-year growth rates, and greater disparities of income between the wealthiest and poorest fifths of the population. High official deficits (Zimbabwe's reached 30 percent of GDP in 2001) support lavish security spending and the siphoning of cash by elites. Inflation usually soars because the ruling elite raids the central bank and prints money. From the resulting economic insecurity, often engineered by rulers to maximize their own fortunes and their own political as well as economic power, entrepreneurs favored by the prevailing regime can reap great amounts of money. Smuggling becomes rife. When state failure becomes complete, the local currency falls out of favor, and some or several international currencies take its place. Money changers are everywhere, legal or not, and arbitrage becomes an everyday national pursuit. Sometimes, especially if climatic disasters intervene, the economic chaos and generalized neglect that is endemic to failed states can lead to regular food scarcities and widespread hunger -- even to episodes of starvation and resulting international humanitarian relief efforts. Natural calamities can overwhelm the resources even of nonfailed but weak states in the developing world. But when unscrupulous rulers and ruling elites have consciously sucked state competencies dry, unforeseen natural disasters or man-made wars can drive ignored populations over the edge of endurance into starvation. Once such populations have lost their subsistence plots or sources of income, they lose their homes, forfeit already weak support networks, and are forced into an endless cycle of migration and displacement. Failed states offer no safety nets, and the homeless and destitute become fodder for anyone who can provide food and a cause. A nation-state also fails when it loses a basic legitimacy -- when its nominal borders become irrelevant and when one or more groups seek autonomous control within one or more parts of the national territory or, sometimes, even across its borders. Once the state's capacity deteriorates and what little capacity still remains is devoted largely to the fortunes of a few or to a favored ethnicity or community, then there is every reason to expect less and less loyalty to the state on the part of the excluded and the disenfranchised. When the rulers are seen to be working for themselves and their kin, and not for the state, their legitimacy, and the state's legitimacy, plummets. The state increasingly is perceived as owned by an exclusive class or group, with all others pushed aside. Citizens naturally become more and more conscious of the kinds of sectional or community loyalties that are their main recourse and their only source of security and economic opportunity. They transfer their allegiances to clan and group leaders, some of whom become warlords. These warlords or other local strongmen derive support from external and local supporters. In the wilder, more marginalized corners of failed states, terror can breed along with the prevailing anarchy that emerges from state breakdown and failure. A collapsed state is an extreme version of a failed state. It has a total vacuum of authority. A collapsed state is a mere geographical expression, a black hole into which a failed polity has fallen. Dark energy exists, but the forces of entropy have overwhelmed the radiance that hitherto provided some semblance of order and other vital political goods to the inhabitants embraced by language affinities or borders. When a state such as Somalia collapses (or Lebanon and Afghanistan a decade ago and Sierra Leone in the late 1990s), substate actors take over. They control regions and subregions, build their own local security apparatuses, sanction markets or other trading arrangements, and even establish an attenuated form of international relations. By definition, they are illegitimate and unrecognized, but some may assume the trappings of a quasi-state, such as Somaliland in northern Somalia. Yet, within the collapsed state prevail disorder, anomic behavior, and the kinds of anarchic mentality and entrepreneurial pursuits -- especially gun and drug running -- that are compatible with networks of terror.

State Good—Key To Protect Human Rights

The state’s monopolization of violence is key to peace—only the state can protect human rights.

Neil A. Englehart, Assistant Professor of Government and Law at Lafayette College, 2003 (“In Defense of State Building: States, Rights, and Justice,” *Dissent*, Fall, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Academic Search Elite, p. 18-19)

Modern states are distinctive in two respects: they claim and mostly wield a monopoly of the use of violence and they are bureaucratically organized. The monopoly of legitimate force eliminates the widely dispersed violence typical in other kinds of polities. In medieval Europe, for example, violence was legitimately used by peasant villages, urban guilds, city governments, the nobility, and the church—all in addition to, and independent of, the king. By monopolizing violence, modern states sharply reduce its overall level, enabling ordinary people to live more securely. States create what Norbert Elias calls “pacified social spaces,” which permit citizens to pursue their own interests without worrying about their personal safety every minute of every day. An important reason that states are able to secure this monopoly is that rational-legal bureaucracies give them an unprecedented capacity to control society. Although people commonly rail against bureaucratic inefficiency, these complaints measure bureaucracies against an ideal of efficient performance rather than against any actually existing alternative. In most of the administrative systems that preceded the development of modern bureaucracy, offices were a form of property or ascribed status, held as private entitlements. Officials were therefore much less responsive to the public or higher authorities, and social control—including the control of violence—was much less effective. Bureaucracies are often accused of being intrinsically oppressive because they are so much more effective at gathering information and enforcing laws and policies than other kinds of administrations. This efficiency is indeed sometimes dangerous, but non-bureaucratic systems are always dangerous because there is no systematic accountability, no way to check the abuses of the powerful. Because of their size and complexity, rational- legal bureaucracies are much more rulebound than the alternatives. Even if the rules are unjust, their systematic nature promotes accountability. Ordinary citizens, nongovernmental agencies (NGOs), and international agencies can much more easily identify the agents of injustice; they will have an address for protests and recommendations; they will know whom to blame when things go badly. The letter-writing campaigns of Amnesty International and the assessments of UN human rights rapporteurs depend on this accountability. Without it human rights activists are helpless, which means that they are helpless in countries that are stateless. The monopoly of violence and rule of law together create the potential for rights—legally enforceable entitlements vested equally in all citizens. Of course, many states fail to vest rights equally or to defend the rights they claim to recognize. However, without states the legal enforcement of rights is almost inconceivable. Indeed, despotic regimes often attack their own bureaucracies, precisely because they represent a point of accountability and transparency, and thus may empower those outside the regime. Because our commonsense understanding of states is formed from within the environment created by those same states, it is not surprising that we lack a comparative understanding of the alternatives. It is also not surprising that we chafe against the failures and imperfections of states, holding them—as we should—to an ideal that we can conceive only because of the social order that is potential in them.

\*\*\* Predictions Good

Predictions Good—Key To Effective Policymaking

Predictions are key to rational policymaking—even if an examination of our assumptions is important, we have to make decisions in the end. The burden of proof should be on those that reject formal analysis, standards of evidence, and probabilistic reasoning.

Michael Fitzsimmons, defence analyst at a Washington DC consulting firm, 2006 (“The Problem of Uncertainty in Strategic Planning,” *Survival*, Volume 48, Issue 4, December, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via InformaWorld)

Uncertainty is not a new phenomenon for strategists. Clausewitz knew that 'many intelligence reports in war are contradictory; even more are false, and most are uncertain'. In coping with uncertainty, he believed that 'what one can reasonably ask of an officer is that he should possess a standard of judgment, which he can gain only from knowledge of men and affairs and from common sense. He should be guided by the laws of probability.'34 Granted, one can certainly allow for epistemological debates about the best ways of gaining 'a standard of judgment' from 'knowledge of men and affairs and from common sense'. Scientific inquiry into the 'laws of probability' for any given strategic question may not always be possible or appropriate. Certainly, analysis cannot and should not be presumed to trump the intuition of decision-makers. Nevertheless, Clausewitz's implication seems to be that the burden of proof in any debates about planning should belong to the decision-maker who rejects formal analysis, standards of evidence and probabilistic reasoning. Ultimately, though, the value of prediction in strategic planning does not rest primarily in getting the correct answer, or even in the more feasible objective of bounding the range of correct answers. Rather, prediction requires decision-makers to expose, not only to others but to themselves, the beliefs they hold regarding why a given event is likely or unlikely and why it would be important or unimportant. Richard Neustadt and Ernest May highlight this useful property of probabilistic reasoning in their renowned study of the use of history in decision-making, Thinking in Time. In discussing the importance of probing presumptions, they contend: The need is for tests prompting questions, for sharp, straightforward mechanisms the decision makers and their aides might readily recall and use to dig into their own and each others' presumptions. And they need tests that get at basics somewhat by indirection, not by frontal inquiry: not 'what is your inferred causation, General?' Above all, not, 'what are your values, Mr. Secretary?'hellip If someone says 'a fair chance'hellip ask, 'if you were a betting man or woman, what odds would you put on that?' If others are present, ask the same of each, and of yourself, too. Then probe the differences: why? This is tantamount to seeking and then arguing assumptions underlying different numbers placed on a subjective probability assessment. We know of no better way to force clarification of meanings while exposing hidden differenceshellip Once differing odds have been quoted, the question 'why?' can follow any number of tracks. Argument may pit common sense against common sense or analogy against analogy. What is important is that the expert's basis for linking 'if' with 'then' gets exposed to the hearing of other experts before the lay official has to say yes or no.'35 There are at least three critical and related benefits of prediction in strategic planning. The first reflects Neustadt and May's point - prediction enforces a certain level of discipline in making explicit the assumptions, key variables and implied causal relationships that constitute decision-makers' beliefs and that might otherwise remain implicit. Imagine, for example, if Shinseki and Wolfowitz had been made to assign probabilities to their opposing expectations regarding post-war Iraq. Not only would they have had to work harder to justify their views, they might have seen more clearly the substantial chance that they were wrong and had to make greater efforts in their planning to prepare for that contingency. Secondly, the very process of making the relevant factors of a decision explicit provides a firm, or at least transparent, basis for making choices. Alternative courses of action can be compared and assessed in like terms. Third, the transparency and discipline of the process of arriving at the initial strategy should heighten the decision-maker's sensitivity toward changes in the environment that would suggest the need for adjustments to that strategy. In this way, prediction enhances rather than undermines strategic flexibility. This defence of prediction does not imply that great stakes should be gambled on narrow, singular predictions of the future. On the contrary, the central problem of uncertainty in planning remains that any given prediction may simply be wrong. Preparations for those eventualities must be made. Indeed, in many cases, relatively unlikely outcomes could be enormously consequential, and therefore merit extensive preparation and investment. In order to navigate this complexity, strategists must return to the distinction between uncertainty and risk. While the complexity of the international security environment may make it somewhat resistant to the type of probabilistic thinking associated with risk, a risk-oriented approach seems to be the only viable model for national-security strategic planning. The alternative approach, which categorically denies prediction, precludes strategy. As Betts argues, Any assumption that some knowledge, whether intuitive or explicitly formalized, provides guidance about what should be done is a presumption that there is reason to believe the choice will produce a satisfactory outcome - that is, it is a prediction, however rough it may be. If there is no hope of discerning and manipulating causes to produce intended effects, analysts as well as politicians and generals should all quit and go fishing.36 Unless they are willing to quit and go fishing, then, strategists must sharpen their tools of risk assessment. Risk assessment comes in many varieties, but identification of two key parameters is common to all of them: the consequences of a harmful event or condition; and the likelihood of that harmful event or condition occurring. With no perspective on likelihood, a strategist can have no firm perspective on risk. With no firm perspective on risk, strategists cannot purposefully discriminate among alternative choices. Without purposeful choice, there is no strategy. \* \* \* One of the most widely read books in recent years on the complicated relationship between strategy and uncertainty is Peter Schwartz's work on scenario-based planning, The Art of the Long View. Schwartz warns against the hazards faced by leaders who have deterministic habits of mind, or who deny the difficult implications of uncertainty for strategic planning. To overcome such tendencies, he advocates the use of alternative future scenarios for the purposes of examining alternative strategies. His view of scenarios is that their goal is not to predict the future, but to sensitise leaders to the highly contingent nature of their decision-making.37 This philosophy has taken root in the strategic-planning processes in the Pentagon and other parts of the US government, and properly so. Examination of alternative futures and the potential effects of surprise on current plans is essential. Appreciation of uncertainty also has a number of organisational implications, many of which the national-security establishment is trying to take to heart, such as encouraging multidisciplinary study and training, enhancing information sharing, rewarding innovation, and placing a premium on speed and versatility. The arguments advanced here seek to take nothing away from these imperatives of planning and operating in an uncertain environment. But appreciation of uncertainty carries hazards of its own. Questioning assumptions is critical, but assumptions must be made in the end. Clausewitz's 'standard of judgment' for discriminating among alternatives must be applied. Creative, unbounded speculation must resolve to choice or else there will be no strategy. Recent history suggests that unchecked scepticism regarding the validity of prediction can marginalise analysis, trade significant cost for ambiguous benefit, empower parochial interests in decision-making, and undermine flexibility. Accordingly, having fully recognised the need to broaden their strategic-planning aperture, national-security policymakers would do well now to reinvigorate their efforts in the messy but indispensable business of predicting the future.

Predictions Good—Threat Construction Key To Prevent Conflict

Identifying and preparing for threats is a security requirement of the first order—the alternative is surprise threats and conflict escalation.

Charles F. Doran, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of International Relations at Johns Hopkins University, 1999 (“Is major war obsolete? An exchange,” *Survival*, Volume 41, Issue 2, Summer, Available Online via Proquest)

The conclusion, then, is that the probability of major war declines for some states, but increases for others. And it is very difficult to argue that it has disappeared in any significant or reliable or hopeful sense. Moreover, a problem with arguing a position that might be described as utopian is that such arguments have policy implications. It is worrying that as a thesis about the obsolescence of major war becomes more compelling to more people, including presumably governments, the tendency will be to forget about the underlying problem, which is not war per se, but security. And by neglecting the underlying problem of security, the probability of war perversely increases: as governments fail to provide the kind of defence and security necessary to maintain deterrence, one opens up the possibility of new challenges. In this regard it is worth recalling one of Clauswitz's most important insights: A conqueror is always a lover of peace. He would like to make his entry into our state unopposed. That is the underlying dilemma when one argues that a major war is not likely to occur and, as a consequence, one need not necessarily be so concerned about providing the defences that underlie security itself. History shows that surprise threats emerge and rapid destabilising efforts are made to try to provide that missing defence, and all of this contributes to the spiral of uncertainty that leads in the end to war.

We should respond to uncertainty by carefully planning for contingencies, not rejecting predictions – doing so leaves us unprepared to deal with future threats.

Michael Fitzsimmons, defence analyst at a Washington DC consulting firm, 2006 (“The Problem of Uncertainty in Strategic Planning,” *Survival*, Volume 48, Issue 4, December, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via InformaWorld)

For all of its importance, however, recognition of uncertainty poses a dilemma for strategists: in predicting the future, they are likely to be wrong; but in resisting prediction, they risk clouding the rational bases for making strategic choices. Over-confidence in prediction may lead to good preparation for the wrong future, but wholesale dismissal of prediction may lead a strategist to spread his resources too thinly. In pursuit of flexibility, he ends up well prepared for nothing. A natural compromise is to build strategies that are robust across multiple alternative future events but are still tailored to meet the challenges of the most likely future events. Recent US national security strategy, especially in the Department of Defense, has veered from this middle course and placed too much emphasis on the role of uncertainty. This emphasis, paradoxically, illustrates the hazards of both too much allowance for uncertainty and too little. Current policies on nuclear-force planning and the results of the recent Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) are examples of overreaching for strategic flexibility. The record of planning for post-war operations in Iraq, by contrast, indicates that decision-makers, in enlisting uncertainty as a rationale for discounting one set of predictions, have fallen prey to overconfidence in their own alternative set of predictions. A more balanced approach to accounting for uncertainty in strategic planning would address a wide range of potential threats and security challenges, but would also incorporate explicit, transparent, probabilistic reasoning into planning processes. The main benefit of such an approach would not necessarily be more precise predictions of the future, but rather greater clarity and discipline applied to the difficult judgements about the future upon which strategy depends.

Predictions Good—Threat Construction Key To Prevent Conflict

There’s no alternative to threat construction—rejection increases the risk of violence.

Alastair J. H. Murray, Professor of Politics at the University of Wales Swansea, 1997 (“Part II: Rearticulating and Re-Evaluating Realism,” *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics*, Published by Keele University Press, ISBN 1853311960, p. 188-189)

Ashley's critique thus boils down to a judgement as to the potentialities for change in the current situation and how best to exploit them. It amounts to the difference between a progressive philosophy which regards systemic transformation as imminent, and one which remains more sceptical. In 'Political realism and human interests', for instance, realism's practical strategy ultimately appears illegitimate to Ashley only because his own agenda is emancipatory in nature. His disagreement with realism depends on a highly contestable claim — based on Herz's argument that, with the development of global threats, the conditions which might produce some universal consensus have arisen — that its 'impossibility theorem' is empirically problematic, that a universal consensus is achievable, and that its practical strategy is obstructing its realisation. 48 In much the same way, in 'The poverty of neorealism', realism's practical strategy is illegitimate only because Ashley's agenda is inclusionary. His central disagreement with realism arises out of his belief that its strategy reproduces a world order organised around sovereign states, preventing exploration of the indeterminate number of — potentially less exclusionary — alternative world orders. 49 Realists, however, would be unlikely to be troubled by such charges. Ashley needs to do rather more than merely assert that the development of global threats will produce some universal consensus, or that any number of less exclusionary world orders are possible, to convince them. A universal threat does not imply a universal consensus, merely the existence of a universal threat faced by particularistic actors. And the assertion that indeterminate numbers of potentially less exclusionary orders exist carries little weight unless we can specify exactly what these alternatives are and just how they might be achieved. As such, realists would seem to be justified in regarding such potentialities as currently unrealisable ideals and in seeking a more proximate good in the fostering of mutual understanding and, in particular, of a stable balance of power. Despite the adverse side-effects that such a balance of power implies, it at least offers us something tangible rather than ephemeral promises lacking a shred of support. Ultimately, Ashley's demand that a new, critical approach be adopted in order to free us from the grip of such 'false' conceptions depends upon ideas about the prospects for the development of a universal consensus which are little more than wishful thinking, and ideas about the existence of potentially less exclusionary orders which are little more than mere assertion. 50 Hence his attempts, in 'Political realism and human interests', to conceal these ideas from view by claiming that the technical base of realism serves only to identify, and yet not to reform, the practical, and then, in 'The poverty of neorealism', by removing the technical from investigation altogether by an exclusive reliance on a problem of hermeneutic circularity. In the final analysis, then, Ashley's post-structuralist approach boils down to little more than a critique — and, at that, a critique which fails. It is predicated on the assumption that the constraints upon us are simply restrictive knowledge practices, such that it presumes that the entirety of the solution to our problems is little more than the removal of such false ways of thinking. It offers nothing by way of alternative — no strategies, no proximate goals, indeed, little by way of goals at all. If, in constructivism, the progressive purpose leads to strategies divorced from an awareness of the problems confronting transformatory efforts, and, in critical theoretical perspectives, it produces strategies divorced from international politics in their entirety, in post-structuralism it generates a complete absence of strategies altogether. Critique serves to fill the void, yet this critique ultimately proves unsustainable. With its defeat, post-structuralism is left with nothing. Once one peels away the layers of misconstruction, it simply fades away. If realism is, as Ashley puts it, 'a tradition forever immersed in the expectation of political tragedy', it at least offers us a concrete vision of objectives and ways in which to achieve them which his own position, forever immersed in the expectation of deliverance, is manifestly unable to provide. 51

Predictions Good—A2: Predictions Are Arbitrary/Wrong

Political predictions are testable and verifiable—the alternative is ‘anything goes’.

John Mearsheimer, Professor and Chair of the Deptartment of Political Science at the University of Chicago, 1990 (“Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War," *International Security*, Volume 15, Number 1, Summer, p. 9-10)

The study of international relations, like the other social sciences, does not yet resemble the hard sciences. Our stock of theories is spotty and often poorly tested. The conditions required for the operation of established theories are often poorly understood. Moreover, political phenomena are highly complex; hence precise political predictions are impossible without very powerful theoretical tools, superior to those we now possess. As a result, all political forecasting is bound to include some error. Those who venture to predict, as I do here, should therefore proceed with humility, take care not to claim unwarranted confidence, and admit that later hindsight will undoubtedly reveal surprises and mistakes. Nevertheless, social science *should* offer predictions on the occurrence of momentous and fluid events like those now unfolding in Europe. Predictions can inform policy discourse. They help even those who disagree to frame their ideas, by clarifying points of disagreement. Moreover, predictions of events soon to unfold provide the best tests of social science theories, by making clear what it was that given theories have predicted about those events. In short, the world can be used as a laboratory to decide which theories best explain international politics. In this article I employ the body of theories that I find persuasive to peer into the future. Time will reveal whether these theories in fact have much power to explain international politics.

Predictions Good—A2: Predictions Are Arbitrary/Wrong

Rejecting predictions causes a race to the bottom in which individual biases dictate decision-making—this undermines strategic flexibility and internal link turns their argument.

Michael Fitzsimmons, defence analyst at a Washington DC consulting firm, 2006 (“The Problem of Uncertainty in Strategic Planning,” *Survival*, Volume 48, Issue 4, December, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via InformaWorld)

Why is this important? What harm can an imbalance between complexity and cognitive or analytic capacity in strategic planning bring? Stated simply, where analysis is silent or inadequate, the personal beliefs of decision-makers fill the void. As political scientist Richard Betts found in a study of strategic surprise, in 'an environment that lacks clarity, abounds with conflicting data, and allows no time for rigorous assessment of sources and validity, ambiguity allows intuition or wishfulness to drive interpretation… The greater the ambiguity, the greater the impact of preconceptions.'16 The decision-making environment that Betts describes here is one of political-military crisis, not long-term strategic planning. But a strategist who sees uncertainty as the central fact of his environment brings upon himself some of the pathologies of crisis decision-making. He invites ambiguity, takes conflicting data for granted and substitutes a priori scepticism about the validity of prediction for time pressure as a rationale for discounting the importance of analytic rigour. It is important not to exaggerate the extent to which data and 'rigorous assessment' can illuminate strategic choices. Ambiguity is a fact of life, and scepticism of analysis is necessary. Accordingly, the intuition and judgement of decision-makers will always be vital to strategy, and attempting to subordinate those factors to some formulaic, deterministic decision-making model would be both undesirable and unrealistic. All the same, there is danger in the opposite extreme as well. Without careful analysis of what is relatively likely and what is relatively unlikely, what will be the possible bases for strategic choices? A decision-maker with no faith in prediction is left with little more than a set of worst-case scenarios and his existing beliefs about the world to confront the choices before him. Those beliefs may be more or less well founded, but if they are not made explicit and subject to analysis and debate regarding their application to particular strategic contexts, they remain only beliefs and premises, rather than rational judgements. Even at their best, such decisions are likely to be poorly understood by the organisations charged with their implementation. At their worst, such decisions may be poorly understood by the decision-makers themselves. Moreover, this style of decision-making is self-reinforcing. A strategist dismissive of explicit models of prediction or cause and effect is likely to have a much higher threshold of resistance to adjusting strategy in the face of changing circumstances. It is much harder to be proven wrong if changing or emerging information is systematically discounted on the grounds that the strategic environment is inherently unpredictable. The result may be a bias toward momentum in the current direction, toward the status quo. This is the antithesis of flexibility. Facts on the ground change faster than belief systems, so the extent to which a strategy is based on the latter rather than the former may be a reasonable measure of strategic rigidity. In this way, undue emphasis in planning on uncertainty creates an intellectual temptation to cognitive dissonance on the one hand, and confirmatory bias on the other. And the effect, both insidious and ironic, is that the appreciation for uncertainty subverts exactly the value that it professes to serve: flexibility.

Predictions Good—A2: Predictions Are Impossible

The fact that the future is difficult to predict doesn’t mean we can’t identify threats—prefer the theoretical and empirical analysis of our evidence to their philosophical nonsense.

Michael Fitzsimmons, defence analyst at a Washington DC consulting firm, 2006 (“The Problem of Uncertainty in Strategic Planning,” *Survival*, Volume 48, Issue 4, December, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via InformaWorld)

At one level it is difficult to contest the basis for these claims. Who can deny that surprise is an important fact of life? It is self-evident that predicting the future is difficult, all the more so when the subject of the prediction is a network of highly complex, dynamic, human systems, like international politics. This judgement is borne out by extensive theoretical and empirical inquiry, especially in emerging applications of complexity theory to the social sciences.10 Accordingly, retaining flexibility is important for any organisation facing uncertainty. Rumsfeld and his advisers are to be applauded for their recognition of and attempts to grapple with these important considerations. But acknowledging the importance of uncertainty does not quite equate to accepting its practical utility, much less its centrality to strategic planning. How uncertain is the future? And does stepping back from predictions of the future really produce greater strategic flexibility? The trouble with uncertainty In spite of its intuitive appeal, applying uncertainty to strategic planning quickly becomes problematic and can even inhibit the flexibility it was meant to deliver. The first question we must ask here is: granting the inevitability of surprise, can we learn anything about the future from the current security environment? We do know a great deal about that. We know, for example, that transnational terrorist networks are actively targeting US interests and allies throughout the world. Also, Iran, a nation with a track record of xenophobic foreign policy and support for terrorism, is building nuclear weapons. The paranoid, totalitarian regime in North Korea continues to threaten its neighbours with nuclear weapons, sophisticated missile systems, a million-man army, and thousands of artillery tubes within range of Seoul, the heart of one of Asia's largest economies. None of these conditions is likely to disappear in the near future. Acknowledging current challenges such as these does not suggest that obvious threats are necessarily the most important ones, or that the future is bound to resemble the present. But it does suggest that uncertainty must be considered within the context of an environment where some significant threats are relatively clear and where certain known contingencies are important to plan for. Unexpected threats notwithstanding, just the three threats noted above constitute a fairly healthy set of challenges for strategic planning to address. And, of course, the Pentagon does plan extensively for these and other specific contingencies. From this perspective, it becomes a bit harder to accept the claim that 'uncertainty defines the strategic and operational environment today'. Additionally, the notion that today's future is less certain than yesterday's is overdrawn. There is more nostalgia than truth behind the characterisation of the Cold War as 'a time of reasonable predictability'. Presidents from Harry Truman to George H.W. Bush might have taken exception to that description, as might soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines deployed to Korea, Vietnam, Iran, Lebanon, Grenada, Libya, Panama and Iraq, among other places, while Pentagon strategists refined plans for war in Central Europe. By the same token, today's future may not be shrouded in complete mystery. Indeed, much of recent official rhetoric surrounding the 'war on terror' echoes that of the Cold War, identifying the emergence of a mortal enemy, in the form of violent radical Islam, and the prospects for a generational struggle against that enemy.11 This rhetoric contrasts sharply with claims that uncertainty is central to strategic planning. The 2006 QDR flirts with a little logical tension when it introduces the term 'the long war' and the notion of 'an era of surprise and uncertainty' within one page of each other.12 In sum, the justification for emphasising uncertainty in strategic planning is questionable. Strategic uncertainty is neither novel to the current security environment nor overwhelming in the face of some clear challenges facing US national security.

Even if the future is uncertain, we should estimate probabilities and weigh risks.

Michael Fitzsimmons, defence analyst at a Washington DC consulting firm, 2006 (“The Problem of Uncertainty in Strategic Planning,” *Survival*, Volume 48, Issue 4, December, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via InformaWorld)

However, the weak grounds for emphasising uncertainty are only half the problem: even if justified in theory, applying uncertainty to planning is highly problematic. In the most literal sense, uncertainty makes planning impossible: one cannot plan for that which cannot be known.13 However, traditional rational-choice theory distinguishes this kind of pure uncertainty from risk. Conditions of risk are those that prevail in casinos or the stock market, where future outcomes are unknown, but probabilities can be estimated. Conditions of uncertainty, by contrast, are those where there is no basis even for estimating probabilities.14 If the uncertainty evoked by strategic planners is more properly characterised as risk, then this implies the need for greater variability in the scenarios and planning factors against which strategies are tested.

Predictions Good—A2: Tetlock/Menand—1st Line

The study applies equally as much to them—

They also cite specialists, not generalists—there’s no distinction between the expert predictions that we make and the expert predictions that they make—even if they win this argument, there’s no impact.

The Tetlock study is guilty of selection bias—it is not a reason to reject experts.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor of Economics at George Mason University, 2005 (“Tackling Tetlock,” *EconLog: Library of Economics and Liberty*, December 26th, Available Online at http://econlog.econlib.org/archives/2005/12/ tackling\_tetloc\_1.html, Accessed 04-15-2009)

Philip Tetlock, one of my favorite social scientists, is making waves with his new book, Expert Political Judgment. Tetlock spent two decades asking hundreds of political experts to make predictions about hundreds of issues. With all this data under his belt, he then asks and tries to answer a bunch of Big Questions, including "Do experts on average have a greater-than-chance ability to predict the future?," and "What kinds of experts have the greatest forecasting ability?" This book is literally awesome - to understand Tetlock's project and see how well he follows through fills me with awe. And that's tough for me to admit, because it would be easy to interpret Tetlock's work as a great refutation of my own. Most of my research highlights the systematic belief differences between economists and the general public, and defends the simple "The experts are right, the public is wrong," interpretation of the facts. But Tetlock finds that the average expert is an embarassingly bad forecaster. In fact, experts barely beat what Tetlock calls the "chimp" stategy of random guessing. Is my confidence in experts completely misplaced? I think not. Tetlock's sample suffers from severe selection bias. He deliberately asked relatively difficult and controversial questions. As his methodological appendix explains, questions had to "Pass the 'don't bother me too often with dumb questions' test." Dumb according to who? The implicit answer is "Dumb according to the typical expert in the field." What Tetlock really shows is that experts are overconfident if you exclude the questions where they have reached a solid consensus. This is still an important finding. Experts really do make overconfident predictions about controversial questions. We have to stop doing that! However, this does not show that experts are overconfident about their core findings. It's particularly important to make this distinction because Tetlock's work is so good that a lot of crackpots will want to highjack it: "Experts are scarcely better than chimps, so why not give intelligent design and protectionism equal time?" But what Tetlock really shows is that experts can raise their credibility if they stop overreaching.

They’ve come to the wrong conclusion about the Tetlock study—it’s not a reason to reject expert opinion.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 89)

My primary target in this section is not Tetlock, but populists who might misread him. Nevertheless, Tetlock could and should have done more to distance himself from populism. He was so intrigued by the differences among different types of experts that he neglected two bigger questions: 1. What is the main point a broader audience will take away from this book? 2. How can I help the audience to take away the right point? As the book is written, it is too easy for a casual reader to think that Tetlock's main point is that political experts are no better than astrologers. If I were Tetlock, I would have tried harder to immunize readers from this misinterpretation. Above all, I would have repeatedly emphasized that "the experts have much to learn, but they also have much to teach," or at least that "however bad experts seem, laymen are far worse."

Predictions Good—A2: Tetlock/Menand—1st Line

Their deployment of this argument results in comparatively worse decision-making.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 83)

Furthermore, even if the experts are no better than Tetlock finds, he does too little to discourage demagogues from misinterpreting his results as a vindication of populism. There is only one major instance in which Tetlock compares the accuracy of experts to the accuracy of laymen. The result: The laymen (undergraduate Berkeley psychology majors—quite elite in absolute terms) were far inferior not only to experts, but to chimps. Thus, the only relevant data in Expert Political Judgment further undermine the populist view that the man in the street knows as much as the experts. But the back cover of Tetlock's book still features a confused blurb from The New Yorker claiming that "the somewhat gratifying lesson of Philip Tetlock's new book" is "that people who make prediction their business…are no better than the rest of us." Tetlock found no such thing. But in his quest to make experts more accountable, he has accidentally encouraged apologists for popular fallacies. It is important for Tetlock to clear up this misunderstanding before it goes any farther. His goal, after all, is to make experts better, not to delude the man in the street into thinking that experts have nothing to teach him.

Predictions Good—A2: Tetlock/Menand—Protectionism DA

Their argument results in protectionism—it replaces expertise with populist sentiment.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 87-88)

Tetlock tells us that political experts "barely best the chimp." It is easy to conclude that these so called "experts" are a bunch of quacks. Question: What would happen if the average voter accepted this conclusion? Would he start relying on the winner of Tetlock's horserace—formal statistical models? No. In all likelihood, if the average voter came to see political experts as quacks, he would rely even more heavily on his own preconceptions. As a result, policies would shift in a populist direction. For example, if the public lost whatever respect it now has for experts, one would expect policy to move away from the free trade prescription of [end page 87] the vast majority of economists, and towards the protectionist policies that most people instinctively favor.

Protectionism causes war—prefer our empirical evidence.

Vincent H. Miller, Founder and President of the International Society for Individual Liberty, and James R. Elwood, Vice-President of the International Society for Individual Liberty, 1988 (“Free Trade or Protectionism? The Case Against Trade Restrictions,” *International Society of Individual Liberty*, Available Online at http://www.isil.org/resources/lit/free-trade-protectionism.html, Accessed 09-22-2003)

TRADE WARS: BOTH SIDES LOSE When the government of Country "A" puts up trade barriers against the goods of Country "B", the government of Country "B" will naturally retaliate by erecting trade barriers against the goods of Country "A". The result? A trade war in which both sides lose. But all too often a depressed economy is not the only negative outcome of a trade war . . . WHEN GOODS DON'T CROSS BORDERS, ARMIES OFTEN DO History is not lacking in examples of cold trade wars escalating into hot shooting wars: Europe suffered from almost non-stop wars during the 17th and 18th centuries, when restrictive trade policy (mercantilism) was the rule; rival governments fought each other to expand their empires and to exploit captive markets. British tariffs provoked the American colonists to revolution, and later the Northern-dominated US government imposed restrictions on Southern cotton exports - a major factor leading to the American Civil War. In the late 19th Century, after a half century of general free trade (which brought a half-century of peace), short-sighted politicians throughout Europe again began erecting trade barriers. Hostilities built up until they eventually exploded into World War I. In 1930, facing only a mild recession, US President Hoover ignored warning pleas in a petition by 1028 prominent economists and signed the notorious Smoot-Hawley Act, which raised some tariffs to 100% levels. Within a year, over 25 other governments had retaliated by passing similar laws. The result? World trade came to a grinding halt, and the entire world was plunged into the "Great Depression" for the rest of the decade. The depression in turn led to World War II. THE #1 DANGER TO WORLD PEACE The world enjoyed its greatest economic growth during the relatively free trade period of 1945-1970, a period that also saw no major wars. Yet we again see trade barriers being raised around the world by short-sighted politicians. Will the world again end up in a shooting war as a result of these economically-deranged policies? Can we afford to allow this to happen in the nuclear age? "What generates war is the economic philosophy of nationalism: embargoes, trade and foreign exchange controls, monetary devaluation, etc. The philosophy of protectionism is a philosophy of war." – Ludwig von Mises

Predictions Good—A2: Tetlock/Menand—Selection Bias

The Tetlock study suffers from selection bias—

Our Caplan evidence explains that the study deliberately asked difficult and controversial questions upon which there was significant disagreement among experts. This only proves that experts are prone to overreaching, not that they are unreliable in general—the conclusion they draw is not consistent with the results.

And—Tetlock rigged the game.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 82)

For purposes of this review, I took Tetlock's fox hedgehog test. Even though I knew his results in advance, the test pegs me as a moderate hedgehog. Nevertheless, I find Tetlock's evidence for the relative superiority of foxes to be compelling. In fact, I agree with his imaginary "hardline neopositivist" critic who contends that Tetlock cuts the hedgehogs too much slack.1 I part ways with Tetlock on some major issues, but I do not claim that he underestimates my own cognitive style. 2 My main quarrels are, rather, that Tetlock underestimates experts in general, and does too little to discourage demagogues from misinterpreting his results. How does Tetlock underestimate the experts? In a nutshell, his questions are too hard for experts, and too easy for chimps. Tetlock deliberately avoids asking experts what he calls "dumb questions." But it is on these so called dumb questions that experts' predictions shine, relative to random guessing. Conversely, by partitioning possible responses into reasonable categories (using methods I will shortly explain), Tetlock saved the chimps from severe embarrassment that experts would have avoided in their own.

Specifically—the results were biased by the questions that were selected:

A. Difficulty.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 85)

On reflection, though, a more neutral word for "ridiculous" is "easy." If you are comparing experts to the chimp's strategy of random guessing, excluding easy questions eliminates the areas where experts would have routed the chimps. Perhaps more compellingly, if you are comparing experts to laymen, positions that experts consider ridiculous often turn out to be popular (Caplan 2007; Somin 2004; Lichter and Rothman '999; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Thaler 1992; Kraus, Maimfors, and Slovic 1992). To take only one example, when asked to name the two largest components of the federal budget from a list of six areas, the National Survey of Public Knowledge of Welfare Reform and the Federal Budget (Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University 1995) found that foreign aid was respondents' most common answer, even though only about 1 percent of the budget is devoted to it. Compared to laymen, then, experts have an uncanny ability to predict foreign aid as a percentage of the budget.

B. Controversy.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 85)

Tetlock also asks quite a few questions that are controversial among the experts themselves.4 If his goal were solely to distinguish better and worse experts, this would be fine. Since Tetlock also wants to evaluate the predictive ability of the average expert, however, there is a simple reason to worry about the inclusion of controversial questions: When experts sharply disagree on a topic, then by definition, the average expert cannot do well.

Predictions Good—A2: Tetlock/Menand—Selection Bias

C. Response Options.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 85-86)

But Tetlock does more to help the chimp than just avoiding easy questions and asking controversial ones. He also crafts the response options to make chimps look much more knowledgeable than they are. When questions dealt with continuous variables (like GDP growth or stock market closes), respondents did not have to give an exact number. [end page 85] Instead, they were asked whether variables would be above a confidence interval, below a confidence interval, or inside a confidence interval. The catch is that Tetlock picked confidence intervals that make the chimps' strategy fairly effective: The confidence interval was usually defined by plus or minus 0.5 of a standard deviation of the previous five or ten years of values of the variable. For example, if GDP growth had been 2.5 percent in the most recently available year, and if the standard deviation of growth values in the last ten years had been 1.5 percent, then the confidence band would have been bounded by 1.75 percent and 3.25 percent. (244) Assuming a normal distribution, Tetlock approach ensures that variables will go up with a probability of 31 percent, stay the same with a probability of 38 percent, and go down with a probability of 31 percent.5 As a consequence, the chimp strategy of assigning equal probabilities to all events is almost automatically well calibrated. If, however, Tetlock had made his confidence interval zero—or three—standard deviations wide, random guessing would have been a predictive disaster, and experts would have shined by comparison.

And—that takes out their “monkeys throwing darts” argument—

A. Response Precision.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 86)

To truly level the playing field between experts and chimps, Tetlock could have asked the experts for exact numbers, and made the chimps guess from a uniform distribution over the whole range of possibilities. For example, he could have asked about defense spending as a percentage of GDP, and made chimps equally likely to guess every number from o to 1oo. Unfair to the chimps? Somewhat, but it is no more unfair than using complex, detailed information to craft three reasonable choices, and then concluding that the chimps' "guesswork" was almost as good as the experts' judgment.

B. Unrealistic Comparison.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 86)

To amplify this lesson, consider the classic question of how long it would take a chimp typing at a keyboard to write War and Peace. If the chimp could type anything he wanted, the sun might go out first. But what if each key on the keyboard printed a book rather than a letter, and one of those books was War and Peace? It is a lot easier for a chimp to "write" War and Peace when someone who actually knows how to do so paves the chimp's way.

Predictions Good—A2: Tetlock/Menand—Selection Bias

And—the fact that formal models are superior to off-the-cuff theorizing is obvious—it doesn’t disprove the validity of expert predictions.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 87)

Fair enough, but what are the implications? Suppose that, properly measured, experts crush chimps, but still lose to extrapolations and formal models. Does that make experts' forecasting abilities "good," or "bad"? In my view, the right answer is: pretty good. Almost no one is smart enough to run extrapolations or estimate formal models in his head. For experts to match formal models, they would have to approach Tetlock's questions as a consulting project, not "just a survey." Speaking at least for my own discipline, most economists who are seriously interested in predicting, say, GDP growth rely on formal statistical models. But very few economists would estimate a formal model just to answer a survey. Our time is too valuable, or, to put it less charitably, we're kind of lazy. It is hardly surprising, then, that economists lost to formal models, considering the fact that Tetlock took the time to open his favorite statistical program, and the economists did not. All that this shows is that statistical forecasting is better than from the hip forecasting, and that experts are not smart enough to do statistical forecasting without the help of a computer. Experts cannot escape all of Tetlock's indictment. He makes a convincing case that experts break some basic rules of probability, overestimate their predictive abilities for "non ridiculous" and controversial questions, and respond poorly to constructive criticism. But contrary to the radical skeptics, experts can easily beat chimps in a fair game. For the chimps to stand a chance, the rules have to be heavily slanted in their favor.

Predictions Good—A2: Tetlock/Menand—Wrong Conclusion

They have reached the wrong conclusion—

Caplan characterizes the Menand evidence as a misreading of the Tetlock study—the proper conclusion is NOT that expert predictions are unreliable. Accepting the affirmative's conclusions results in disastrous decision-making—the assumption that a layperson's opinion is as credible as an expert's is incorrect and leads to irrational populism.

And—experts thump laypersons—Tetlock’s study proves.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 88)

If Tetlock is right, wouldn't a shift toward populism be a good thingor at least not a bad thing? Many readers will be quick to make this inference, but it is mistaken. Even though Tetlock races experts against a long list of competitors, he says very little about the relative performance of experts versus laymen. As far as I can tell, the only laymen Tetlock tested were a group of briefly briefed Berkeley undergraduates. In 1992, we gave psychology majors "facts on file" summaries, each three paragraphs long, that presented basic information on the polities and economies of Russia, India, Canada, South Africa, and Nigeria. We then asked students to make their best guesses on a standard array of outcome variables. (2005, 6) Out of all the competitors in Tetlock's tournament, these undergraduates came in dead last: The undergraduates were both less calibrated and less discriminating than professionals working either inside or outside their specialties. If one insists on thinking like a human being rather than a statistical algorithm ... it is especially dangerous doing so equipped only with the thin knowledge base of the undergraduates. The professionals—experts and dilettantes—possessed an extra measure of sophistication that allowed them to beat the undergraduates soundly .... (6) The upshot is that Tetlock does nothing to show that experts are "no better than the rest of us." When he does race the two groups, laymen lose decisively. Tetlock, like Voltaire, finds that "common sense is not so common."

And—this is consistent with the consensus of other studies.

Bryan Caplan, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University, 2007 (“Have The Experts Been Weighed, Measured, And Found Wanting?,” *Critical Review*, Issue 19, Issue 1, p. 88-89)

The poor performance of the Berkeley undergraduates is particularly noteworthy because these laymen were elite in absolute terms, and received basic information before they made their predictions. We can only imagine how poorly the average American would have done using nothing but the information in his head—and shudder when we realize that "the average American, using nothing but the information in his head" roughly describes the median American voter.6 Actually, we can do more than just imagine how poorly the average American would have done. While no one has administered Tetlock's survey to the general public, an entire literature tests the accuracy of [end page 88] public beliefs about politics, economics, and more (Caplan 2007; Somin 2004; Lichter and Rothman 1999; Deli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Thaler 1992; Kraus, Malmfors, and Slovic 1992). On balance, the public's performance is shockingly bad. Given Tetlock's (2003) own work on "taboo cognitions," this should come as no surprise; to a large extent, people hold political beliefs as sacred dogmas, not scientific hypotheses (Caplan 2007).