Reconstructing Political Realism: The Long March to Scientific Theory

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RECONSTRUCTING POLITICAL REALISM

THE LONG MARCH TO SCIENTIFIC THEORY

ASHLEY J. TELLIS

DESPITE SUBSTANTIAL differences in the approaches, methods, and formulations of various individual realists, there is little doubt that political realism constitutes a coherent tradition of explaining political behavior. Centered on an understanding of politics as a permanent struggle for power and security, political realism has consistently sought to explain how entities seek to preserve themselves in an environment characterized by pervasive egoism and the ever-present possibility of harm. The presence of egoism implies that all entities value only themselves; the interaction of many such entities creates a situation in which each becomes a limitation on the security, freedom, and ambitions of the others; and the competition which results is characterized by each entity constantly jostling with other entities in an attempt to preserve its own power and enhance its own safety. Realist approaches thus perceive politics primarily as a conflictual interaction. Consequently, their analyses of political behavior center, at least in the first instance, on a positive description of how political entities cope with ubiquitous threats in the face of unending security competition. This positive description of political actions aimed at enhancing security constitutes the "minimum realist program." This program has been articulated differently in diverse formulations beginning with the antiquarian philosophic-historical reflections of Thucydides and culminating in contemporary social-scientific theories, the most prominent of which is the systemic-structuralism of Kenneth Waltz.

This article reconstructs the realist research program with a view to understanding how it has evolved over time. By analyzing the works of five

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individuals who represent distinctive turning-points in the evolution of political realism, it will reconstruct how the realist program, which began as a philosophical reflection on the nature and behavior of security-seeking entities, has gradually been transformed—however imperfectly—into the abstract, deductive formulations which modern social science demands. Given this objective, it is important to recognize that this article is primarily a "rational reconstruction"[1] and not a historical narrative. As such, it is fundamentally an interpretation which recreates the internal history of the realist research program. The term "internal history," in turn, refers to the various substantive and methodological problem shifts marking the evolution of that research program.[2]

This emphasis on internal history does not make a rational reconstruction identical to a chronological narrative in which the evolution of a theory or the growth of a discipline is described *simpliciter*. It is also not a history of ideas, in which the development of a given "unit-idea" is systematically traced out with respect to both time and usage in order to make manifest the "exclusively logical progress in which objective truth progressively unfolds itself in a rational order."[3] A rational reconstruction is an attempt to explain, as rationally as possible, the growth of objective knowledge in terms of the normative methodology provided by a philosophy of science. Far from aiming for a theoretically uncontaminated chronology (as is often thought to exist in popular conceptions of narrative history), or for the systematic exposition of individual concepts (as is specifically sought out in the history of ideas), a rational reconstruction settles for a more modest objective: interpreting the significant problem-shifts defining the growth of a particular research program when viewed from the perspective of both substantive formulation and methodological approach. Thus, this essay includes elements of narrative history and elements derived from the history of ideas, without being reducible to either or both of these disciplines.[4]

1. The term "rational reconstruction" has been borrowed from Imre Lakatos, "History of Science and its Rational Reconstructions," *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 8 (1970): 91–136.

2. This focus on "internal history" implies that the question of how various problem shifts are linked to the broader social conditions from which they emerge—an issue tackled almost exclusively by "external history"—lies outside the province of this inquiry and is, therefore, neglected. The distinction between internal and external history has been discussed in Thomas S. Kuhn, "Notes on Lakatos," *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 8 (1970): 140–41.

3. Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Reflections on the History of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1 (1940): 21.

4. This definition of rational reconstruction varies from Imre Lakatos' usage of the term. Lakatos sought to use rational reconstructions to compare various competing methodologies of science. That objective cannot be replicated here because the discipline of international

CRITICAL RATIONALISM AND RATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION OF REALISM

THIS RATIONAL reconstruction of political realism scrutinizes sequentially the contributions of three traditional realists—Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Hans Morgenthau—and two scientific realists—Morton Kaplan and Kenneth Waltz—with a view to understanding how their work comports with the methodological criteria for good scientific theory as identified by the critical rationalist philosophy of science. The critical rationalist tradition is based on the founding work of Karl Popper. Developed further by Joseph Agassi, Paul Feyerabend, Imre Lakatos, David Miller, John W. N. Watkins, and others,[5] it offers contemporary realists methodological solutions which avoid either the bankrupt inductivism of logical positivism or the abandonment of objectivity by postmodernism.[6] Thus, it is particularly congenial to the scientific reformulation of political realism because it considers objective social scientific knowledge to be both possible and desirable. Furthermore, it encourages the creation of such knowledge without pretending that possession of it would lead either to

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relations and the research program of political realism are relatively young as social sciences and, therefore, do not lend themselves to testing competing methodologies of science. Hence, the technique of rational reconstruction used here is intended primarily to trace the growth of the realist research program when viewed against Popperian prescriptions for the construction of scientific theories.

5. The chief sources of the critical rationalist tradition are Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1959); Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vols. 1 and 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1961); Karl Popper, *Realism and the Aim of Science*, ed. W. W. Bartley III (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1983); Joseph Agassi, *Science in Flux*, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1975); Hans Albert, *Treatise on Critical Reason*, trans. Mary Varney Rorty (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); W. W. Bartley III, *The Retreat to Commitment* (New York: Knopf, 1962); David Miller, *Critical Rationalism* (La Salle: Open Court, 1994); J. W. N. Watkins, *Science and Scepticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Imre Lakatos, *Philosophical Papers*, vols. 1 and 2, ed. John Worrall and Gregory Currie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Paul Feyerabend, *Philosophical Papers*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

6. Although sometimes identified as two distinct schools, critical rationalism actually encompasses those concerns usually associated with scientific realism. The conventional wisdom often identifies the former school with the deductive-nomological conception of science and the latter school with the search for causal mechanisms or underlying structures. This distinction is superficial at best because the scientific laws sought by critical rationalism are not isolated universal statements but part of a theoretical lattice which describes certain observable behaviors deduced from a conception of underlying (perhaps unobservable) structures. Therefore, the attempt to describe scientific realism as essentially different from critical rationalism is unsustainable, and the former is treated as subsumed by the critical rationalist philosophy of science for the purposes of this article. For a good discussion of how critical rationalism is scientifically realist in both intent and structure, see Popper, *Realism and the Aim of Science*, 11–158.

epistemic certainty or to social and political utopia. The methodology proffered by critical rationalism thus enables scientific realists to produce theoretical formulations that are consistent with the deepest intuitions of their historical predecessors, the traditional realists.

The three principal components of critical rationalist methodology, especially as applied to the social sciences, are conjectural knowledge, deductive systematization, and methodological individualism.[7]

Conjectural knowledge. Conjectural knowledge was Karl Popper's celebrated solution to the "problem of induction." The problem of induction, a traditional epistemological conundrum, arises from the fact that there appears to be no logical way in which a discrete number of singular observations can be used to justify the truth of any universal statement. Induction as a methodology, therefore, constrains the very activity which is of most interest to science: the discovery and enunciation of true universal laws. Most philosophers now acknowledge that induction is a problematic procedure. Popper's solution is an improvement because it offers the hope of enunciating true universal statements even as it affirms that "the ideal of certainty is quite barren"[8] and, therefore, ought not to be pursued by science.

The basic idea underlying conjectural knowledge is simple and straightforward. The worth of a scientific hypothesis is judged not by the empirical base from which it is derived, but by its ability to pass rigorous tests. Any hypothesis—no matter what its source or inspiration and no matter how outlandish—is admissible. It is accepted for scientific consideration so long as it can be empirically tested and, by implication, falsified. Consequently, the value of a hypothesis or conjecture is not dependent on a scientist's ability to justify it a priori through confirming procedures (as the inductivist methodology of logical positivism traditionally demanded), but rather by its ability to survive severe and prolonged testing.

Deductive systematization. The objective of expelling false conjectures by severe criticism and testing, in turn, generates the second requirement that all conjectures be deductively systematized. Deductive systematization is necessary for three reasons:

First, it enables the scientist logically to draw out the maximum number of inferred, non-obvious, consequences from a given conjecture. This is important because, other things being equal, the greater the number of test-

7. The following discussion of critical rationalist methodology is based on the more detailed exposition which appears in Ashley J. Tellis, "The Drive to Domination: Towards a Pure Realist Theory of Politics" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1994), 18–80.

8. David Miller, "Conjectural Knowledge: Popper's Solution to the Problem of Induction," in *In Pursuit of Truth,* ed. Paul Levinson (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1982), 22.

able consequences, the easier it is to falsify a particular conjecture. A more fecund conjecture is preferable to one which is less: it possesses greater "potential satisfactoriness"[9] relative to its competitors. Other things being equal, therefore, it is judged preferable to them.

Second, it helps establish internal coherence within a theoretical framework. This is necessary because, as Popper notes, while coherence does not establish truth, "incoherence and inconsistency do establish falsity; so if we are lucky, we may discover inconsistencies and use them to establish the falsity of some of our theories."[10]

Third, deductive systematization is indispensable because it provides the means by which a theoretical conclusion can be falsified through the application of the logical rule of *modus tollens*. This implies that although theories can never be conclusively verified, scientific knowledge can nevertheless grow because, whenever certain evidence secures provisional acceptance by the scientific community, syllogistic logic can be used to demonstrate that a theory is false.[11]

Methodological individualism. In addition to conjectural knowledge and deductive systematization, critical rationalism also argues that methodological individualism is necessary for the growth of genuine social scientific knowledge. Methodological individualism is the stipulation that all social behavior and all social institutions be explained by reference to the behaviors of in-

9. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, 217.

10. Ibid., 226.

11. Ibid., 64. Because falsification thus becomes the only means by which scientific knowledge can truly grow, even if only negatively, formulating deductively coherent theories is of great importance. The foundations of such theories are, no doubt, conjectural and may, in fact, even be utterly arbitrary. If, however, these conjectural foundations give rise to deductively coherent theoretical systems whose conclusions may, in turn, be falsified by severe testing, it is possible that our knowledge may increase as a result. If these conclusions are falsified when matched against accepted observation statements, we may know that at least some hypothesis is not true. If, on the other hand, the conclusions are *not* falsified when matched against accepted observation statements, nothing happens. That is to say, the unfalsified hypothesis is retained as one as-yet unrefuted explanation whose intrinsic truth we are not—and may never be—certain of. This as-yet unrefuted explanation may never be considered *true* in any serious epistemological sense, "for no theory has been shown to be true, or can be shown to be true" (Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, 21). If it has survived more severe tests than its competitors, however, we may rationally prefer it as a basis for practical action. The critical rationalist tradition thus asserts that while we may occasionally discover that some of our conjectures are false, we will never be certain that even our most successful conjectures are true. Yet, because they are continually exposed to criticism, testing and possible revision, the growth of objective knowledge is possible. Such knowledge—even if it refers only to knowledge of those conjectures shown to be false—is objective nonetheless because the process of criticism is a public activity open to inter-subjective examination and discussion. Through such activity, it is possible that certain speculatively proffered hypotheses will survive long enough to provide us with some plausible universal laws explaining certain phenomena. If so, we will have secured these laws through a method not vulnerable to the debilitating defects of induction.

dividuals in specific situations. These behaviors, in turn, are a function of an individual's preferences. When one such individual interacts with another, a specific structure of interactions arises. This structure, then, proceeds to constrain all individuals into exhibiting certain behaviors. These behaviors can also give rise to particular social aggregates and if so, these aggregates (or social "wholes") can thereafter be explained simply as a result of the specific interindividual interactions arising from a given situational constraint.

Using the individual as the unit of analysis in this fashion precludes the need for either psychological or biological explanations, and this methodology is justified by critical rationalism on two counts: the ontological and the epistemological. The ontological justification derives from the fact that critical rationalism denies the genuine existence of wholes beyond the properties and interactions of their parts.[12] This denial is conditioned, among other things, by a desire to avoid the pitfall of reification, which is the pretense that social wholes exist a priori as unproblematic entities. The critical rationalist asserts that social wholes like "markets," "firms," "states," and the "international state system," to offer just a few examples, do not exist in fact. Rather, they are epiphenomenal entities—economizing abstractions—constituted merely for theoretical purposes and, hence, are not real in the sense that only individuals can be. Therefore, if an analysis involving these social wholes is desired, the wholes must—in principle or in practice—first be derived as products of the unintended consequences of purposive interactions among conscious individuals.

Since social wholes do not meaningfully "exist"—and this is the essence of the ontological argument—it follows that we cannot know them as such. This is the essence of the epistemological argument. As Friedrich A. von Hayek noted, "what of social complexes are directly known to us are only the parts...the whole is never directly perceived but always reconstructed by an effort of our imagination."[13] Reconstruction by deductive logic is,

12. The best discussion of the critical rationalist position on wholes and parts can be found in D. C. Phillips, *Holistic Thought in Social Science* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

13. F. A. von Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution of Science* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1979), 93. What is also entailed by this claim of methodological individualism is that, whereas we may be eternally agnostic about what the true units of the natural sciences are (agnostic because our knowledge of the fundamental units is constantly revised from generation to generation), acting individuals alone are the true explanatory units of the social sciences. This essentially means that while it may be possible to explain social outcomes by further reducing even individuals to more primitive constituents, like faculties, genes, or atoms, such explanations would not be, properly speaking, social scientific explanations but, rather, philosophical, biological, or physical explanations. If, in fact, a genuine reduction of this sort is possible, Popper would wholeheartedly support it (though he is quite skeptical both of the possibility

therefore, fundamental because all social wholes are theoretically constituted entities. In the absence of an accepted constituting framework, it would be impossible either to recognize their existence or to agree on whether any given whole is to be considered an appropriate unit of analysis. This simple insight has profound consequences for the growth of social scientific knowledge—a point that becomes clear through the following example. It is not at all uncommon to find Marxist theorists denying that states are critical to the explanation of international political behavior. On the other hand, realist scholars, concerned with states as actors, often deny that ideologies, social forces, or classes are relevant to international political explanations. Because the debate is framed in terms of such macroscopic entities—entities lacking an unambiguous ontological status—all such deliberations are bound to be inconclusive. As a result, the dispute over which units of analysis are legitimate (for purposes of explanation) remains unresolved and, to that extent, the growth of knowledge itself is retarded. The only way out of this logjam, the critical rationalist argues, is to reduce all social wholes to their elementary parts—the individual—and then attempt to synthesize them by deductive logic. Those wholes which cannot be generated in terms of the rational behaviors of the elementary entities would then be jettisoned; those wholes which can be so generated would be retained as legitimate units of analysis. Deductive causal explanations, utilizing these wholes, could thereafter be created.

SINGLE- AND MULTIPLE-EXIT MODELS

The ontological and epistemological arguments taken together, therefore, boil down to the claim that because individuals alone, not social wholes, are recognized as existent by all social scientists irrespective of their theoretical or ideological affiliation, only a deductively systematized theory, which bases its explanations on a priori ascribed properties of individuals, can survive as a good model of social scientific explanation. As far as the formal requirements for such an explanation are concerned, the principles of deductive systematization and methodological individualism combine to

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of complete physical reductionism and its ability to provide explanatory completeness). Even if such reduction were possible, however, the social sciences would nonetheless still have great utility though at an intermediate rather than at an "ultimate" level of analysis. The social sciences, therefore, by definition must explain social outcomes in terms of acting individuals and asserting this does not in any way preempt the possibility that one day even acting individuals could be further decomposed into more primitive units by other disciplines.

demand the creation of single- or multiple-exit models.[14] These models are intended to isolate the single or multiple rational choices open to any actor in the face of some generated situational constraint. The simplest such models are static models. These are relatively easy to create, even if a particular discipline is in its infancy. As a discipline develops, however, it is possible to create more complex models of actor behavior, like comparative static and possibly even dynamic models.

Regardless of which kind of model is actually developed at any given time, it is important to recognize that the single-exit version represents the preferred ideal from an explanatory point of view. This is because single-exit models incorporate sufficient information about the situational constraints facing a given actor such that only one decision is seen as rational from the perspective of that actor. Single-exit models are thus attractive because they make for determinate explanations. When creating such single-exit models is not feasible, however, multiple-exit models become necessary. These models represent the second-best, because they succeed only in delineating a range of possible actions, rather than being able to identify the one single and unique rational choice facing a given actor. Multiple-exit models, therefore, introduce indeterminacy in an explanation and, to that degree, are less preferable in comparison to single-exit models.

While the type of model that can be developed at any point in time is often a function of the relative sophistication of a discipline, it is important that some kind of exit model be created. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the goal of social science consists primarily of developing theoretical exit models which expose the characteristic behavior of actors in some defined situation. Developing these models is crucial because they serve as "ideal types": they enable the observer to systematically identify the kinds of constraining forces at work in some situation and, thereafter, to understand and predict the typical, appropriate, rational, behavior which any hypothetical actor would exhibit when confronted by the situational compulsions encoded in the model.[15] Exit models thus serve two functions: first, they capture the causal mechanics at work in some hypothesized situation;

14. The logic and structure of various exit models has been discussed in Spiro Latsis, "A Research Programme in Economics," in *Method and Appraisal in Economics*, ed. Spiro Latsis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1–41.

15. It is not difficult to perceive that this "situational determinist" methodology proffered by critical rationalism incorporates, with some modifications, the methodological legacy of Max Weber with its emphasis on creating "ideal types" in the service of "ideal-typical" analysis. The relationship between Weber's methodological program and critical rationalism's view of social scientific analysis is explored in J. W. N. Watkins, "Ideal Types and Historical Explanation," in *Modes of Individualism and Collectivism*, ed. John O'Neill (London: Heinemann, 1973), 143–65.

second, they uncover the rational behavior of agents in those situations in a formal way. The isolation of such law-like regularities through situational logic provides the very stuff of which empirical testing and, it is hoped, falsification, are made.

To sum up, the critical rationalist tradition suggests that an ideal social scientific theory will have three characteristics. First, it will not be inductively justified; second, it will be an internally coherent deductive system taking the form of static, comparative static or dynamic, single- or multiple-exit models; third, it will be methodologically individualist in form.

APPLYING CRITICAL RATIONALIST METHODOLOGY

These three characteristics will now be used as yardsticks to assess the work of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Morgenthau, Kaplan, and Waltz. Each of them will be interpreted "synthetically," meaning that their individual works are understood as interrelated parts of a larger, unified argument. This approach presumes that each theorist possesses a coherent weltanschauung from which various given works radiate like spokes from the hub of a wheel: any single piece of writing can be used to illuminate the others.[16] Such a presumption is legitimate for purposes of a reconstruction since what is attempted is not an exegesis of the various texts per se, but an interpretation of how they encode the realist program when scrutinized in terms of the following considerations.

First, what is the principal substantive claim offered by the theorist in question? The inquiry here will focus on establishing how the realist program, focused as it is on power and security, is embodied in the principal written contributions of the theorist concerned and what its role is in terms of the evolving growth of scientific knowledge.

Second, what is the methodological form used by the theorist to advance his substantive claims? The analysis here will focus on the manner in which the substantive claims are derived—inductively or deductively—and whether these claims are presented in the form of a unified theoretical system or merely as an exposition of pragmatic insights drawn from and useful to the practice of statecraft.

Third, what are the units of analysis utilized by the theorist to frame his theoretical claims and how does reliance on these units cohere with the theorist's larger understanding of the causes of conflict? The investigation

16. This metaphor has been borrowed from Mark Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 230.

here will seek to establish whether individuals, states, or state systems have either analytical or theoretical primacy[17] in the author's work, and whether the causes of conflict are located in the nature of man, the internal organizations of societies, states, and governments, or in the character of the political system as a whole—a classificatory structure now identified as first-, second-, and third-image explanations of political behavior by Waltz.[18]

In addressing these questions, this reconstruction will view the progress of political realism as a long—but yet unfinished—march from philosophical-metaphysical reflection to modern social-scientific theory. It will conclude with an evaluation of the present state of political realism as science, an analysis of its limitations, and suggest how the critical rationalist methodology of science can provide the means by which realist theory can be reconstituted in a way which rids it of its present limitations and significantly expands its explanatory scope.

THUCYDIDES: THE FOUNTAINHEAD OF THE POLITICAL REALIST TRADITION

IN AN ESSAY written for *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Thucydides is described as a "political observer, not a speculative philosopher," whose "work builds self-consciously on a clearly defined philosophical position, an antimetaphysical naturalism and positivism which he probably learned from the practitioners of Hippocratic medicine and from the Sophists, who dominated the higher education of fifth-century Athens."[19] This reading of

17. The distinction between "analytical" and "theoretical" primacy is important to methodologically individualist approaches in social science. This is because all individualist theories are faced with the problem of explaining how rational individual action gets transformed into collective social outcomes or particular social wholes, many of which may not even have been intended by the acting agents. To solve this problem satisfactorily, a particular conception of individuals and individual action is required such that both social wholes and individual choices are integrated seamlessly. If this integration is satisfactorily achieved, it is possible for a social scientific discipline to accord analytical primacy to some social whole of its choosing (for example, "states," "classes," etc.), while still being able to demonstrate that these preferred wholes are derived from individuals who continually have theoretical primacy in the explanatory system. In other words, successful social scientific explanations recognize individuals to be the "efficient causes" of social outcomes (and, hence, are accorded theoretical primacy), while the social wholes that arise are viewed primarily as emergent outcomes which are economical for purposes of large-scale analysis (and, hence, are accorded analytic primacy). For a good discussion of this question, see Reinhard Wippler and Siegwart Lindenberg, "Collective Phenomena and Rational Choice," in *The Micro-Macro Link*, ed. Jeffery C. Alexander, et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 135–52.

18. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).

19. Paul Edwards, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 8 (New York: Macmillan, 1967), s.v. "Thucydides" by William T. Bluhm.

Thucydides as a perceptive historian who shares both the modern empiricist spirit and perhaps even its scientific method,[20] is commonplace among social scientists, and it is particularly congenial to contemporary realists because it allows a fairly straightforward appropriation of his insights for purposes of theorizing about international politics. Thus, Morgenthau explicitly uses the Thucydidean formulation that "identity of interests is the surest of bonds whether between states or individuals," to justify his conception of the primacy of the national interest.[21] Similarly, Waltz credits Thucydides for being among the earliest theorists preoccupied with the problem of "the use of force and the possibility of controlling it."[22] Robert Gilpin, perhaps his most systematic redactor, not only describes Thucydides as "the first scientific student of international relations"[23] but also interprets his work as setting forth a "theory of hegemonic war" where "the uneven growth of power among states is the driving force of international relations."[24] Operating within the horizon of positivist history, several generations of realist scholars have thus read Thucydides as a historian concerned with documenting the dynamic patterns of conflict and strife as they relate to the growth and decline of hegemonic states in world politics.[25]

While admitting that such readings of Thucydides are both legitimate and, in the case of Gilpin, especially instructive, a rational reconstruction of the Thucydidean achievement cannot rest content with viewing his work as simply a magisterial history of the rise and decline of great powers. It can-

20. For a classic reading of Thucydides as a practitioner of modern scientific history see G. F. Abbott, *Thucydides: A Study in Historical Reality* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1970).

21. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 4th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1967), 8.

22. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), 186.

23. Robert Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," in *Neorealism and its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 306.

24. Robert Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (spring 1988): 591.

25. Such empiricist readings of Thucydides have increasingly come in for criticism, usually from critical theorists who argue that the Thucydidean opus is less about power politics in a scientific sense than it is about how discourse interacts with material constraints to produce specific political outcomes. See, by way of example, Daniel Garst, "Thucydides and Neorealism," *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (1989): 3–27; and Laurie M. Johnson Bagby, "The Use and Abuse of Thucydides in International Relations," *International Organization* 48 (1994): 131–53. Criticism of this sort, however, may be overstated from a methodological point of view because none of the realists who interpret Thucydides pretend to provide authoritative exegeses of the text. Rather, they are content to read it for its insights into power politics. From a substantive point of view such criticism—while useful and cautionary—may be overstated as well because a "scientific" reading of Thucydides, especially if conducted in accordance with the critical rationalist notion of "situational logic," can readily accommodate the argument that ideas influence individuals in their decision calculus. The relative degree of influence, however, can be determined only by reconstructing the actual situation that any given individual finds himself or herself in.

not treat his work as yet another empiricist "history" because both the architectural structure of the text and the philosophical content suffusing its historical narrative preclude reading *The Peloponnesian War* as a descriptive chronicle of facts.[26] This reconstruction, therefore, comprehends *The Peloponnesian War* as a classic form of "epic"[27] writing in which two levels of reality are described and reflected upon in an intertwined fashion. On one hand, the work describes events occurring at a world-historical level, where different diplomatic and military initiatives within and between states are narrated and analyzed in a linear fashion. At this level, it may be described as an analysis of the causes and consequences of Athenian imperialism insofar as it affected both the domestic body politic and its external relations with the other Greek city-states. On the other hand, it is a deep philosophical reflection on the nature of political decay and moral dissolution as exhibited both in the cosmic realm of order and in the human realm of politics. At this level, it may be described as an attempt to delineate the archetypal form (*eidos*) of a violent convulsion (*kinesis*)—a convulsion which Thucydides judged to be without parallel or precedent (1.1) and which, if correctly understood, would provide unique insight into all convulsions yet to come. Both these levels of analysis constantly interact such that even simple narratives at the world-historical level always convey an ineffable sense of preternatural drama and tragedy, while the profound philosophical reflections about nature and artifice, order and decay, as conveyed through the various speeches in the text, always speak—at some level—to simple, and sometimes trite, issues of political, military, and strategic choice. By recognizing that both these levels inextricably pervade the work, it is possible to read Thucydides, as Leo Strauss correctly interpreted him, as a "philosopher-historian" who sought to do justice to both the demands of philosophy as well as of history.[28]

From a methodological point of view, Thucydides' technique appears "inductive" in character in that it attempts—following the Hippocratic method—to give a detailed observational account of the "symptoms" or the "form" of the "disease" or "convulsion" in question.[29] The positive

26. All quotes from Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War* are cited in accordance with convention within the text by Book and Paragraph numbers. All quotes are drawn from Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley (New York: Random House, 1951).

27. For a succinct statement about the character of epic writing see Luciano Canfora, "Epic and Historical Claim to Totality," *Poznan Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities* 5 (1979): 37–54.

28. Leo Strauss, "On Thucydides' War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians," chap. in *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 139–45.

29. Eric Voeglin, *Order and History*, vol. 2, *The World of the Polis* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 353–58.

description of these symptoms at the world-historical level is remarkable: first, for its detail; second, because its selection of facts is not determined by a mythological view of history; and, third, because it attempts, even if only implicitly, to induce from the described "symptoms" a deeper understanding of the universal essence of disorder.[30] Hence, it is no surprise to find Eric Voeglin describing Thucydides "as the first craftsman who tried to transform the empirical knowledge of politics into a science, using the science of medicine as his model for this purpose."[31]

The attempt to derive an archetypal model of disorder from a single observation-event implies that Thucydides saw the Peloponnesian war as more than just a random political incident. Viewing it, instead, as an exemplar which furnishes universally valid insights—and doing so in a way that cannot be duplicated by any iteration of other apparently similar events—he confidently offers this single case "as an aid to the interpretation of the future" (1.24). Such confidence stems, in the first instance, from the inductivist belief that the future will resemble the past, even if it does not repeat it entirely (1.24). In the final instance, however, it derives from the apparently simple claim that this was "a great war, and [hence] more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it" (1.1). Consistent with this claim, Thucydides goes to great lengths in the *Archaeology* to establish that this *kinesis* is without parallel or magnitude in history. Its exemplary importance—its "greatness"—is validated by three crucial reasons which are mentioned only innocuously.

First, the warring parties are Greek and all the Hellenic races are bracing in one way or another for the quarrel (1.1). Second, the Peloponnesian *kinesis* seems to envelop both the human order pertaining to political relations within and between the cities and the cosmic order as manifested in the disorders of nature and the universe (1.24). Third, "the preparations of both the combatants were in every department in their last stage of perfection" (1.1). The implications of these reasons are consequential to Thucydides. To begin: if a polity, like the Greek, so advantaged by all its achievements and so committed to attaining good political order, could be on the verge of a devastating political and moral breakdown, then, Thucydides reasons, such a *kinesis* could not be just another random world-historical event; rather, it had to be an upheaval of truly paradigmatic proportions, whose truth would be worthy "as a possession for all time" (1.23).[32] Fur-

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., 356–57.

32. Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, vol. 1, trans. Gilbert Highet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 410–11.

ther, the paradigmatic nature of this upheaval is confirmed by the fact that the cataclysm in the earthly city finds reflection in the fractures of nature itself; these fractures, then, came to represent cosmic reminders of the significance of this extraordinary political event.[33] Finally, because the *kinesis* occurs when the combatants are at the peak of their skill and perfection, they bequeath more of enduring value "for all time" than if examined when truly inconsequential.

Thucydides' attention, therefore, centers on the epoch when the bipolarity of the system is at its tightest, when both the Athenian and Spartan cities are at the peak of their achievements, and when their citizens exhibit peculiarities of character in sharpest relief.[34] Now, he could capture them, in a manner of speaking, as entities writ large, when both the strengths and the weaknesses of the state system, the cities and their citizens are magnified—thus making those easier to observe, understand and reflect upon.

This attempt at reflecting upon the "human things" when they are at their apotheosis, then, compelled Thucydides not merely to describe a set of significant experiences but to create a new unit of understanding which is now recognized as *the* Peloponnesian War. It is important to acknowledge that whereas today most readers would readily identify—thanks to Thucydides—the Greek convulsion between 431 B.C. and 404 B.C. as the Peloponnesian War, it is unlikely that Thucydides' contemporaries were aware of any such fact. They had witnessed over a century of conflict, beginning with the Median expeditions against the Hellenes in 490 B.C. and culminating with the defeat of Sparta and the rise of Theban hegemony at Leuctra in 371 B.C.[35] Until 404 B.C., when the Thucydidean opus was not yet published, the history of the Greek wars was perceived as nothing other than a loosely connected series of events. This perception is reflected in Thucydides' work itself when, during the Decelean War, the Lacedaemonians are portrayed as considering the fault to be their own "in the former war" (21.19). It was Thucydides' genius that, from the large number of sequential conflicts, he selected carefully and unified together just four conflicts occurring between 431–404 B.C.—the Archidamian and Decelean wars, the Peace of Nicias, and the Sicilian Expedition (the last did not even involve the Lacedaemonians directly)—to create a new "event" for poster-

33. This issue is discussed in Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, "What Thucydides Saw," *History and Theory* 25 (fall 1986): 1–16.

34. Peter J. Fliess, *Thucydides and the Politics of Bipolarity* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), 13–79.

35. The history of this century of conflict has been usefully summarized in ibid., 3–11.

ity.[36] In a real sense, therefore, "*The* Peloponnesian War" is a creation of Thucydides. It has been created, never having occurred as such. Hence, he does not describe his opus—in contrast to his modern translators—as a "history" (*historia*), despite the fact that the word was commonly known and accepted in Greece at the time. Instead, he uses the peculiar locution "*xynegraphe ton polemon*" which, literally translated, implies that he "wrote up" the Peloponnesian War.[37]

The use of the term *syngraphe* conclusively suggests that the work, far from being a mere historical narrative, was in fact a construction of a great "deed worthy of speech"—a construction which, while describing "the harsh grandeur, ruggedness, and even squalor"[38] of power politics in the earthly city, would open itself to limning the eternal *eidos* of dissolution and decay. Given this fact, any rational reconstruction of the realist tradition must admit that Thucydidean "science," no matter how modern it appears in intention and how sophisticatedly inductivist it appears in technique, represents ultimately a "metaphysical research program."[39] That is, the scientific component of Thucydides, which deals with cause-and-effect at the world-historical level of politics, is suffused by a set of larger philosophical ideas about the inevitability of decay afflicting even the most admirable order as that represented by Periclean Athens. This overarching philosophy not only conditioned Thucydides' selection of the facts, his creation of the narrative, and his redaction of the numerous speeches made by the various participants, but it also—most fundamentally—limited the freedom of action he could accord to those individuals faced with the situations he describes in ostensibly "positivist" detail. This metaphysics of necessity—which, as Voeglin put it, resists "the temptation to obscure the dilemmatic structure of political existence by any attempt at rationalization"[40]—pervades the entire *syngraphe*, and from it derives the ethic of tragedy and despair which has since been appropriated fully by political realism. The presence of such a metaphysical thematic right at the very founding of the realist tradition, then, serves to confirm the Popperian insight that all science ultimately is rooted in and born out of metaphysics and that "metaphysical ideas belong to scientific research as crucially important

36. Voeglin, *The World of the Polis*, 349–51.
37. Ibid.
38. Strauss, "On Thucydides' War," 139.
39. The phrase is Popper's, and a succinct summary of the concept can be found in Paul A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, vol. 1 (La Salle: Open Court, 1974), 133–43.
40. Voeglin, *The World of the Polis*, 364.

regulative ideas [just as] scientific [discourse] belongs to the rational debate concerning metaphysical ideas."[41]

Given this background, the Thucydidean *syngraphe*—when viewed in terms of the realist program at the world-historical level—begins with a conventional third-image explanation of the causes of conflict. Distinguishing between real and apparent causes of the war, Thucydides declared that "the real cause I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable" (1.24). War, in this sense, was engendered by an anarchic system, in which the absence of superordinate authority resulted in states becoming sensitive to the security threats posed by the uneven growth of other states. The primacy of coercive military power in this context is abundantly emphasized early on by the Corcyraeans who, possessing a navy second only to that of Athens, seek Athenian assistance for their cause, despite the recognition that such assistance would violate Athenian obligations to Sparta:

> For your first endeavor [the Corcyraeans admonish the Athenians] should be to prevent, if possible, the existence of any naval power except your own; failing this, to secure the friendship of the strongest that does exist. And if any of you believe that what we urge is expedient, but fear to act on this belief, lest it lead to a breach of [your] treaty [with Sparta], you must remember that on one hand, whatever your fears, your strength will be formidable to your antagonists; on the other, whatever confidence you derive from refusing to receive us, your weakness will have no terrors for a strong enemy. (2.36)

Thus, military power alone is salient in security competition among egoists and it cannot be replaced by confidence derived from other instruments such as legal treaties or friendship. Failure to recognize this, while dangerous at the best of times, may be fatal when "the breaking out of war...is all but upon you" (2.36). This affirmation of the value of military power over any mitigating principle, though provoked by the demands of security competition, is exacerbated by the bipolarity of the system in which each hegemon seeks to supplant the other. As a result, the two hegemons are not only drawn into other third-party conflicts on opposing sides, but their own bilateral struggle also provides opportunities for the smaller states to

41. Joseph Agassi, "The Nature of Scientific Problems and Their Roots in Metaphysics," chap. in *Science in Flux*, 212.

entrap them into alliances aimed at resolving the local security competition between these small states.[42]

These twin processes recur endlessly throughout the text and they provide Thucydides with the opportunity to underscore the concept of necessity, where political entities are forced to engage in unpalatable behavior for reasons beyond their control. Thus, the Athenian Empire, once in existence, is viewed as "a major cause of the murder and devastation of the war—but the compulsion of historical necessity [is seen to] enforce the Empire."[43] This leitmotif, which has since been appropriated by the realist program in its explanations of politics, is never asserted by Thucydides in a proposition emanating from himself. It appears, however, as a pervasive motif in the speeches made by the various participants.

Having initiated the third-image explanation of why conflict arises and what the role of coercive military power is in such circumstances, Thucydides promptly proceeds to decompose this structural explanation by offering a detailed second-image account of why the Peloponnesian war became inevitable. This explanation, framed magnificently in the Corinthian speech at the Congress at Lacedaemon, is a specific and pointed description of how the character of a particular state—in this case, the spiritedness of Athens—was responsible for the creation of an empire without parallel in Hellenic history:

> They are swift to follow up a success, and slow to recoil from a reverse. Their bodies they spend ungrudgingly in their country's cause; their intellect they jealously husband to be employed in her service. A scheme unexecuted is with them a positive loss, a successful enterprise a comparative failure. The deficiency created by the miscarriage of an undertaking is soon filled up by fresh hopes; for they alone are enabled to call a thing hoped for a thing got, by the speed with which they act upon their resolutions. Thus they toil on in trouble and danger all the days of their life, with little opportunity for enjoying, being ever engaged in getting: their only idea of a holiday is to do what the occasion demands, and to them laborious occupation is less of a misfortune than the peace of a quiet life. To describe their character in a word, one might truly say that they were born into the world to take no rest themselves and to give none to others. Such is Athens, your antagonist. (3.70)

If third-image explanations initially framed the context of events, there is little doubt that second-image explanations now suddenly acquire new

42. Fliess, *Thucydides and the Politics of Bipolarity*, 85–106.

43. David Grene, *Man in His Pride: A Study in the Political Philosophy of Thucydides and Plato* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 64.

prominence as a causal explanation of the Peloponnesian War. Thus, the spiritedness of the Athenians takes center stage, and it is justified both as that virtue which saved Hellas from the Mede and as a consequence of the universal laws of politics.[44] The Athenians, therefore, are depicted as arguing that the empire actually began when the other states inspired by Athenian spiritedness joined it to fight the Medes, and it was transformed into a domination based on superior coercive power only when "fear be[came their] principal motive, though honor and interest afterwards came in" (3.75). In other words, state character—spiritedness—produced a systemic outcome—empire—which brought in its trail the logic of inescapable necessity—continued domination out of fear, interest, and honor—and this logic is ordained by an ubiquitous natural law:

> It follows that it was not a very wonderful action, or contrary to the common practice of mankind, if we did accept an empire that was offered to us, and refused to give it up under pressure of three of the strongest motives, fear, honor and interest. And, it is not we who set the example, for it has always been the law that the weaker should be subject to the stronger. (3.76)

Fear, honor, and interest thus conspire—as necessity—to create a pragmatic, amoral, rationality of political action which seeks to preserve the empire at all costs.[45] The natural law undergirding this logic reaches its most systematic enunciation in the Melian Dialogue, where it is reasoned that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must" (17.90). This argument is then used by Thucydides to describe how the Athenian drive to imperial domination, and its effort to maintain that domination through additional conquests, results in the triggering of various opposing balances. Because this dynamic is part of the logic of domination resulting from egoist competition, neither hegemon nor challenger can escape it. It must be accepted for what it is: a natural process (3.77).[46]

While attention is thus focused on Athenian spiritedness as the cause of empire and the depredations flowing from it, such is but half the story. The relative shift in the balance of power between Athens and Lacedaemon is caused equally by the latter's inaction and passivity, an argument articulated clearly in the Corinthian speech at the Second Congress at Lacedaemon:

44. Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, trans. Philip Thody (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), 312–13.

45. de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, 270–72.

46. Grene, *Man in His Pride*, 61.

> The Athenians are addicted to innovation, and their designs are characterized by swiftness alike in conception and execution; you [Lacedaemonians] have a genius for keeping what you have got, accompanied by a total want of invention, and when forced to act you never go far enough. Again, they are adventurous beyond their power, and daring beyond their judgment, and in danger they are sanguine; your wont is to attempt less than is justified by your power, to mistrust even what is sanctioned by your judgment, and to fancy that from danger there is no release. Further, there is promptitude on their side against procrastination on yours; they are never at home, you are never from it: for they hope by their absence to extend their acquisitions, you fear by your advance to endanger what you have left behind. They are swift to follow up success, and slow to recoil from a reverse. (5.69)

The role of passivity is further emphasized by the assertion that "the true author of the subjugation of a people is not so much the immediate agent, as the power which permits it having the means to prevent it" (3.69). This judgment recurs in even more systematic reflection later on in Hermocrates' speech to the Camarinaeans (19.79–80).

Because this contrast between spiritedness and passivity plays such a critical role throughout the work, it appears as if the Athenian Empire and the consequent war necessitated by its expansion could be a product of second-image causes. This contrast, at first sight, makes possible the distinction between "revisionist" (that is, Athens) and "status quo" (that is, Sparta) states on the basis of internal character. Before such a distinction can be set in stone, however, Thucydides—in perhaps the most sophisticated twist of all—develops the narrative to a point where both sides—as embodied in the personalities of their leaders—come to partake in the character of the other. Thus, in a reversal of roles made visible as the war proceeds, Brasidas the Spartan becomes the epitome of spiritedness, while Nicias the Athenian becomes the symbol of moderation. Because the narrative purposefully paints such a reversal of roles, the second-image explanation dissolves into the insight, expressed in Werner Jaeger's words, "that the parts of tyrant and liberator [do] not correspond with any permanent moral quality in these states but [are] simply masks which would one day be interchanged to the astonishment of the beholder when the balance of power [is] altered."[47]

Jaeger's insight has been appropriated most readily by structural realists who usually take it to mean that the internal character of a state does not matter. Thucydides' intentions, however, appear to be more complicated.

47. Jaeger, *Paideia*, 397.

The distinction between Athenian spiritedness and Spartan passivity is pursued throughout the text precisely because it says something about the distressing nature of politics in the earthly city. As Paul Rahe succinctly summarized it,

> No one who reads the book with sympathy and care will fail to prefer Athens to Sparta on the grounds that the former nourishes and the latter stunts human development. And yet it is precisely because Athens gives relatively free rein to the potential for greatness inherent in human nature, that it is Athens and not Sparta, that loses all sense of measure and falls apart.[48]

In Thucydides' world view, therefore, Athenian spiritedness has normative value but unsettling consequences: it represents the best in human nature insofar as it gives rise to great human institutions and achievements. It is also problematic, however, insofar as it incites the passive into shedding their inertia under pressure of necessity. What starts out, therefore, as an unpleasant choice between a spiritedness which exalts human possibility (but also brings in its trail war and destruction) and a passivity which is uninspiring (and makes for moderation bordering on the otiose), finally becomes a tragedy as spiritedness transforms passivity to engender a catastrophe which destroys the great institutions that spiritedness alone can build.

If the notion that some states are inherently status quo while others are inherently revisionist thus cannot be derived from Thucydides' reading of the Peloponnesian war, it becomes evident that the narrative soon discredits not only second-image explanations but their constituent units as well. Thus, the reader is once again confronted by yet another possibility: that "states" themselves may be insufficient units for purposes of understanding politics conceived of as competition between egoists.[49] This obliteration of second-image units and its replacement by first-image units as well as explanations based on human nature is carried out most subtly, linked as it is with the twin images of the glorious rise of Athens on the one hand and the terrifying disorders of the plague and the civil war on the other hand.

Because the greatness of Athens is entirely a product of its spiritedness when applied to the material arts, Thucydides depicts its power as artificial, that is, man-made and not endowed by any Divinity. This power is described as having various forms, ranging from naval forces to wealth and

48. Paul Rahe, "The Moral Realism of Thucydides," 41 (unpublished text of an address delivered at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., 25 January 1994).

49. This argument is owed to Grene, *Man in His Pride*, 3–6, 28, 30–31; and Peter R. Pouncey, *The Necessities of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

commerce.[50] Clearly, the absence of a parsimonious conception of power is substituted only by the recognition that power is a product of the nature of its citizenry. Also, this nature is understood to consist mainly of an egoistic pursuit of individual desires. Under conditions of political stability and economic productivity, this pursuit remains unproblematic as the interests of the citizens and those of the state coincide. Therefore, in the moments of glory and wealth, the state—experiencing coherence in spirit, institutions, and resources—can impose its will on other states and that is precisely what happens when Athens is at the height of its power. Because its internal unity is based on little other than a convenient congruence of egoistic interests, however, the first signs of strain fracture this unity irreparably. States are then seen for what they are: not as complexes of organic solidarity, but as mere collections of individuals held together by a desire for power and self-interested gratification.[51]

Thus, if "war...proves a rough master that brings men's characters to a level with their fortunes" (3.82), so are all other forms of strife as well. Consequently, the descriptions of the plague, the civil war, and the various military defeats, are particularly memorable because they allow Thucydides to depict the fragile structure of the polity, which is best seen in circumstances of adversity when ethical restraint, trust, and even language lose all meaning. Thus, although the genesis and logic of how the state is formed are not described in any formal sense, Thucydides nonetheless utilizes the opportunity afforded by these disasters to demonstrate how the state, in the process of disintegration, is progressively "reduced" into its true constituents: first, to the cliques and factions which seek to usurp power and use it in accordance with their own parochial interests, and finally to tyrannical, egotistic individuals who, in the words of Alcibiades, assert: "Love of country is what I do not feel when I am wronged, but what I felt when secure in my rights as a citizen" (6.92). Recognition of this fact is perhaps most pronounced in the speech attributed to Diodotus in which aggressiveness and egoism are described as the natural condition of all individuals, with calamity being the only requirement for the manifestation of their brutality (3.42–49). When the chips are down, Thucydides insinuates, all that is left is the primitive unit of the social system: the egotistic individual with his self-regarding preferences and desires. Nothing more, nothing less.

The formal pattern of Thucydides' argument—describing how entities behave in the context of egoist competition—thus manifests itself in de-

50. A. G. Woodhead, *Thucydides on the Nature of Power*, Martin Classical Lectures (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

51. Grene, *Man in His Pride*, 30–31.

scending form. It begins with a systemic, third-image depiction of political behavior; then it quickly descends to a detailed second-image explanation based on state character; and that, in turn, only opens the door to an even deeper first-image analysis of the depravity of human behavior in situations of calamity. At all three levels, the political entities in question are depicted as essentially egoist with respect to material wealth and political security, and the manifestation of this egoism—through conditioned by circumstances—is seen to operate in consonance with an ubiquitous natural law. Having said that, however, it is important to recognize that on balance the investigative focus continues to remain on "men in their national entities." Thus, it can be said that second-image units in the form of either cities or states have analytical primacy insofar as they remain the point of entrance through which both systemic consequences and the nature of individuals are explored.

In a larger causal sense, however, the Thucydidean "progress of pessimism"[52] can be seen as moving in another direction: from fundamental human egoism to the spiritedness of national entities and thence to hegemonic conquest. This hegemonic conquest, of course, provokes interstate resistance which, in turn, creates domestic strain and leads up, in many instances, to civil war. Accordingly, "the war of all against all" becomes the fitting culmination of a cataclysm which is ultimately rooted in an egoistic human nature that cannot help itself.[53] This, then, represents the core of Thucydides' teaching: Egotistic individuals in their quest for power and security create great political institutions, like states, which are then forced to preserve themselves by the creation of empires; these, in turn, are constrained to dominate out of necessity, even if doing so ultimately produces a calamitous system-wide war. Egotistic individuals pursuing wealth and security thus lie at the root of all political struggles for domination: functioning as prime movers, they alone have theoretical primacy in Thucydides' explanatory system.

While it is possible to concede in principle that such individuals could govern themselves in accordance with the demands of law, reason, and foresight (thereby avoiding the recurrent struggles for domination), Thucydides implies that in practice it is all but impossible. No remedial effort can arrest the decay which accompanies the pursuit of wealth and security—even in the best political order imaginable—as all individuals doing only what they must by reason of necessity embark on a path that leads to

52. Pouncey, *The Necessities of War*, 31.

53. William T. Bluhm, "Causal Theory in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*," *Political Studies* 10 (February 1962): 15–35.

inevitable violence and destruction. Understanding this logic cannot alter it, except at the margins, and hence, the *eidos* of the *kinesis* is ultimately also the *eidos* of tragedy. From a methodological point of view, therefore, we may conclud that the Thucydidean *eidos* of power politics is ultimately rooted in a first-image explanation based on egoistic human nature, despite the fact that such a conclusion is never explicitly asserted in the work.

The absence of explicit assertion points once again to the peculiar methodological character of Thucydides' work. Given his intention of letting us see the universal *eidos* in this particular *kinesis*, "the narrative," as Hobbes so presciently pointed out, "doth secretly instruct the reader, and more effectually than can possibly be done by precept." Since Thucydides is judged to be "the most politic historiographer that ever writ," the reader "may from the narrations draw out lessons to himself,"[54] particularly through the powerful descriptions which involve richly textured detail. This technique of conveying philosophical truths through a set of "empirical facts" is preferred over abstract theoretical specification (based on an explicit monocausal system of deduction), because "history" and "political science" are identical for Thucydides and, hence, an "insight into politics could be gained only by reliving history in [all] its concreteness."[55] The Thucydidean opus, traversing over almost every realm of human reality in both world-historical and philosophical dimensions, not only vindicates Gilpin's judgment that "everything the new realist finds intriguing in the interaction of international economics and international politics can be found in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*,"[56] but it also becomes a classic example of how a fecund metaphysical research program (in the Popperian sense) spawned a research effort for centuries to come. It is this characteristic of Thucydides which makes him the fountainhead of the realist tradition.

MACHIAVELLI: THE METHODS OF MANAGING DISORDERED HUMAN NATURE

IN CONTRAST TO Thucydides, whose work was triggered explicitly by an event involving interstate violence, the next great realist, Machiavelli, laid the foundations of modernity—and, by implication, for modern social science—by explicitly treating the nature of man and the consequences of that nature for the formation, maintenance, and growth of the state. While the

54. Thomas Hobbes, cited in Strauss, "On Thucydides' War," 144.

55. Hajo Holborn, "Greek and Modern Concepts of History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10 (1949): 5.

56. Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition," 308.

Machiavellian corpus is situated against the backdrop of struggles between the Italian principalities, the Papacy, and the other European kingdoms (and, in this sense, is located like Thucydides within the constraints of a third-image realm), Machiavelli's objective, at least in the theoretical writings, is not to explain interstate behavior per se, but to understand human nature and its consequences for political action. Because this engagement with practical politics is one of the classic watermarks of traditional realism, attention is focused principally on Machiavelli's chief theoretical works, *The Prince* and the *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*, to the neglect of his other major writings, such as the *Florentine Histories* and *The Art of War*, and his other minor poems, plays, reports, and letters.[57]

An interpretation based on just these two works is defensible on the ground that they alone contain his systematic reflections about politics, a conclusion attested to by Machiavelli himself in the dedicatory epistles to both works, but it does raise the larger question of what exactly is the theoretical relationship between *The Prince* and the *Discourses*. This question is important because several prominent commentators have argued over the years that *The Prince* and the *Discourses* contain diametrically opposed writings, in that the former is marked by a "political realism" favorable to princes while the latter is charged with a "political idealism" which is favorable to republics.[58] This "otherwise inexplicable contradiction"[59] is then explained away either by "genetic" solutions, where the two works are treated as exhibiting the evolution in Machiavelli's thought,[60] or by treating *The Prince*, which appears different from the other works, as a satire not intended to represent Machiavelli's "political science."[61] In contrast to several such approaches, this reconstruction—following Cassirer, Strauss, and

57. All references to these two works are drawn from the following editions: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); and Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, ed. Bernard Crick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988). For reasons of maintaining grammatical coherence, quotations from *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*, trans. Allan Gilbert (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965) have occasionally been used. These quotations have been identified by translator and page number when required.

58. Felix Gilbert, "The Composition and Structure of Machiavelli's *Discorsi*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14 (1953): 156.

59. Ibid., 143.

60. Felix Gilbert thus concludes that the relationship must be explained as "an intellectual development" and not as "an expression of tension in Machiavelli's mind." See, Gilbert, ibid., 156; and, Eric W. Cochrane, "Machiavelli: 1940–1960," *Journal of Modern History* 33 (June 1961): 113–36.

61. Garret Mattingly, "Machiavelli's *Prince*: Political Science or Political Satire?" *American Scholar* 27 (1958): 482–91.

Meinecke[62]—reads *The Prince* and the *Discourses* as two "realist" works united by the common objective of describing Machiavelli's "new modes and orders" or, in other words, his new understanding of how political order arises and is maintained. Thus, the former work is seen to prescribe the range of techniques that the prince must learn if a state is to be preserved, while the latter work—taking the form of a commentary on Titus Livy's *History of Rome*—buttresses the prescriptions of *The Prince* by describing both how states are founded and maintained and how an exemplary state like Rome developed the institutions that "conduced to its perfection...."[63] Accordingly, both works are unified by speaking essentially to the single power-political issue of how and why order is created and sustained.

This fundamental question has exercised philosophical interest since the beginning of time. The ancient Greeks, especially in the person of Aristotle, answered it by describing the *polis* as founded for the sake of protecting life and maintained for the sake of pursuing the Good. The Christian era, which succeeded the Greek, only absorbed this conception and redefined it in terms of ethical-political action aimed at prefiguring the Kingdom of God on earth. Thus, both traditions asked "What is the best life for man?" or "What must a man (or prince) do in order to be virtuous before God?" In response, both were led, in different ways, to postulate "imagined kingdoms or republics," since they took their bearings from "how man ought to live, by virtue."[64] Because these imagined regimes were founded on conceptions of virtue, they were in some sense subversive of "good" political order insofar as they grounded their notions of the political good on some "higher" understanding of either a moral or a religious good.

The uniqueness of the Machiavellian revolution is that in seeking to elaborate the nature of the political good, Machiavelli—decisively and openly—rejected these "imagined republics" and their norms for ethical politics on the grounds that "it has appeared to [him] more fitting to go directly to the effectual truth of the thing than to the imagination of it."[65] Since "many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in truth," going to the "effectual truth of the

62. Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), 116–62; Leo Strauss, "Niccolò Machiavelli," in *History of Political Philosophy*, 2nd ed., eds. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 271–92; Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'Etat and Its Place in Modern History*, trans. Douglas Scott (New York: Praeger, 1965), 25–48.

63. *Discourses* 1.2.

64. Strauss, "Niccolò Machiavelli," 274.

65. *The Prince* 15.

thing" was more important for good politics because "it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation."[66] The constitution of good political order can and must be grounded, therefore, only in a recognition of political reality as it is, rather than in a desire for what it should be. On this understanding that politics should be grounded in fact rather than in value, Machiavelli established his "new modes and orders" and, in so doing, laid the foundations for modern social science.

To be sure, dim outlines of such a "science" are discernible even in Thucydides, insofar as the empirical content of his *syngraphe* ostensibly describes political things "simply as they are." As the previous section argued, however, this empirical content is embedded in an implicit, overarching, metaphysics, which makes the factual detail recorded in the text problematic a priori. At any rate, Thucydides' teaching centers on the inevitability of tragedy and as such does not entail any specific recommendations for political practice. Machiavelli, however, is a world removed from Thucydides: "writ[ing] something useful to whoever understands it,"[67] he seeks "to enter upon a new way, as yet untrodden by anyone else."[68] Unlike Thucydides, he emphatically seeks to prescribe what he sees required for the successful maintenance of order so that politics could once again—after the classical Greek and Christian interludes—be oriented primarily to attaining the earthly goods of internal stability and external security.[69] Therefore, for the first time since the Sophists, the *telos* of the earthly polity was openly defined in negative rather than in positive terms. No longer would it be conceived as a progressive assent toward the *agathon* (as in Plato), or as a communitarian search for the *eudamonia* (as in Aristotle), or as a pilgrim's search for the *summum bonum* (as in Aquinas); instead, it would be seen merely as an artificial device created purposely for avoiding the *summum malum*. Such a reorientation in purpose implied that the polity would no longer be considered as a medium for the acquisition of virtue. Instead, it could only be a restraint against the worst of human vices and, for that to be possible, the actions of the prince—insofar as they are directed toward that end—must necessarily be considered *the* standard of right.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. *Discourses* 1, Preface.

69. For an insightful reflection on how order and security lies at the core of the Machiavellian project, see Harvey Mansfield Jr., "Necessity in the Beginnings of Cities," in *The Political Calculus*, ed. Anthony Parel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 101–26.

Why does such a political reorientation, so radically removed from the visions of both the classical Greeks and Christianity, become at all necessary? Machiavelli's response is explicit, blunt, and straightforward. It becomes necessary because

> one can say this generally of men: that they are ungrateful, fickle, pretenders and dissemblers, evaders of danger, eager for gain. When you do them good, they are yours, offering you their blood, property, lives and children...when the need for them is far away; but, when it is close to you, they revolt. And that prince who has founded himself entirely on their words, stripped of other preparation is ruined; for friendships that are acquired at a price and not with greatness and nobility of spirit are bought, but they are not owned and when the time comes they cannot be spent. And men have less hesitation to offend one who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared; for love is held by a chain of obligation, which, because men are wicked, is broken at every opportunity for their own utility, but fear is held by a dread of punishment which never forsakes [the prince].[70]

Men are wicked and egoistic: With this first-image explanation of disorder lying at the heart of Machiavelli's project, his chief interest now revolves around explaining how political order, or in his own words, how "principalities that are altogether new in prince and in state"[71] come to be. The short answer he provides is that they come about either through "one's own arms and *Virtu*" or "through other's arms and Fortune."[72] In the first category lie "the most excellent" leaders "Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and the like,"[73] whereas in the second category, he insinuates, lie the princes of Italy who, lacking *virtu*, have acquired kingdoms by good luck and the efforts of others. Since princes of the latter sort "cannot have roots and branches" and hence are liable to be destroyed by "the first adverse weather,"[74] Machiavelli's chief task in *The Prince* consists of providing prescriptions which, if "carried out prudently," will enable these princes to "keep what fortune has placed into their laps"[75] and thereby reap the kind of benefits which accrued to those most excellent leaders who possessed their own *virtu*. Thus, he aims to teach those princes who, lacking the fortitude of the most excellent leaders, are nonetheless confronted by the

70. *The Prince* 17.
71. Ibid., 6.
72. Ibid., 6, 7.
73. Ibid., 6.
74. Ibid., 7.
75. Ibid.

chance "to begin a new princedom" and "to strengthen it with good laws, good arms and good examples."[76]

This immediate objective, however, only raises the larger question of what made those most excellent leaders such as Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus, most excellent in the first place. Machiavelli does not explicitly respond to this question in *The Prince*, but in the *Discourses* he provides an eloquent answer. These leaders are most excellent because, when confronted by the mass of asocial, wicked and egoist individuals, they had the *virtu* required to commit those great and unimaginable crimes necessary for the creation of good political order. Thus, the founder of Rome, Romulus, is most excellent because he had the courage to slay his own brother Remus and then acquiesce in the death of Titus Tatius, "whom he had chosen as his colleague in the kingdom."[77] Similarly, Machiavelli notes that, "he who reads the Bible with discernment will see that, in order that Moses might set about making laws and institutions, he had to kill a very great number of men who, out of envy and nothing else, were opposed to his plans."[78]

The moral is clear: Given the egoism of individuals, the true birth of a city begins not with a social contract but only with a great crime. It requires that the new prince "organize everything in the state afresh" and that entails completely despoliation, "leav[ing] nothing of that province intact, and nothing in it, neither rank, nor institution, nor form of government, nor wealth, except it be held by such as recognize that it comes from [the new prince]."[79] Admittedly, "such methods are exceedingly cruel, and are repugnant to any community,"[80] but if a prince cannot undertake them, he is better off living as a private citizen. If, however, he does wish to be a most excellent leader of men, he has no choice but "to enter the path of wrong doing" and to do so concertedly, because any crime committed half-heartedly "is very harmful."[81] Given that Machiavelli perceives none of the Italian princes as capable of such *virtu*, he does not expect them to become founders of cities. All he can do is to educate them about how to maintain the political order that was bequeathed to them by Fortune.

Educating them in this regard, Machiavelli begins by asserting that "the principal foundation of all states" are "good laws and good arms."[82] It turns out, however, that the latter are more important because "there cannot be

76. Gilbert, *Machiavelli: The Chief Works*, 30.
77. *Discourses* 1.9.
78. Ibid., 2.30.
79. Ibid., 1.26.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. *The Prince* 12.

good laws where there are not good arms [but] where there are good arms there must be good laws."[83] Force and coercion are thus central to the maintenance of order and, given their importance, the wise prince "should have no other object, nor any other thought, nor take anything else as his art but the art of war and its orders and discipline; for that is the only art which is of concern to one who commands."[84] This, Machiavelli argues, implies that the prince should always reject mercenaries and auxiliary arms because, in an anarchic world, "without its own arms no principality is secure; indeed it is wholly obliged to fortune since it does not have virtue to defend itself in adversity."[85] The first prescription of *The Prince*, therefore, is that strong arms are fundamental to political order: they produce accord within the state and security outside it.

Good arms lie at the heart of Machiavelli's prescription because they are important both in themselves and because they empower other instruments of state, like the laws. A preliminary reading suggests that the laws are useful not because they possess any intrinsic worth but because they serve to inculcate civic virtue. Therefore, *The Prince* treats the laws, briefly and epiphenomenally, as merely palatable surrogates for good arms. In the *Discourses*, however, Machiavelli endows the laws with more elaborate—even if still instrumental—functions, arguing that they become the means by which a prince can instill *virtu* in the populace at large, and Lycurgus of Sparta and Romulus and Numa of Rome are held up here as models because of the constitutions they produced.[86] By means of the laws, Machiavelli depicts Rome as having *virtu* "forced upon her," such that "even the greatness of her empire could not for many centuries corrupt her."[87] The laws, in ensuring a mixed constitution, are then seen as critical to Rome's vitality: they begot internal strife, but held it in delicate balance. By giving various factions a certain measure of liberty, they allowed the regime to co-opt the masses into serving the state for military purposes.

It is this latter objective which makes the laws so crucial to Machiavelli. Having first argued for a strong prince in order to create domestic order, he now argues for limited internal liberty, so that the largest possible number of individuals can be suborned for purposes of external expansion. It is in this context that republicanism comes to be preferred over monarchy—not for ethical reasons, but merely for instrumental ones. Monarchies, Ma-

83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., 14.
85. Ibid., 13.
86. *Discourses* 1.2.
87. Gilbert, *Machiavelli: The Chief Works*, 65.

chiavelli concludes, eventually turn out to be torpid because princes, after establishing themselves, become slothful and merely content to enjoy what they have conquered, whereas republics, because of their continual domestic restlessness, always remain aggrandistic and expansionary.[88] Consequently, republics are endorsed not because they promote "liberty" per se, but because they nourish the internal restiveness required to fuel the great machines necessary for war and expansion.[89]

Lest this argument be misunderstood, it is important to recognize that Machiavelli's preference for war and expansion is not merely the product of an innate imperialist impulse. Such an impulse certainly exists, as Mark Hulliung's scholarship demonstrates. There is, however, more, as Machiavelli, completing the logical chain, argues that wars of external expansion are in the final analysis products of structural necessity: because individuals, never being "content to live on their own resources," are always "inclined to try to govern others," it becomes "impossible for a republic to succeed in standing still and enjoying its liberties."[90] In such a situation, when "all human affairs are ever in a state of flux and cannot stand still,"[91] necessity forces a state to expand through aggressive imperialism. If a state eschews this option, it will be overwhelmed by external enemies over time or will be progressively destroyed through decay from within. The security and greatness of Rome, in Machiavelli's reading, then derived from the fact that it understood this dynamic and consistently acted in accordance with the imperatives flowing from it. Rome thus maintained its integrity and its eminence by continually conquering potential competitors merely to forestall future threats to its security.

As Machiavelli approvingly describes, Rome was compelled to conquer Greece in order to preempt Antiochus of Syria from securing Greece for himself. Clearly, neither Greece nor Syria threatened Roman security in any immediate sense but,

> the Romans, seeing inconveniences from afar, always found remedies for them and never allowed them to continue so as to escape a war, be-

88. *Discourses* 2.2.

89. The idea of military expansion as an integral component of Machiavelli's understanding of "greatness" is explored in systematic detail in Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli*, 3–60.

90. Gilbert, *Machiavelli: The Chief Works*, 194. The logic of why it is impossible for a state to "stand still" and follow a middle path between being strong enough to be secure but not strong enough to threaten others is described at great length in the *Discourses* 1.6.

91. *Discourses* 1.6.

> cause they knew that war may not be avoided but [only] deferred to the advantage of others.[92]

Roman security was, therefore, preserved by its prudence, and this prudence took the form of continual preemptive conquest. As a result, Rome progressively extinguished external threats even as it satiated those internal demands emanating from its citizenry for wealth and prosperity. To this degree, Machiavelli's reading only echoes Thucydides', but because it takes such explicit and systematic form, it comes to represent the high point of traditional realist teaching about egoist politics: the demand for security always and inevitably translates into an imperative to dominate and this imperative can be neglected only at great risk to the entities concerned.

The Machiavellian argument thus far can be summarized by the proposition that good arms and good laws make for good order both within a state and outside it. Because good laws, however, are only instrumental to the perfection of order (in contrast to good arms which are fundamental), Machiavelli recommends that they be supplemented by a third device. This device is civic religion, and Roman paganism—once again—is seen as exemplary because it provided the false consciousness required to motivate individuals to behave well and to sacrifice their lives for the state. Hence, the founder of Roman paganism, Numa Pompilius, is considered even greater than Rome's founder, Romulus, because in

> finding the people ferocious and desiring to reduce them to civic obedience by means of the arts of peace, [he] turned to religion as the instrument necessary above all others for the maintenance of a civilized state, and so constituted it that there was never for so many centuries so great a fear of God as there was in this republic.[93]

Such religion, Machiavelli declares, "was among the primary causes of Rome's success, for [it] entailed good institutions; good institutions led to good fortune, and from good fortune arose the happy results of undertakings."[94] Roman paganism thus articulated such a fear of God that "its citizens were more afraid of breaking an oath than of breaking the law, since they held in higher esteem the power of God than the power of man."[95] Because paganism made for such good social order, Rome became a place "conspicuous alike for virtue (*virtù*), religion (*religione*), and orderly conduct

92. *The Prince* 3.
93. *Discourses* 1.11.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.

(*ordine*)"[96] and, thus, it offered an example of many things not impossible to introduce into a polity in which there is still left something good.[97]

While religion was useful because it made for good social order, it was also, and perhaps more importantly, necessary because it gave rise to good arms in battle and generated "the confidence [which] almost always leads to victory."[98] Biblical Christianity was derided in this regard because, according to Machiavelli, it failed when measured against the three achievements of Roman paganism: First, in contrast to "the pusillanimity of those who have interpreted [Christianity] in terms of *laissez faire*,"[99] Roman paganism gave rise to a coruscating display of *virtu* in the service of worldly honor, such that the citizenry "who held it in high esteem and looked upon it as their highest good, displayed in their actions more ferocity than we [Christians] do."[100] Second, it made for a love of liberty because Roman paganism, in exalting the defense of the fatherland, was unlike Christianity which "appears to have made the world weak, and to have handed it over as a prey to the wicked, who run it successfully and securely since they are well aware that the generality of men, with paradise for their goal, consider how best to bear, rather than how best to avenge, their injuries."[101] Third, Roman paganism, in making for magnificent institutions, grand ceremonies, and great displays of ferocity and courage, created an ethos built upon the manly arts and, in contrast to the timidity encouraged by Christianity, beatified men only if "they were replete with worldly glory."[102] Consequently, Roman paganism remained an exemplar of religion of the right kind which "properly used"[103] could provide the ideological incentives for otherwise egoist individuals to sacrifice their interests for state survival and expansion in an anarchic universe.

Machiavelli's celebrated solution to the problem of founding and maintaining political order, then, consists of two elements: good arms at the foundation and good laws and good religion at the superstructure. Yet, by itself, this solution is inadequate because it depicts structural conditions but says little about the agents required to use it. Machiavellian realism still

96. Ibid., 2.29.

97. For the best analysis of Machiavelli's utilitarian approach to religion, see J. Samuel Preus, "Machiavelli's Functional Analysis of Religion: Context and Object," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40 (1979): 171–90.

98. *Discourses* 1.14.

99. Ibid., 2.2.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid., 1.15.

needs a *virtuoso* and the heart of *The Prince*, therefore, elaborates those personal qualities necessary for the ruler to maintain good order in a world of beasts. Referring to the prevailing advice offered in this regard, Machiavelli notes that "many have written of this" already, but indicates that he is going to "depart from the orders of others."[104] Thus, he begins with the traditional Christian injunctions—that the prince should be liberal, merciful, and truthful—and concludes that "it would be a very laudable thing to find in a prince all of the above mentioned qualities that are held good." "Since human conditions do not permit it," however, it is in fact necessary "to avoid the infamy of those vices that would take his state from him...."[105] Accordingly, the maintenance of political order should be treated as the first and greatest good and whatever enables the preservation of this order should be treated as the greatest virtue. Hence, Machiavelli argues that

> one should not care about incurring the reputation of those vices without which it is difficult to save one's state; for if one considers everything well, one will find something appears to be a virtue, which if pursued would be one's ruin, and something else appears to be a vice, which if pursued results in one's security and well-being.[106]

The wise prince, therefore, cannot be governed by the canons of conventional Christian morality but only by the dictates of necessity. Since he has to maintain his state, he often has to act

> against faith, against charity, against humanity, against religion. And so he needs to have a spirit disposed to change as the winds of fortune and the variations of things command him, and as I said above, not depart from good, when possible, but know how to enter into evil, when forced by necessity.[107]

While it is therefore useful that the prince be virtuous, it is more important that he appear virtuous for insofar as the appearance of virtue aids the defense of the state and the maintenance of order, it will have served its purpose: Thus, he should take care to "appear merciful, faithful, humane, honest, and religious,"[108] while being fully prepared to act in contravention of these appearances—for "it is a sound maxim that reprehensible actions may be justified by their effects, and that when the effect is good, as it was in

104. *The Prince* 15.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid., 18.
108. Ibid.

the case of Romulus, it always justifies the action."[109] In short, the presence of egoism demands the subordination of means to ends, and the prince, imitating the lion and the fox, should not shy away from using force and fraud, whenever necessary, to preserve his estate.

Because the realist program in Machiavelli is thus aimed at enabling the prince to do whatever is essential to assure the health of the body politic, it is predicated, in Benedetto Croce's celebrated description, on a "clear recognition of the necessity and autonomy of politics, of politics which is beyond or, rather, below moral good and evil, of politics which has its own laws against which it is useless to rebel."[110] This severance of politics from the pursuit of virtue is derived from an explicit assertion about the bestial nature of man and the imperative of security which flows from it. From such an assertion then emanates both Machiavelli's description of how states are formed and his prescriptions for how they can be maintained in greatness. This approach is innovative because it focuses on the most primitive elements of the political system—man and his nature—in an explicit and ordered manner. Individuals are, thus, accorded theoretical primacy in Machiavelli's explanatory system but, equally important, they are used to constitute "states" in a coherent and systematic way.

Unlike Thucydides, who glides over the fundamental and most problematic issue of state formation in order to focus on the dynamics of decay and state breakdown, Machiavelli confronts this central problem of political theory head on. He provides a methodical account of how the problem of state formation or order production can be resolved, coming down on the side of coercion-by-some rather than on the side of cooperation-by-all. Further, this emphasis on coercion is consistent, and it is upheld as efficacious in all realms: among individuals, within states, and among states. As a result, Machiavelli presents the realist argument in its complete and purest form: egoist competition engenders violence, contention and brutality, and it cannot be resolved except through the logic of domination. The pursuit of domination by individuals alone holds the promise of producing order through the creation and maintenance of states, while the pursuit of domination by states alone holds the promise of producing security insofar as the creation and maintenance of universal empires serves to attenuate the political competition otherwise existing between self-regarding states. The logic of domination in domestic politics and the logic of domination in interstate affairs, then, are inextricably intertwined: they become part of a

109. *Discourses* 1.9.

110. Benedetto Croce, *Politics and Morals*, trans. Salvatore J. Catiglione (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945), 59.

seamless web of political responses derived from the fundamental human drive for security. Not only must this uninterrupted logic be frankly recognized, but the prince is also enjoined to pursue everything necessitated by its dictates because there is only "one goal that is intrinsic to the political realm, and that is success measured as survival, longevity, or glory."[111]

This account of the requirements of good political order does not take the form of a deductive system such as that demanded by modern social science: it lacks the explicit logical systematization which would justify its conclusions beyond all doubt. Through the use of copious historical illustration, however, it nonetheless provides a coherent narrative of how the vexed problem of order production can be resolved. Accordingly, it furnishes a means for viewing "states" as macroscopic wholes produced as a result of individual action—entities which can, thereafter, be accorded analytical primacy insofar as they subsist either as an arena in which political activity takes place or as nominal units in the larger universe of "international" politics.

Besides the substantive claims and the clear focus on individuals as prime movers in the explanatory system, Machiavelli's larger intentions and techniques, especially as they affect his location in the evolution of the realist research program, are also of great interest.

Unlike Thucydides, who transmitted his insights silently and by implication, Machiavelli provides clear prescriptions for political success and, in order to buttress their validity, he interrogates history with an eye to providing an explicit description of human nature. For this reason, Machiavelli has been considered the first real "political scientist" because his "theoretical presuppositions and the inner logic of his doctrines led him to conceive of examples and imitation in a more scientific than didactic sense."[112] Such "science," it must be noted, while "disclo[sing] the internal analogies of the historical events...considered typical, significant or decisive,"[113] was not aimed at a dispassionate description or analysis of political facts for its own sake—in the manner idealized by contemporary inductivist science. Rather, it was aimed at enabling "political leaders [to] discover in the events of the past the similarities of the circumstances and conditions which may determine their initiatives and reveal their chances of success or failure."[114]

111. Steven Forde, "Classical Realism," in *Traditions of International Ethics*, eds. Terry Nardin and David R. Mapel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 66.

112. Leonardo Olschki, *Machiavelli the Scientist* (Berkeley: Gillick, 1945), 47.

113. Ibid.

114. Ibid., 44.

In this sense, Thucydidean "science"—which consisted primarily of a detailed description of a single event informed by a metaphysical view of the whole—is enlarged upon by Machiavellian "science" in that the latter, by interrogating several diverse historic events with a view to uncovering the underlying character and behavior of their primitive elements, seeks to produce a template which can be "unlimitedly reproduced by a skilled man who [understands] the rules and creates the circumstances favorable to their successful application."[115] This objective betrays the fundamental optimism underlying the Machiavellian corpus. Unlike Thucydides, who did not believe that any practical action could significantly alter the momentum of the *kinesis*, Machiavelli emphatically argues that *virtu* can in fact subjugate *fortuna*.[116] What is required is a proper understanding of political reality as it actually is, and a willingness to act appropriately upon that understanding.

The Machiavellian version of political realism is thus a model of science in the service of political control—science as technology—and its construction is explicitly inductive. Machiavelli uses historical facts to generate "practical generalizations,"[117] a method he justifies by the claim that

> if the present be compared with the remote past, it is easily seen that in all cities and in all peoples there are the same desires and the same passions as there always were. So that, if one examines with diligence the past, it is easy to foresee the future of any commonwealth....[118]

Like Thucydides, then, he believed that all political events are endlessly continuous in time. This inductivist belief about the past being a guide to the future thereafter becomes the creative instrument through which Machiavelli "strove to gain...theoretical insight into the intricacies of history and politics."[119] This tradition of understanding and interpreting politics with a view to controlling the outcomes of statecraft would be among Machiavelli's great bequests to the realist tradition. It was in some sense carried to its apotheosis, albeit with significant modification, by Morgenthau, whose contribution consisted principally of systematizing the realist world

115. Ibid., 47.

116. As Machiavelli colorfully describes, "...fortune is a woman; and it is necessary, if one wants to hold her down, to beat her and strike her down. And one sees that she lets herself be won more by the impetuous than by those who proceed coldly. And so always, like a woman, she is the friend of the young, because they are less cautious, more ferocious, and command her with more audacity." *The Prince*, 25.

117. The character of such "practical generalizations" and the inductive method of their generation has been described in Robert Brown, *The Nature of Social Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 25–37.

118. *Discourses* 1.39.

119. Olschki, *Machiavelli*, 27.

view in the detached expository form associated with the best versions of inductivist science.

MORGENTHAU: POLITICS AS THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

PERHAPS THE MOST distinguished and articulate exponent of political realism in the twentieth century, Hans Morgenthau sought to provide a comprehensive philosophical understanding of politics. Politics was conceived essentially as a struggle for power, and philosophy, "primarily an unusually stubborn attempt to think clearly,"[120] was intended to illumine those fundamental principles which could guide statesmen in their understanding of political realities. Morgenthau's arrival on the American scene, part of the great European intellectual migration to the United States prior to the Second World War, immediately entangled him with the great debate then prevailing among scholars and practitioners of foreign policy.

The legalist tradition had sought to define the goals of American foreign policy in terms of creating a harmonious international society based on the search for and acceptance of universal moral principles.[121] At the heart of this objective lay the liberal philosophy of the Enlightenment with its belief

> that a rational and moral political order, derived from universally valid abstract principles, [could] be achieved here and now. It assume[d] the essential goodness and infinite malleability of human nature and attribute[d] the failure of the social order to measure up to rational standards to lack of knowledge and understanding, obsolescent social institutions, or the depravity of certain isolated individuals or groups.[122]

Thanks to this presumption of an eternal harmony of interests, the legalist tradition perceived international conflict to be a product of political misperceptions and unintended mistakes. Accordingly, Reason, embodied in "education, reform, and the sporadic use of force,"[123] was held out as the

120. William James's phrase cited in Kenneth Thompson, "Philosophy and Politics: The Two Commitments of Hans J. Morgenthau," in *Truth and Tragedy*, augmented edition, ed. Kenneth Thompson and Robert J. Myers (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1984), 28.

121. See, by way of example, Frank Tannenbaum, "The Balance of Power versus the Coordinate State," *Political Science Quarterly* 47 (June 1952): 173–97, and Thomas I. Cook and Malcolm Moos, *Power through Purpose: The Realism of Idealism as a Basis for Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1954).

122. Hans J. Morgenthau, "Another Great Debate: The National Interest of the United States," *American Political Science Review* 46 (1952): 961–62.

123. Ibid.

solution through which human beings could realize the authentic truth of their common estate. Thus,

> if all men followed reason, the conflicts which separate them would disappear or, at worst, be resolved in compromise; the wants from which they suffer would be satisfied; the fears which destroy their lives would be dispelled; and harmony, welfare, and happiness would reign.[124]

The institutions of law, education, and trade were thus envisaged as the main instruments by which individuals could be brought to the recognition of their mutual interdependence and harmonious interests. It was hoped that such recognition would result in the establishment of an international society, in a manner analogous to the establishment of the state. With these premises and beliefs, the objectives of American foreign policy were defined to be the creation of those international institutions which could sustain a new universal moral order based on and nourished by Reason.

Rejecting the optimistic premises underlying such proposals, Morgenthau argued that political life, far from presupposing an eternal harmony of interests, is "rooted in the lust for power which is common to all men, [and] is for this reason inseparable from social life itself."[125] Based on an Augustinian understanding of the fallen nature of man, Morgenthau, quoting Martin Luther, suggested that "concupiscence is insuperable" and, therefore, the lustful craving for power, being ubiquitous to the human condition, must be recognized as "the element of corruption and sin which injects even into the best intentions at least a drop of evil and thus spoils it."[126] In the final analysis, all politics is therefore evil if for no other reason than it represents an activity conducted by evil men.

Elaborating further on the nature of political activity, Morgenthau argued that its diabolic character is rooted in two human drives. On one hand, it derives from an elementary egoism which arises from the competition for those scarce material and ideational goods that enable individual human beings to survive. These goods "such as money, jobs, marriage, and the like, have an objective relation to the vital needs of the individual" and, therefore, the selfishness of humans in this regard may be construed as having "limits."[127] In contrast to such demands emanating from the requirements of physical survival, Morgenthau saw, on the other hand, the *animus domi-*

124. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 14.
125. Ibid., 9.
126. Ibid., 194–95.
127. Ibid., 193.

nandi—"the desire to maintain the range of one's own person with regard to others, to increase it, or to demonstrate it"[128]—as a human will to power that has no constitutive limits. He explained the boundlessness of this latter drive explicitly in theological terms: "For while man's vital needs are capable of satisfaction, his lust for power would be satisfied only if the last man became an object of his domination, there being nobody above or beside him, that is, if he became like God."[129] The distinction between these two drives is rooted in the fact that while "there is in selfishness an element of rationality presented by the natural limitation of the end" (since human beings presumably need only a relatively finite amount of material goods to survive), both finitude and rationality are "lacking in the will to power."[130]

It thus appears as if Morgenthau is asserting that the evil of politics is derived from two ontologically distinct drives: in a selfishness which originates in necessity provoked by the demands of survival, and in an aggrandizement which originates in the choices of individuals who seek the exhilaration of conquest and mastery. Quickly disposing off what seems like an ontological distinction, he argues that these contrasts, if they exist at all, are merely phenomenological, that is, merely different facets of the same uniformly evil nature of man:

> By setting in this way the desire for power apart from selfishness, on the one hand, and from the other transcendent urges, on the other, one is already doing violence to the actual nature of that desire; for actually it is present whenever man intends to act with regard to other men. One may separate it conceptually from the other ingredients of social action; actually there is no social action which does not contain at least a trace of this desire to make one's own person prevail against others. It is this ubiquity of the desire for power which, besides and beyond any particular selfishness or other evilness of purpose, constitutes the ubiquity of evil in human action.[131]

Consequently, the very fact that egoist human beings exist among one other is sufficient for the *animus dominandi* to assert itself, and in it can be found the causes of all social strife. The heart of Morgenthau's understanding of politics is centered, therefore, on an explicit first-image explanation of conflict: strife is caused by the evil and egoistic nature of man. Such egoism, essentially taking the form of each man placing his own interests before the interests of all others, results in a scramble for power because

128. Ibid., 192.
129. Ibid., 193.
130. Ibid., 193–94.
131. Ibid., 194.

"what the one wants for himself, the other already possesses or wants, too."[132] As a result, politics is transformed into an arena of evil where individuals have no choice but to partake of selfishness even if they otherwise seek to comport with the moral obligation to be unselfish toward others.[133]

If evil and disordered individuals are thus understood, as Thucydides and Machiavelli did, to be the true units of political life, the question of how political order can be constructed immediately becomes a pressing issue. Thucydides avoided answering this question directly, but Machiavelli, recognizing the salience of the subject, provided an explicit answer inductively garnered from history: states are created by force, principally through crimes of great magnitude carried out by individuals of exemplary *virtu*. Morgenthau, in contrast, is generally silent about how political order is created. He admits that "it is always the individual who acts" and that "the action of society, of the nation, or of any other collectivity, political or otherwise, as such has no empirical existence at all,"[134] but he does not provide any generative understanding of how egoist individuals come to be ordered into those minimally cohesive aggregations called "states" which he treats as the analytic units of international politics. Instead, he resolves this issue descriptively by treating all macroscopic social entities as unadulterated collections of egoistic individuals. Morgenthau, then, resembles Thucydides at least in this respect. The narcissistic quest for power, considered the defining characteristic of human beings, is treated as an operative mechanism visible at all levels of social life, but neither theorist utilizes it for the causal explanation of either the origins or the structure of macroscopic entities like the state despite the fact that both assign theoretical primacy to individuals and analytical primacy to states in their explanatory systems.[135]

This lack of generative mechanism is self-evident in Morgenthau's discussion of the relationship between domestic and international politics:

> Regardless of particular social conditions, the decisive argument against the opinion that the struggle for power on the international scene is a mere historical accident must be derived from the nature of domestic politics. The essence of international politics is identical with its domestic counterpart. Both domestic and international politics are a struggle

132. Ibid., 192.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid., 187.
135. Thucydides no doubt speaks to the issue of state structure. His teaching on the question, however, is made manifest only implicitly through his description of the processes of political decay. He does not provide causal explanation of how state structures come to be (either through his own comments or through the speeches) in a way that he does when the issues of imperialism and systemic war are discussed.

> for power, modified only by the different conditions under which this struggle takes place in the domestic and in the international spheres.
>
> The tendency to dominate, in particular, is an element of all human associations, from the family through fraternal and professional associations and local political organizations to the state. On the family level, the typical conflict between the mother-in-law and her child's spouse is in essence a struggle for power, the defense of an established power position against the attempt to establish a new one. As such it foreshadows the conflict on the international scene between the policies of the status quo and the policies of imperialism. Social clubs, fraternities, faculties, and business organizations are scenes of continuous struggles for power between groups that either want to keep what power they already have or seek to attain greater power. Competitive contests between business enterprises as well as labor disputes between employers and employees are frequently fought not only, and sometimes not even primarily, for economic advantages, but for influence over each other and over others; that is, for power. Finally, the whole political life of a nation, particularly of a democratic nation, from the local to the national level, is a continuous struggle for power. In periodic elections, in voting in legislative assemblies, in lawsuits before courts, in administrative decisions and executive measures—in all these activities men try to maintain or to establish their power over other men...In view of this ubiquity of the struggle for power in all social relations and on all levels of social organization, is it surprising that international relations is of necessity power politics? And would it not be rather surprising if the struggle for power were but an accidental and ephemeral attribute of international politics when it is a permanent and necessary element of all branches of domestic politics?[136]

The similarity of domestic and international politics is therefore established by inductive analogies rather than by logical demonstration. States are described as entities composed of power seeking individuals and international politics is then described as little other than domestic politics writ large. This approach to understanding international politics may therefore be seen as assimilating the core argument offered by previous realists, namely that the egoistic nature of man is the cause of all political strife. Unlike one previous realist, however—Machiavelli—who offered a detailed explanation about how domestic and external political order are linked in causal terms, Morgenthau's interest shifts quickly from the domestic realm to international politics proper. Hence, after briefly asserting that the nature of the international system and the nature of the state, third-image and sec-

136. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 31–33.

ond-image realities respectively, share certain characteristic similarities with their first-image constituent, man with his lust for power, the theoretical primacy of individuals drops out of the analysis altogether and Morgenthau's magnum opus, *Politics among Nations*, proceeds briskly to its chief objective: the description of international politics as the struggle for power among analytically primal units called states.

As might be expected, Morgenthau begins with a brief analysis of the nature of power but, unlike Machiavelli, who parsimoniously described power as the coercive capability flowing from "good arms," Morgenthau defines power as a "psychological relation" between unequals flowing from "the expectation of benefits, the fear of disadvantages, [and] the respect or love for men or institutions."[137] Thus, threats, orders, persuasion, or charisma, are all avenues through which power is exercised, and the "tendency to reduce political power to the actual application of force or at least to equate it with successful threats of force" is explicitly rejected on the grounds that it neglects the role of prestige in politics.[138] Later on in the work the nature of national power is elaborated in copious detail with an elaborate typology that includes every conceivable component from geography at one end through natural resources, military preparedness, and population all the way to national character, morale, and quality of diplomacy and government at the other end.[139] The discussion about power concludes with a revealing section titled "The Fallacy of the Single Factor," in which Morgenthau discusses the fallacy of monocausal explanations, be they based on geography, military power, or national ethos.[140]

The discussion of power in *Politics among Nations* is fascinating for the light it sheds on Morgenthau's attitude toward the possibility of a political science. While both Thucydides and Machiavelli sought in different ways to provide some kind of scientific formulation of political realism, Morgenthau is conspicuous for his heated polemical rejection of the possibility of political "science." Thus, while claiming on one hand that "politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature,"[141] he energetically rejects on the other hand the notion that these objective laws could be divined by the abstract and deductive methods of rationalist inquiry. Believing that rationalism was defined by the claim that control and change was automatically predicated by a scientific

137. Ibid., 27.
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid., 97–144.
140. Ibid., 153–60.
141. Ibid., 4.

understanding, Morgenthau rejected political "science" on the grounds that it harbored the illusion of being able to transform the reality of human evil. His sweeping denunciation of all rationalized political science thus derived from the erroneous perception that all "scientific approaches to politics" necessarily proffered the false promise of eradicating human asociality by scientifically engineered solutions. His refusal to countenance the absurdity of some rationalisms, especially those of the liberal-legalist kind he encountered in the great debate, blinded him to the possibility that an alternative rationalism based on the permanent premise of human asociality could in fact be created. Such a rationalism would not only be able to provide logical and deductive realist formulations of greater testability and expanded explanatory power but would readily admit its inability to provide scientific solutions that could decisively abolish evil in history.

Given Morgenthau's inability to envisage the possibility of such a rationalist political realism, he rejected abstract deductive systematization altogether in favor of understanding "the principles of international politics" as gleaned from inductivist "comparisons between [various] events."[142] History, in other words, was to be the essential, if not the exclusive, foundation for the study of international politics, and the latter discipline, in turn, was tasked with the intellectual objective of "distinguishing the specific from the general and dealing meaningfully with both."[143] With this conception of the foundations of international politics, it is no surprise that the substantive portions of *Politics among Nations* are concerned primarily with providing "a map of the political scene." Obviously, "such a map does not provide a complete description of the political landscape as it is in any particular period of history," but rather describes "the timeless features of its geography distinct from their ever changing historical setting."[144]

This attempt at surveying the timeless features of international politics becomes conspicuous in Morgenthau's analysis of international politics as the struggle for power. The key category of analysis here is defined as the "national interest" which, in turn, is composed of permanent "minimum requirements" relating to the survival of the state as well as a "whole gamut of other [variable and supernumerary] meanings that are logically compatible with it."[145] Since state behavior always seeks to promote the national

142. Ibid., 17.

143. Norman A. Graebner, "Morgenthau as Historian," in Thompson and Myers, *Truth and Tragedy*, 67.

144. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 39.

145. Ibid., 65.

interest, the struggle for power in history is seen to conform to three basic patterns: the policy of the "status quo" aimed at keeping one's power; the policy of "imperialism" aimed at increasing one's power; and the policy of "prestige" aimed at acquiring reputation and demonstrating one's power. Why does a state choose one policy rather than another? Morgenthau's answer is set out in empirical rather than in logical terms. Thus, for example, the incentives to choose imperial policies is provided either by "victorious wars," "lost wars," or "weakness," with each of these explanations derived from historical events. Similarly, history provides the basis for the claim that not all imperialisms are alike and, therefore, Morgenthau proceeds to distinguish them both by the nature of their goals—"world empire," "continental empire," and "local preponderance"—and the character of the methods—"military," "economic," and "cultural"—used to attain them.

This discussion of national power as gleaned from the historical record is complemented by analysis of the various limitations besetting it, and here again Morgenthau's objective consists of providing a comprehensive catalog of the numerous features of the political landscape. Thus, the "balance of power," "international morality," and "international law," are duly recognized as limiting forces, albeit of varying intensity, on the drive to power.[146] Clearly, the balance of power is held to be the most important limitation on the untrammeled exercise of a state's power and "the aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying either to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads of necessity to a configuration...called the balance of power and to policies aimed at preserving it."[147] While such an explanation appears to be rationalist in form, in that it looks like an explanation derived deductively from the logic of a given situation, it is in fact induced from the historical experience of European statecraft, an inescapable conclusion given Morgenthau's description of the six conditions associated with the classic balance of power: the presence of a large number of independent states; the common European culture; the geographical constriction of the international system; the absence of weapons of mass destruction; the freedom of elites to make policy; and, the presence of a "balancer."[148] Given the postwar changes in international relations, Morgenthau concludes this discussion of the balance of power on a pessimistic note since most of the classic six conditions for successful balancing have been all but obliterated. In fact, given his detailed inductive reading of the European balance, it is not even certain—in terms of his own descrip-

146. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 161–296.
147. Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics*, 41, 258.
148. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 167–95.

tions—whether the concept of the balance is at all a meaningful one because in some instances states are seen to seek equality of countervailing power and in others, a clear margin of superiority.[149] For this reason perhaps, he concluded elsewhere that "the character of imperialism as a universal phenomenon of international politics must be maintained."[150]

Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* represents the summation of the inductivist construction of the realist program because it is such a detailed inventory of the complex and often divergent behaviors that are manifested in international politics. While these behaviors share a common thread, in that they represent state actions related to increasing security through power maximization, no attempt at parsimonious ordering is either attempted or achieved in his work. In fact, the exhaustive depiction of political facts, even if appearing contradictory at times, was deemed desirable precisely because a rational-theoretical understanding of political life falsely ordered a reality which was, and could be, only chaotic. Warning, in Montaigne's words, against the "wrested, forced, and biased interpretation"[151] of politics when filtered through rationalist constructions, Morgenthau held out a philosophically conditioned empiricism as the ideal methodology for the study of international relations and the appropriate alternative to rationalist science.

> The first lesson which the student of international politics must learn and never forget is that the complexities of international affairs make simple solutions and trustworthy prophecies impossible. It is here that the scholar and the charlatan part company. Knowledge of the forces which determine politics among nations, and knowledge of the ways by which their political relations proceed, reveals the ambiguity of the facts of international politics. In every political situation contradictory tendencies are at play. One of these tendencies is more likely to prevail under certain conditions than others. But which tendency will actually prevail is anybody's guess. The best the scholar can do, then, is to trace the different tendencies which, as potentialities, are inherent in a certain international situation. He can point out the different conditions which make it more likely for one tendency to prevail than for another, and, finally, assess the probabilities for the different conditions and tendencies to prevail in actuality.[152]

149. Ibid., 196–223.

150. Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth W. Thompson, eds. *Principles and Problems of International Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1950), 61.

151. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 17.

152. Ibid., 19.

With this approach, *Politics among Nations* represents the denial of the efficacy and value of all rationalist-scientific methods of understanding politics. There could be no rationalized study of international political behavior, only expository reflections that aid various prudential forms of statecraft. The "science" of politics is, therefore, nothing other than *episteme politike*, a practical science that requires both commitment and distance. It involves distance in that the statesman has to stand back as it were and use his philosophically conditioned but inductively generated store of knowledge to arrive at an assessment of the many reasonable and prudential political choices; but it also required commitment in that the best political choice can only be discerned from within the context of the alternatives facing a particular statesman and his particular state.

In attempting to illuminate the practical truths required for such successful choices in the world of power, Morgenthau's objective, as incarnated in his work, represents a significant shift in emphasis from that of Machiavelli's: whereas the latter was more interested in prescribing techniques for successful politics and in understanding politics primarily as a means to that goal, Morgenthau appears more interested in understanding politics, its character and its limitations, for its own sake. While a normative policy interest certainly exists at a subsidiary level in all his work, Morgenthau's distinctive contribution to the evolution of the realist program consists of his systematic, empiricist, exposition of international political practice. This exposition was no doubt conditioned by a distinctive view of human nature and human destiny but, in the final analysis, it was aimed largely at creating a framework which "imposes intellectual discipline upon the observer, infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible."[153]

With this objective, traditional realism could be said to have reached its high point in the long march toward scientific theory. In the work of Thucydides, it began as a metaphysical research program which, in bearing a fertile world view, gave birth to a new tradition of viewing politics. This understanding of politics over time gave rise to a desire for practical control and, not surprisingly in the work of Machiavelli, the realist program evolves into a search for practical generalizations aimed at manipulating political outcomes. In the final stage, the realist program comes to embody a desire that transcends mere technological control and, consequently, in the work of Morgenthau, it takes the form of producing a systematized body of empirical information which, while partly intended to help make good policy,

153. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 5th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1978), 4–5.

is now fundamentally aimed at creating objective knowledge for its own sake. To the degree that Morgenthau's work represents the latter aspiration, it could justifiably be considered the epitome of the empiricist approaches characterizing traditional realism.

TRADITIONAL REALISM: THE LOGIC OF DOMINATION, THE PRIMACY OF INDIVIDUALS, AUSTERE INDUCTIVISM

The tradition of political realism examined thus far through the approaches of three practitioners—one ancient, the other pre-modern, and the third, modern—suggests that the realist research program could be summarized in the following way.

At the level of substantive claims, all three theorists are engaged by the problem of order and all explain the reality of conflict and strife in terms of the logic of domination engendered by necessity. Each theorist asserts either explicitly or implicitly that all political entities—even if they seek only security ex ante—are forced by the demands of competition to embark on a course of action which ultimately involves control, conquest, and domination. Only Machiavelli, however, utilizes this logic explicitly to explain how order is produced. Both Thucydides and Morgenthau recognize the importance of the question, but neither addresses it explicitly or in causal form. Machiavelli alone systematically describes both the processes through which individuals interact to constitute order-producing entities called "states" and how these constituted states thereafter behave in a world of interstate politics. Consequently, Machiavelli can lay claim to being called the "compleat realist": his work exhibits a clarity and consistency of argument and a fullness of explanatory scope which neither Thucydides nor Morgenthau can rival. Despite the limitations of the latter, however, it is important to recognize that all three theorists acknowledge that security competition ends in a struggle for domination and it is this substantive claim which, more than any other, unifies the traditional realist teaching on politics in the earthly city.

At the level of units of analysis and logic of causation, all three theorists share important similarities again. Despite operating within the premises of the state-system, Thucydides focuses on the character of "men in their national entities" in an attempt to discover the egoism which is distinctively human. Machiavelli bases his reading of politics on the nature of the individual as well. Similarly, Morgenthau focuses on the evil in human nature to explain behavior at all three levels of political aggregation, even if only in a metaphorical way. Therefore, in terms of the units of analysis, all three

theorists assign theoretical primacy to individuals in their explanatory systems. They do not differ in their emphasis on what is most significant for the successful explanation of politics, namely, egoist individuals and their self-regarding nature. They do differ, however, in their utilization of human nature for purposes of causal explanation. Machiavelli uses human nature most coherently and explicitly both to constitute macroscopic political entities and to explain their behavior. Thucydides uses human nature to explain the behavior of macroscopic political entities, but only implicitly: he does not explain their generation except by insinuation, but concentrates instead on their decay and breakdown. Morgenthau also does not use human nature explicitly in his causal explanations of international politics. The evil in human nature remains the backdrop, but it is not used causally to explain either how macroscopic political entities are constituted or how they behave. The traditional realist emphasis on human nature, while laudable in a Popperian sense, is therefore marred by the inability to incorporate it explicitly in causal systems of explanation which describe both the constitution and behavior of macroscopic political entities as outcomes of interindividual action. Machiavelli is certainly the exception here, but his contribution, too, remains stymied because his explanatory system is historically derived and inductively justified and as such lacks the absolute necessity that derives only from a system of formal (deductive) logic.

Finally, at the level of methodological form, all three traditional realists are unified by their reliance on empiricist-inductivism (which, with the exception of Thucydides, is concerned, in some degree or another, with solving the practical problems of statecraft). This concern with collating empirical generalizations on the basis of an austere perception of visible phenomena is perhaps the earliest method of acquiring knowledge, and the empiricist tradition has been distinguished by its effort at creating universal generalizations, both practical and theoretical, through the inductive technique of iterating and comparing singular observation statements. All three traditional realists conduct their political analysis based on such collected singular observation statements about political life. Using Einstein's words, it may be said that their epistemological presumption is that "experience is the alpha and omega of all our knowledge of reality."[154] In none of the traditional realists does the emphasis on postulating theoretical categories, internally related to each other by deductive generation with a high degree of predictable content, become manifest. In the great dialectic between

154. Albert Einstein, "On the Method of Theoretical Physics," in *Ideas and Opinions*, trans. and rev. Sonja Bargmann (New York: Crown, 1954), 271.

"empirical" and "rational" knowledge which Einstein often spoke about, the traditional realists are firmly wedded to the methodology of the former.[155] Since the need for determinacy, predictability, and logical systematization via deductively-generated explanations was explicitly eschewed by at least one of them (and, perhaps implicitly, by both others), the idea of a purely rational construction in which every generalization "proceed[s] from step to step with such precision that every single one of its propositions [becomes] absolutely indubitable"[156] is not yet salient.

From the perspective of the critical rationalist methodology of science, all traditional realist approaches must therefore be found wanting. Their emphasis on individuals as the appropriate units of analysis and as the efficient causes of all political action is commendable and comports perfectly with the critical rationalist stipulation of methodological individualism. Their reliance on induction for purposes of justifying their insights, however, remains problematic, and their failure to order their causal explanations in systematic, deductive, form deprives them of the possibility of demonstrating that their conclusions hold not merely due to the exigencies of chance but by sheer logical and theoretical necessity. To that degree, traditional realism lacks the fundamental ingredient which makes the scientific method so useful and attractive and, consequently, it is no surprise that the first modification contributed by its successors, the scientific realists, was not so much substantive as methodological: the shift from a historically based and inductively justified set of explanations to a more abstract and deductively systematized body of causal hypotheses. Such an effort, which is peculiar to modern social science, first becomes evident in the path-breaking work of Morton Kaplan and it is his approach and, later on, that of Waltz, which must be now reviewed.

KAPLAN: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AS THE SCIENCE OF SYSTEMS

BY THE TIME Morgenthau had completed his project of disabusing the American polity of its Enlightenment illusions, it was generally recognized that the realist tradition offered indispensable insights for the successful conduct of statecraft. This recognition coincided with the new in-

155. For an excellent discussion of Einstein's method and the distinction between rationalist and empiricist approaches to science, see Gerald Holton, "Thematic Presuppositions and the Direction of Scientific Advance," in *Scientific Explanation*, ed. A. F. Heath (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 1–27.

156. Einstein, "On the Method," 271.

ternational role of the United States as a superpower and, given the consequent demands of international management, it was no surprise that *Politics among Nations* quickly became *the* textbook that educated an entire generation of American policymakers about the realities of international politics. The practical success enjoyed by Morgenthau's opus, however, also illustrated its limitations and it was not long before scholars and practitioners alike felt the need for a systematic understanding of international politics derived more from a theoretical knowledge of its underlying structure than merely from pragmatic insights into its shifting historical configurations.[157] The need for such theoretical knowledge could be viewed as the first step in transforming the *episteme politike* of traditional realism into the discipline of international relations understood as a social science.

Toward that end, the core intuitions, beliefs, and practical knowledge offered by the traditional realists from their reading of history had to be reformulated to meet the new standards of scientific theory. In other words, the inductive-empiricist approach of traditional realism had to be transformed into the deductive-rationalist systems of science, in which the success of practical manipulation would be contingent on achieving a proper theoretical understanding of the underlying realities of international politics.[158] When measured against this objective, the inadequacy of traditional realism was manifested in two ways. First, the standard concepts offered by the traditional realists were too fuzzy and imprecise to allow consistent operational formulation. Second, the subjective and objective aspects of political reality which melded together in diplomatic practice had to be separated if the wisdom of traditional realism had to be objectified in the testable formulations demanded of scientific theory. These two propositions implied that international politics had to be treated as an objective social fact—the "international system"—to be examined as an independent phenomenon with its own laws and possessing its own logic.

The marriage of the inductively-garnered insights of traditional realism with the rationalist apparatus of modern social science produced the scientific realist synthesis. Among the first exponents who created a conceptual framework aimed at abstract clarity was Kaplan in his 1957 classic, *System and Process in International Politics*.[159] In that work Kaplan sought to produce a

157. For a succinct early statement defending the goals and possibilities of the scientific study of international politics, see Morton A. Kaplan, "The New Great Debate: Traditionalism vs. Science in International Relations," *World Politics* 19, no. 1 (October 1966): 1–20. See also, Morton A. Kaplan, *Macropolitics: Selected Essays on the Philosophy and Science of Politics* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

158. Kaplan, "New Great Debate," 1–20.

159. Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1957).

self-contained theoretical understanding of international politics. Toward that end, he drew upon the general systems theory advanced by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1948, and various other developments in cybernetics associated with the work of W. Ross Ashby, to produce a revolutionary edifice based on the three fundamental categories of system, structure, and function.[160] General systems theory was expressly intended by its early developers, especially von Bertalanffy and Ashby, as a theoretical effort which would reverse the reductionist investigative strategies prevalent in physics and chemistry. These sciences, proceeding along the "analytic" route, sought progressively to decompose all physical realities under examination into more and more elementary entities, thus postulating "wholes" as necessary outcomes of structurally related "parts." While admitting the success of such reductionism in the physical sciences, the early general systems theorists suggested that it was equally important to understand natural realities "synthetically," that is, to go beyond the parts and understand how complex systems are organized and how they operate as a whole. As Bertalanffy argued,

> Today our main problem is that of organized complexity. Concepts like those of organization, wholeness, directiveness, teleology, control, self-regulation, differentiation and the like are alien to conventional physics. However, they pop up everywhere in the biological, behavioral and social sciences, and are, in fact, indispensable for dealing with living organisms or social groups. Thus, a basic problem posed to modern science is a general theory of organization.[161]

Obviously, the claim that "a general theory of organization" is the "basic problem posed to modern science" would be viewed suspiciously by the analytic tradition since the latter sought to explain organization as a property reducible to the interaction of various constituent parts, if not in the first then at least in the last instance. The opposing assertion that organization merits study in its own right, thus derives from a larger philosophical claim that structural arrangements as a property cannot be exhaustively explained by the "parts" and, as such, constitute a residual element that escapes all analytic approaches. General systems theory was therefore advanced as the theoretical tool designed especially for the investigation of such residual elements and, since there were allegedly "correspondences in

160. The classic works in this regard are Ludwig von Bertalanffy, "General Systems Theory," *General Systems Yearbook* 1 (1956), 1–10; W. Ross Ashby, *Design for a Brain* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1952); W. Ross Ashby, "General Systems Theory as a New Discipline," *General Systems Yearbook* 3 (1958), 1–6.

161. von Bertalanffy, "General System Theory," 2.

the principles which govern the behavior of entities that are intrinsically, widely different,"[162] it was conceived as the means through which these more or less universal principles applying to all systems could be delineated without becoming in any way a restricted explanation of certain, specific, systems. By thus presenting itself as a unified theory of systems behavior which transcended all disciplinary boundaries, it afforded individual theorists the opportunity to operate in a "constructivist"[163] mode, wherein given systems could be created arbitrarily and whose specific content would be defined by the interests of the investigation is question.[164]

It is not difficult to perceive that this approach owed its inspiration to the older holistic traditions in philosophy, sociology and political science, and general systems theory was in fact explicitly intended as a positivist attempt at resuscitating some of these traditional holisms—but without their defects.[165] The basic concept underlying all holistic approaches was that of a "self-regulating whole or system of differentiated parts maintaining itself in an environment."[166] The organicist variant of this approach treated the "whole" in question as a self-regulating biological "organism" endowed with a unique history and future purpose, while the mechanistic variant conceived of the "whole" as a self-regulating "artifact" that attempted to maintain perfect homeostatic balance. The disrepute that teleological explanations suffered over time resulted in organicist holism becoming progressively discredited and, therefore, most modern attempts at resuscitating holism consisted principally of advancing more and more recondite versions of the mechanistic variant.

Such mechanistic holism, as embodied in the conceptions offered by general systems theory and cybernetics, was attractive to Kaplan precisely because it allowed international politics to be treated not merely as an activity that individual states engaged in—as the traditional realists perceived it—but as an objective system which, transcending any given state and its

162. Ibid., 1.

163. Oran Young, *Systems of Political Science* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968), 16.

164. This methodology obviously raised the ticklish problem of whether these "constructed" systems were intended to model entities actually existing in reality or whether they were merely freely-constructed mental artifacts designed to illustrate the inner logic and operation of some hypothetical realities. Most political scientists operating in the constructivist mode never adequately clarified this question and most general systems theorists never offered a definitive response either. Among political scientists who used the systems approach, the only remarkable exception was Karl Deutsch who attempted explicitly to model empirical systems as well as to provide the theoretical tools required to demonstrate how such models were linked to their empirical predicates.

165. Phillips, *Holistic Thought*, 46–67.

166. W. J. M. Mackenzie, *Politics and Social Science* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 47–48.

activities, could be depicted through a variety of abstract heuristic models.[167] It also provided the unifying concepts and common language which, by "permit[ing] the transference of hypotheses from discipline to discipline,"[168] allowed Kaplan to explain certain patterns of political behavior in terms of a framework borrowed from cybernetics: the ultrastable Ashby automatic pilot. Given this eidectic model, Kaplan focused on "system and process" in international politics, the two distinctive concerns that immediately linked him with the larger holistic tradition of viewing social reality as a "whole" which is "superior to the individual and his acts."[169] Obviously, "one cannot...have a whole without parts" but, as noted earlier, the distinctiveness of general systems theory and cybernetics lay precisely in the claim that "the whole is prior to the parts in the sense that its operations are irreducible to these parts and their properties."[170] Consistent with this belief, Kaplan did not focus on the behavior of the constituent "parts" to produce a "system" either by aggregation or generation. Rather, he focused—like the rest of the holistic theorists of his generation—on modeling the system first, and then utilizing these models to deduce what the characteristic behavior of the parts must be if the system itself was to be maintained in a certain operating state. Succinctly describing this "descendent" methodology, he asserted that "many of the hypotheses employed in the models of individual international systems are intended to express the types of action which must characterize the system if it is to remain in equilibrium rather than to predict that any individual action will be of such a character."[171]

With this objective, Kaplan began his examination of international politics by defining his basic unit of analysis, the "system of action," thus:

> A set of variables so related, in contradistinction to its environment, that describable behavioral regularities characterize the internal relationships of the variables to each other and the external relationships of the set of individual variables to combinations of external variables.[172]

Using the terminology popularized by general systems theory, this definition located the "system" in a wider extra-systemic reality, the

167. Kaplan, *System and Process*, Preface.

168. Ibid., ii–iii.

169. Don Martindale, "Limits and Alternatives to Functionalism in Sociology," in *Functionalism in the Social Sciences*, ed. Don Martindale (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1965), 150–51.

170. Ibid.

171. Kaplan, *System and Process*, 2.

172. Ibid., 4.

"environment," and it laid the basis for describing "the variables of a system" which include the "rules" for the system's continued existence in a given operating state.[173] The constant maintenance of a given operating state constituted the "equilibrium" condition, with the latter always being defined "with respect to arbitrarily chosen variables which remain within arbitrarily chosen limits for an arbitrarily chosen length of time when subject to a specific set of disturbances."[174] As long as the variables shifted only within these narrow chosen limits, such that the equilibrium condition was not transformed, these incremental shifts were taken to define the "characteristic behavior" of the variables in the system. If, however, the variables shifted drastically beyond the arbitrarily chosen limits, such that there is "a radical change in the relationships of the variables of a system—or even in the identity of the variables," this shift was designated a "step-level function" which differed "from other functions by virtue of the fact that it alter[ed] the characteristic behavior of a system."[175]

The equilibrium condition was thus the point of departure for the systems theorist because it defined whether alterations in the values of the variables resulted merely in "equilibrium change" or in a "systems change" itself. If the degree of alteration involved merely a movement to a new operating level, the system was said to experience an equilibrium change.

173. Ibid. Thus, the operating state of a system and the changes affecting it are intimately linked to the *variables* involved and, as Kaplan noted, systemic analysis is little other than "the study of relationships between [various] variables." Since Kaplan is principally interested in creating heuristic models of some reality which may or may not actually exist, "the only proper criterion" for the selection of these variables is their utility for "the investigation of the subject matter of the inquiry" (9). Hence, the variables Kaplan selects as crucial to the understanding of international politics are:

1. the "essential rules," that is, the rules which "describe general relationships between the actors of a system or...assign definite systemic role functions to actors.... The rule is not a law in the sense of physical laws; it merely specifies characteristic behavior" (9).
2. the "transformation rules," which are rules describing the conditions under which the essential rules change: "when environmental conditions are such that changes in characteristic behavior, that is, in the essential rules, are adduced, the transformation rules specify the transformations in that behavior" (10).
3. the "actor classificatory variables" which refer to the character of the individual actors populating the system: "the structure of an actor system produces needs which are peculiar to that structural form of organization and which therefore distinguish its behavior from that of other kinds of actors" (11).
4. the "capability variables" which describe the "physical capability of an actor to carry out given classes of actions in specified settings" (11).
5. the "information variables" which define actor awareness of the history and attributes of other actors in the system thereby enabling one actor to understand how "history creates a predisposition to aim at certain objectives, although other objectives might satisfy needs just as well" (11–12).

174. Ibid., 6.

175. Ibid., 5.

Thus, "if a political system is democratic, the election of one candidate rather than another changes the state of the political system but does not change its characteristic behavior": it is therefore an example of equilibrium change. A systems change, however, occurs when a step-level function alters radically the characteristic behavior of the system: for example, a "revolution may perform [such] a step-level function for a political system by changing the characteristic behavior of the system, for instance, legal procedures, modes of selecting officials and the rights of citizens."[176]

With these concepts defining the behavior of all systems in general, Kaplan proceeded to distinguish international politics from other political systems. A peculiar difficulty now became apparent because, as Charles McClelland points out, international politics when treated as a system "has no environment, unless the "platform" of the physical world "upon" which it operates is so considered."[177] Recognizing this difficulty, Kaplan tried to resolve it initially by assuming that the boundaries of the international system could be reduced to the characteristic behaviors of each of its various operating states. Given the unsatisfactoriness of this approach, however, he finally resolved it only in a Pickwickian sense—by the admission that the international system is not actually a system at all:

> Since no arbiter is available to keep jurisdictional disputes within any given bounds, the system lacks full political status. In the present international system, the nation states have political systems, but the international system lacks one. Alternatively, the international system may be characterized as a null political system.[178]

Kaplan's systems approach was thus confounded at the very beginning by the problem that the reality he sought to investigate, the international political system, did not lend itself to being treated as a genuine system.

Leaving this difficulty aside for the moment and continuing the task of distinguishing international politics from other political systems, Kaplan described the former as "tend[ing] towards the subsystem dominant pole."[179] This claim was elaborated in the following way:

> The political system is dominant over its subsystems to the extent that the essential rules of the political system act as parametric "givens" for any single subsystem. A subsystem becomes dominant to the extent that

176. Ibid.

177. Charles A. McClelland, "Systems and History in International Relations," *General Systems Yearbook* 3 (1958), 237.

178. Kaplan, *System and Process*, 14.

179. Ibid., 17.

> the essential rules of the system cannot be treated as parametric givens for that subsystem.[180]

The international political system cannot impose any essential rules of behavior which bind the subsystems—the states—within it. Therefore, international politics, in addition to being a "null political" system, must also be characterized as being "subsystem dominant."

Finally, international politics as a system was declared to operate in a manner essentially akin to the Ashby pilot: it was deemed to be "ultrastable," that is, it not only continually adjusted itself to maintain its equilibrium state via homeostatic regulation (as in a simple thermostat), but it could actually "'search' for stable patterns of behavior" either by making "internal changes or [by attempting] to change the environment."[181] In other words, the international political system shared at least one characteristic in common with domestic political systems: it not only constantly adjusted to new equilibria within it (as regularly happens in domestic politics through elections, for example, when office holders are regularly replaced), but it could also transmute itself into different types of alternate systems if the "parameter changes" affecting its variables were sufficiently radical (as may happen through a revolution in domestic politics, for example, when a prevailing formal order is violently replaced by a different formal order).

With the concepts of systems analysis and the character of international politics thus established, Kaplan proceeded to examine six hypothetical universes of international politics: the balance-of-power system, the loose bipolar system, the tight bipolar system, the universal system, the hierarchical system, and the unit veto system. The first two systems, representing idealized constructions of international politics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and in the post–Second World War period respectively, were inspired by actual historical epochs, and therefore represented an attempt at illuminating observed behaviors through means of a deductively-generated set of system-derived propositions. The other four systems were purely deductive-rationalist constructions without any historical basis and their construction was justified on the grounds that they might provide both an image of the possibilities which may be concretized at some future point in time and because they could possibly provide confirmation of some hypotheses relating to systems presently existing. The "tight bipolar system" replicated the "loose bipolar system" but without the "bloc actors" (like NATO and the Warsaw Pact) and the "universal actors" (like the United

180. Ibid., 16.
181. Ibid., 8.

Nations) that were visible in the loose bipolar system; the "universal system" idealized a world confederation; the "hierarchical system" idealized a unitary world state; and the "unit veto system" idealized a situation in which states have weapons of mass destruction, like nuclear weapons.[182]

It is important to note that Kaplan's objective in creating such models of international politics was "to *abstract* the materials of international behavior from their biographical or historical setting and to *organize* them into a coherent body of timeless propositions" (emphasis added).[183] In this sense, his interests clearly resemble Morgenthau's insofar as the latter too sought to provide an abstract "map" of the international political landscape. The similarity ends there, however, because the techniques of construction and the character of the maps now differ radically. Whereas Morgenthau constructed his map on the basis of a simple but exhaustive inductive scrutiny of the historical record, Kaplan's maps (= models) are sometimes inspired by history but never justified by it. In fact, Kaplan does not even claim that his models of the international system describe international politics as it actually is. Rather, they are intended merely to uncover the internal logic and the internal relations predicated by the constitution of the model in question. Thus, in a strict sense, the "rules" that these models derive are tautological, that is, they merely describe what would happen if all other factors, other than those specified as variables in the model, are held constant.[184] As such, they apply to international politics only to the degree that there actually exists a certain isomorphy between reality and the model. Kaplan himself does not claim the existence of any such isomorphy, but only holds out his models as preliminary abstractions that need further development if reliable predictability of the kind attained in the physical sciences was to be replicated.

Limitations of space prevent an exhaustive examination of each universe, and so this analysis will restrict itself to a partial reconstruction of only the

182. It is possible to suggest that the "tight bipolar system" too idealizes a certain historical epoch, that of Athens and Sparta, and the "unit veto system" idealizes the post-Second World War universe with nuclear weapons; since Kaplan however does not claim that these models were derived from these epochs, these systems can be treated as ahistorical for all practical purposes. It is also worth noting at this point that the hierarchical and universal systems cannot, strictly speaking, be treated as international political systems within the terms of Kaplan's definition ("null political") because hierarchies capable of rule enforcement obviously exist.

183. Kaplan, *System and Process*, 3.

184. Admittedly, Kaplan is confusing in this regard because he sometimes imputes a normative character to these rules. This is simply meant, however, as a hypothetical imperative and not a categorical one, meaning that this is something that is technically required if the system is to be maintained as is.

balance-of-power system in order to provide an insight into how Kaplan operationalized his version of scientific realism.

The objective of the balance-of-power model was to provide an idealized construction of what an international political universe containing a few relatively equal great powers might look like in the abstract. The actors were arbitrarily specified as numbering "at least five and preferably more."[185] Now, the rules necessary to make this system survive had to be explicated. This process could, in principle, be completed either inductively by examining the actual behavior of states (as Morgenthau did), or deductively on the basis of specified actor attributes and certain a priori specifications of the system's character. Kaplan, proceeding along the latter route, has already specified the character of the system to be a balance-of-power system and hence he proceeds to stipulate what the actors must do if this system is to persist in an equilibrium state, that is, as a stable system which does not undergo a mutation in form. He then lays out these "essential rules" in a generative fashion:

1. Act to increase capabilities but negotiate rather than fight.
2. Fight rather than pass up an opportunity to increase capabilities.
3. Stop fighting rather than eliminate an essential national actor.
4. Act to oppose any coalition or single actor which tends to assume a position of predominance with respect to the rest of the system.
5. Act to constrain actors who subscribe to supranational organizing principles.
6. Permit defeated or constrained essential national actors to reenter the system as acceptable role partners or act to bring some previously inessential actor within the essential actor classification. Treat all essential actors as acceptable role partners.[186]

If these rules are adhered to, Kaplan claimed, the balance-of-power universe will subsist in an equilibrium condition. Any minor deviation from the equilibrium would result in equilibrium change if and only if the "characteristic behavior" of the units persistently conformed to the essential rules laid out above. Clearly, each particular universe had its own parametric set of rules and a unique set of actors, but so long as every actor within it consistently conformed to the derived rules, the political universe in question would remain in a steady homeostatic sort of equilibrium. By thus providing a variety of abstract heuristic models, each with its own set

185. Kaplan, *System and Process*, 22.
186. Ibid., 23.

of inferred rules, Kaplan sought to explain how various systemic configurations (= operating states) in international politics could be understood.

It is easy to see that this approach represents a radical transformation of traditional realism in that the inductive basis of previous realist explanations is jettisoned and a new rationalist methodology is used instead. Kaplan thus inaugurated the new *scientific* approach to explaining international politics by reconstructing realist explanations in a variety of abstract, yet deductively systematized models, where hypothesized theoretic entities are held together by a logical network of internal relations. Not only was the realist program now liberated from its previous role as handmaiden to statecraft but, scientific realism was advanced as well by the provision of formulations that were criticizable and capable of further revision and development. For this reason, Kaplan's six theoretical universes of international politics were a brilliant innovation that married together, no matter how incompletely, the demands of theoretical science with the traditional realist insights about the nature of power politics. Yet, brilliant though this innovation was, his abstract models were problematic constructions for several reasons, each of which will be elucidated with respect to the balance-of-power system elaborated above.

The first problem with Kaplan's construction—and this might be termed the "internal critique"[187]—is that his deductive systematization, as embodied in the essential rules, is faulty. There is, for example, no reason why in a balance-of-power system, possessing the constitution defined for it in terms of the number of actors, states should act to increase their capabilities rather than merely maintain them. Kaplan's justification for this rule consists of the claim that the "lines of organizational integration are much stronger within the internal systems of the national actors than they are in the international system,"[188] but that does not explain why states should seek to increase or even to maintain their present capabilities. Of course, there may be good reasons for states to undertake either power maximizing or power satisficing strategies, but these cannot be deduced from within Kaplan's model of the balance-of-power system. In a systematic critical scrutiny, John Weltman has convincingly demonstrated that of the six essential rules only the fourth rule can be logically derived from Kaplan's concept of "regulatory capacity" and the constitution he has attributed to

187. An "internal critique" accepts the theorist's objectives as given and identifies problems within the theoretical formulation arising from various logical or explanatory inadequacies; the "external critique," in contrast, appraises the theorist's objectives itself and identifies problems with respect to either the adequacy or the scope of those objectives.

188. Kaplan, *System and Process*, 52.

the balance-of-power system.[189] All the other rules are either arbitrary or merely inductive generalizations borrowed from history, where appropriate. Similar difficulties afflict the essential rules of all of Kaplan's other universes as well. It is, therefore, correct to conclude that while Kaplan escapes inductivism (if his models are interpreted in the best possible light), the logical systematization undertaken within his conjectural models is deficient and, for most part, unsustainable.

While the first problem relates to flaws in the deductive systematization of Kaplan's various theoretical models, the second problem—and this is still part of the internal critique—relates to the question of whether the system or the units function as the real efficient causes in his explanatory framework. This issue focuses on where the locus of causation rests in his models and it can be elaborated in the following way. It can be readily admitted that once the nature of a given international political universe is properly specified (even if aprioristically and by definition), it is possible to deduce what the essential rules required to maintain it in equilibrium would be. If the universe is defined, however, as subsystem-dominant, the tricky question of why any constituent state would be committed a priori to maintaining a given universe and, by extension, to going along with those particular universe-derived essential rules, demands explanation. Kaplan resolves this issue, in the first instance, by reifying the universe anthropomorphically, that is, treating what is essentially a hypothetical construct for purposes of explanation as a true natural entity, a system "invested with purpose, instincts and something akin to reason."[190] Thus, he argues that

> The needs of a system are set by the structure of the system. The objectives of a system are set by its needs in its environment as it understands that environment. The objectives of a system are the values for the system. The objectives which in fact would satisfy the needs of the system are valuable for that system.[191]

Why a particular state would follow certain essential rules is thus explained by the fact that the system indicates which objectives are "valuable" (that is, which objectives best satisfy the system's needs) and which must therefore be pursued if that state wishes to maintain the extant system in equilibrium. Each system, possessing an analytical primacy all its own, thus defines

189. John J. Weltman, "The Processes of a Systemicist," *Journal of Politics* 34 (May 1972): 592–611.

190. Andrew Scott, *The Functioning of the International System* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), vii.

191. Kaplan, *System and Process*, 149.

unique objectives deriving from its architectonic structure, and it presents these objectives as normative for the behavior of the units within it.[192]

In the first instance, therefore, Kaplan answers the question of why states would conform to the essential rules by asserting that these rules are necessary if the system is to be maintained in equilibrium. Despite the fact that the systems have needs, impute objectives and realize values, however, Kaplan recognizes that these anthropomorphic explanations cannot, in the final instance, ensure that the units will actually act in accordance with the essential rules required to maintain systemic equilibrium. If they do so, well and good. If they do not, however, he simply concludes that the prevailing system will be transformed into another universe of international politics and the sui generis rules pertinent to that universe will thereafter become the normative rules in operation. Since any one system may be transformed into some other system, depending on whether the actions of its units are radically "deviant" with respect to equilibrium values, the six universes of international politics are not so much discrete models as they are "six states of equilibrium of one ultrastable system." [193] With this conclusion, Kaplan admits, when all is said and done, that the prime movers in his reading of international politics are not "systems" at all, but the constituent "states" within them. It is states, therefore, which possess theoretical primacy in Kaplan's models, a fact that is often obscured by his pervasive emphasis on the constitution of various political systems and the essential rules deriving therefrom: states continue to remain the efficient causes of international political change and the systems that overarch them become merely conceptual facades which lack any operative power.[194] As a result, it turns out that there is nothing uniquely systemic about Kaplan's systemic approach to international politics.

This judgment points to the third problem with Kaplan's approach, namely, the peculiarity of his models when considered as a form of theoretical explanation. This issue forms the heart of the external critique which addresses the adequacy of a theorist's intentions and objectives. The discussion thus far has established that Kaplan's models are unable to explain

192. This feature of Kaplan's approach more than any other identifies the pervasive holism distinctive to the early system approach in that the behavior of the units is illumined by "(a) macroscopic laws which are *sui generis* and which apply to the social system as a whole, and (b) descriptions of the positions (or functions) of the [states] within the whole." Watkins, "Ideal Types and Historical Explanation," 150.

193. Kaplan, *System and Process*, 10–11.

194. It is for this reason that Kenneth Waltz criticizes Kaplan for providing a reductionist explanation which masquerades as a systemic theory. See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 53–54.

why or whether a given unit will behave in conformity to the essential rules he identifies. All he can assert is that if certain step-level disturbances occur, the prevailing universe will be transformed from one formal operating state (= system) into another. Given this fact, it becomes obvious that Kaplan's models function like a mechanistic flow chart: they identify what happens when some variables disturb other variables, but they are not theoretical explanations of the kind prized by science, where conjectures involving law-subsumed efficient causes are adduced as hypotheses explaining why various formal transformations occur at the level of appearance. Because Kaplan's models are not theoretical explanations of this kind, they may be described, in Max Black's sense, as merely "analogue" models which attempt to reproduce structure and relationships eidectically but without the causal explicatory capacity unique to genuine theoretical explanations.[195]

This lack of theoretic explanation, which Kaplan occasionally admitted, was only compounded by the fourth problem which is that his models never provided any evidentiary bases for identifying what, if anything, the entities he hypothesizes would do or actually did. This difficulty, once again part of the external critique, arises both from the character of his explanations and from the holist nature of the entities involved in his explanatory system. At its root, this problem originates primarily from the methodological holism peculiar to the theorists of Kaplan's generation and, in particular, to the methodological character of Kaplan's own explanations. As previous discussion has established, these "explanations" revolve around discerning the types of action necessary for given systems to maintain themselves. Systems as such, however, are unobservable entities, and unless they are mated to observable predicates, explanations based on them become little other than speculative guesses about a set of occult entities. Since Kaplan's explanations consisted of explicating the internal logic of an, at best, hypothetical entity, and did so with an air of precision but without providing observable predicates of any sort at the empirical level, genuine falsification was impossible—as was the acquisition of other significant knowledge pertaining to the genesis, operation and demise of the systems so postulated. Thus, one particularly perceptive critic concluded,

> systems theory ultimately assumes rather than demonstrates the existence of large social entities. Given such a belief—that the international

195. Max Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), 223. For an excellent survey of the various kinds of models possible/desirable in the context of international relations theory, see Duncan Snidal, "The Game *Theory* of International Politics," in *Cooperation Under Anarchy*, ed. Kenneth Oye (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 32–36.

> system is a whole that somehow cannot be fully described only as the sum of its components—interpretation of the variations of those components as complexes of activity interrelated in such a way as to produce or maintain some equilibrium-state makes sense. Without this assumption, however, such interpretations become inexplicable. Some influence immanent in the empirical, yet not subject to verification itself, explains the operations of the variables. Thus, systemic explanations become either metaphysical or meaningless: metaphysical insofar as they depend on the existence of nondemonstrable entities; meaningless insofar as they are cast in terms of disembodied purposes seen as immanent in patterns of concrete interaction. To identify certain activity by the statement that it forms part of a pattern leading to or maintaining a given state is not to explain it at all; it is merely to repeat the interpretation that such a state did in fact come into existence.[196]

Consequently, Kaplan's methodological holism entailed that the claims made for his all important construct, the system and its workings, remained merely assertions at the explanatory level; they could not be corroborated in any empirical way and as such the genesis and causal dynamics of the most important component in Kaplan's explanatory system could never be satisfactorily explained in the manner judged desirable by critical rationalist conceptions of science.

When the realist program as operationalized by Kaplan is evaluated in terms of its evolution into a scientific theory, it is important to recognize (as Kaplan's detractors often fail to do) that despite its limitations, it represents one of the first systematic attempts at objectivizing the traditional pragmatic understanding of international politics and presenting the same as a rationalist construction capable of further development. Kaplan's contribution to the rationalist reordering of political realism, however, had mixed effects, as the differences between his version of scientific realism and that of his traditional realist predecessors clearly suggest. To begin with, the positive-normative question of how political order is constructed from amidst the security competition between egoist individuals is ignored entirely in favor of understanding how certain hypothesized systems encode the essential rules for maintaining order among states. Consequently, the theoretical primacy conventionally accorded to individuals by traditional realism is substituted by a conceptual framework which accords analytical primacy to abstract entities called political "systems" and the logic of domination, which traditional realism unitedly affirmed as the central dynamic of

196. John J. Weltman, *Systems Theory in International Relations* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1973), 79.

all political life beginning with individuals, is defanged only to be absorbed as one of several possibilities in a large repertoire of feasible state actions. The price of scientific advancement, therefore, appears to have been paid both in terms of substantive retreat (the distinctive causal claims of traditional realism are now understated) and in terms of a shift in the units of analysis and the locus of causation (the theoretical primacy traditionally accorded to acting individuals is now accorded to states, with hypothetical political systems replacing states at the level of analytical primacy).

For these reasons, Kaplan's version of scientific realism does not meet the ideal standards enunciated by critical rationalism for good scientific theory. At the substantive level, it does not engage the fundamental question of how order is produced—even at the system and state levels which are its primary focus—except in a very formal and, ultimately, trivial sense. Furthermore, at the level of units of analysis and locus of causation, it sacrifices the microscopic entity, individuals, for holistic abstractions called systems and states, respectively. At the level of methodological form, however, it represents a decisive advance in that it replaces inductively derived and justified explanations of international political action with rationalist ideal types which are in principle capable of being deductively streamlined and explicitly formulated in causal terms. Consequently, despite the limitations of defective logic, the lack of theoretical explanation, and the pervasive reification of ungenerated holistic entities, Kaplan's work was fundamental to the development of scientific realism because his techniques prepared the base on which later conjectural elaborations could develop. One such pivotal effort to be examined below, that of Kenneth Waltz, succeeded in demonstrating the genesis of the international system and alluding to the logic of its operation, but this effort succeeded in part because Kaplan paved the way for it by articulating the key concepts of system and unit, even if only in an otherwise partial, incomplete and muddied way. The following section will examine how Waltz developed the scientific version of the realist program further by providing a causal explanation for the genesis of the international political system—an achievement that eluded Kaplan—and by contributing a structural logic that allows scientific realism to be developed even further in those explanatory areas that Waltz himself has left uncovered: the static explanation of state behavior under anarchy and the genesis of the state itself.

WALTZ: UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL POLITICS THROUGH STRUCTURE

KENNETH WALTZ MADE two distinguished contributions to the development of the realist program between the years 1959 and 1979. In 1959, Waltz's book *Man, the State, and War* carefully surveyed the extant theories of war and provided a taxonomy of those theories with respect to where they located the causes of war on the explanatory map. His findings, briefly summarized, were that most prevailing explanations for war could be classified into three categories depending on whether they located the hypothesized causes of war in human nature, the character of the state, or the nature of the international system. Causes of war deemed to emanate from human nature were typecast as first-image explanations;[197] if the causes of war were attributed to the character of the state, they were typecast as second-image explanations and, as he later argued, could be considered "reductionist theories" since the causes were "reduced" to the attributes of the units (that is, "states") populating the international system;[198] and, finally, if wars were attributed neither to human nature nor to state character but were treated as the product of a constraining state-system, then, such theories were typecast as third-image or, as he later described, as systemic theories.[199] It would be inadequate to evaluate such analysis as merely a taxonomy of the various hypothesized causes of conflict. Rather, what appeared formally as a taxonomy was in fact a detailed investigation of the various kinds of explanations and an assessment of their relative worth as scientific theories.

Understanding Waltz's conclusions in this regard is critical because they came to constitute the foundations on which his own later *Theory of International Politics* would be based and in order that the latter work may be comprehended, his arguments pertaining to the worth of the three images in *Man, the State and War* must be briefly surveyed. After carefully examining the most conspicuous first-image explanations, Waltz judged them to be of limited utility as theoretical explanations for the causes of war: "First-image optimists betray a naiveté in politics that vitiates their efforts to construct a new and better world. Their lack of success is directly related to a view of man that is simple and pleasing but wrong."[200] The contentions of the first-image optimists were directly refuted by the manifold examples of asocial human nature proposed by the first-image pessimists. Waltz noted, how-

197. Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 16–41.
198. Ibid., 80–123; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 18–19.
199. Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 159–86; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 79–81.
200. Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 39.

ever, that the pessimists had lesser success in translating their intuitions into operational theories. As he wrote,

> while human nature no doubt plays a role in bringing about war, it cannot by itself explain both war and peace, except by the simple statement that man's nature is such that sometimes he fights and sometimes he does not. And this statement leads inescapably to the attempt to explain why he fights sometimes and not others. If human nature is *the* cause of war and if, as in the systems of the first-image pessimists, human nature is fixed, then we can never hope for peace. If human nature is but one of the causes of war, then, even on the assumption that human nature is fixed, we can properly carry on a search for the conditions of peace.[201]

He concluded, therefore, that the real contribution made by the first-image pessimists was to "provide a valuable warning, all too frequently ignored in modern history, against expecting too much from the application of reason to social and political problems."[202] Further, and by the very nature of the argument, he suggested that all explanations rooted in human nature force a shift in focus to human institutions because only institutions can be manipulated—with a view either to restraining nature or assisting it—in a way that a permanent human nature cannot.

If first-image explanations were thus proved less than useful as explanatory tools, Waltz easily demonstrated that second-image explanations were equally deficient. Here, the key problem was that the outbreak of war, which appears to be a truly pervasive phenomenon in all recorded history, could not be consistently typecast as the product of any one particular type of state. Democratic states and monarchic states, republican states and autocratic states, capitalist states and socialist states, all appear at some time or another to have caused war and, therefore, the claim that the particular character of a state is what determines the outcome of war or peace appeared highly untenable. The only claim sustainable in this regard was the general but vague assertion that "bad states lead to war."[203] The problem with such a formulation was that it is either vacuous or wrong: vacuous insofar as any state which makes war is a "bad state" by definition, and wrong because, when the nature of the state is stipulated with more precision, there are almost always numerous falsifiers which repudiate the claim about particular state structures being significant as a cause of war. The assertion that the internal character of the capitalist state is what makes war,

201. Ibid., 29–30.
202. Ibid., 40.
203. Ibid., 122.

for example, is threatened by the empirical fact that several socialist states—on more than one occasion—have gone to war just as enthusiastically as many a capitalist state. A similar judgment can be adduced with respect to all the opposed pairs of regime types, like democracy-monarchy, republic-autocracy, etc., thereby justifying Waltz's conclusion that

> the international political environment has much to do with the ways in which states behave. The influence to be assigned to the internal structure of states in attempting to solve the war-peace equation cannot be determined until the significance of the international environment has been reconsidered.[204]

Because of the difficulties associated with the first- and second-image theories he surveyed, Waltz set out to explore the plausibility of third-image, or systemic, explanations, which are conveyed via the following description: "With many sovereign states, with no system of law enforceable among them, with each state judging its grievances and ambitions according to the dictates of its own reason or desire—conflict, sometimes leading to war, is bound to occur."[205] The germ of the systemic explanation, then, consists of the fact that the presence of many competing states gives rise to an anarchic system wherein the absence of automatic harmony results in the possibility of conflict and war. Such a logic does not imply that the specific acts of a given state are irrelevant to the explanation of conflict; rather, the presence of such acts, which often "are the immediate causes of war," only points to the existence of a "general [anarchic] structure that permits them to exist and wreak their disasters."[206] In order that this explanation be complete in a social-scientific sense, Waltz needed to demonstrate two things. First, how do such states come to be? Or, differently stated, how can one know that such states actually exist? Second, can these states be considered unified acting units?

To explore the first question, Waltz, briefly and in an impressionistic way, examines Rousseau's social contract theory with the aim of demonstrating "the proposition that irrationality is the cause of all the world's troubles...is...as true as it is irrelevant."[207] The virtue of Rousseau over Spinoza and Kant is manifested by the former's example of the "Stag Hunt" which is read by Waltz as demonstrating that "if conflict is the by-product of competition and attempts at cooperation in society, then it is

204. Ibid., 122–23.
205. Ibid., 159.
206. Ibid., 184–85.
207. Ibid., 170.

unnecessary to assume self-preservation as man's sole motivation; for conflict results from seeking any goal—even if in the seeking one attempts to act according to Kant's categorical imperative."[208] Waltz concludes, therefore, that human life is riddled with conflictual behavior and to demonstrate this fact the Spinozian axioms of self-preservation were redundant and unnecessary. That this conclusion may be overstated cannot be detailed here at length. Suffice it to say, the very fact that an individual abandons the cooperative project of trapping the stag to lunge unilaterally for a hare implicitly confirms that both the nature of the goals sought and the character of the individuals pursuing those goals become critical to the generation of conflict as a political phenomenon. In this case, the search for subsistence amidst the scarcity of resources and the egoistic character of the entities pursuing subsistence is what makes for individual self-regarding behavior over that of cooperation toward attaining common group objectives.[209] This issue need not be pursued any further because Waltz's conclusion about human behavior is clear: human behavior is conflictual, whatever its motivations and whatever the moral judgment assigned to its actions.

The critical question that now presents itself is how can states come to be constituted in the face of such persistently conflictual behavior? Here, Rousseau (and, by implication, Waltz, who by and large follows him) cannot provide a satisfactory answer. The standard Rousseauian solution that men create a state in order to realize mutual gains—through a dialectical process in which each step toward statehood is hesitantly, yet persistently, embarked upon in the face of chronic difficulties and near-disasters—cannot be sustained unless it can be demonstrated that individuals—who are rational egoists—will continually persist in mutual collaboration despite

208. Ibid., 171. For a good analysis of the two possible readings of Rousseau's parable of the "Stag Hunt," see Russell Hardin, *Collective Action* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 167–69.

209. The important point here is that some notion of genuine, self-regarding egoism *and* some notion of scarcity is fundamentally necessary if conflict is to be derived in the context of multiple individuals pursuing the Kantian categorical imperative. Without some such assumed egoism, it is difficult to produce the kind of conflict which makes the problem of order-production particularly interesting. Sobel's analysis of conflict arising from the "Farmer's Dilemma" demonstrates that conflict *can* arise in the presence of altruism, but generating such conflict requires such "arrogantly" altruistic individuals that the very concept of altruism stands emptied of all its conventional meaning. In other words, a society composed only of individuals like St. Francis of Assisi would not experience an "order" problem. See, J. Howard Sobel, "The Need for Coercion," in *Coercion: Nomos* 14 (Chicago: Aldine, Atherton, 1972), 148–77. Similarly, without some notion of scarcity, be it either that of material or intangible goods, it is difficult to generate conflict in any situation resembling the state-of-nature. For an analysis that systematically elaborates the role of egoism and the role of scarcity, see Tellis, "Resolving the Hobbesian Problem: The Limits of Liberal Theories of Order Production," chap. in *The Drive to Domination*, 161–98.

the losses incurred by some of them during a successive iteration of cooperative interactions. Such a logic fails to explain why those individuals who actually lose out in the present would continue to cooperate merely for the sake of potential gain in the future. If such losses were defined to include the loss of one's life, then, the Rousseauian logic appears even more strained and untenable than usual.

For these reasons, therefore, a contractarian calculus of the Rousseauian variety (or for that matter, any other) cannot be sustained as a logical demonstration of how states can be cooperatively formed out of the interactions between rational egoists.[210] Waltz, in fact, does not critically scrutinize the Rousseauian calculus in any detail. Instead, he assumes that the state can be constituted in the impressionistic manner described by the philosopher. Because this mechanism of state formation may not be sustainable in a rigorous theoretical sense, however, Waltz inserts a caveat that salvages the possibility of systemic explanations: the state is to be treated as analogous to individuals in a state of nature. In other words, if the formation of a state cannot be deductively demonstrated on the basis of interactive individual behaviors, its existence will be assumed a priori and its character treated as corresponding to that of egoist individuals: "By defining the state of nature as a condition in which acting units, whether men or states, coexist without an authority above them, the phrase can be applied to states in the modern world just as to men living outside a civil state."[211] In some sense, then, the central theoretical question of how a state is constituted—so critical to traditional realists such as Machiavelli—is deemed of lesser importance when compared to the question of ascertaining its behavior once its existence has been arbitrarily postulated.

Having thus summarily settled the question of how states come into existence, the second question now presents itself: can a state, whose hypothesized existence is arbitrarily postulated, be treated as a unified rational actor? Again, using Rousseau's argument, Waltz answers in the affirmative. As long as the state "can with some appropriateness take the adjective 'organismic'," and as long as "some power in the state has so established itself that its decisions are accepted as the decisions of the state,"[212] the state can be treated as a unified actor with respect to other similar entities. Here too the reasons adduced for treating the state as an unified actor are not deduced in any theoretical sense. Instead, the formal conditions are

210. This issue is analyzed in great detail in Tellis, "Resolving the Hobbesian Problem," 198–252.

211. Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 173.

212. Ibid., 178.

merely stated: the entity should be conceivable in some "organismic" sense, that is, it should inter alia exhibit "patriotism" and embody the "general will."[213] Further, there should be some power and decisional authority, even if the exact basis for such an institution has not been clearly discerned or logically generated. Because these formal conditions are merely described and not deduced, the notion of the state-as-unified-actor is shored up by several inductive observations such as the nationalism generated by states, the lack of personal resentment among combatants, and finally, the organic solidarity experienced by individuals within states, together with its associated manifestations like economic interdependence, psychological loyalty, and group patriotism. Thus, by a combination of statements about the formal conditions for statehood and inductive observations about state behavior, Waltz justifies the contention that states can in fact be treated as unified actors even if doing so otherwise "does violence to one's common sense to speak of the state, which is after all an abstraction and consequently inanimate, as acting."[214]

The status of the general argument in *Man, the State and War* can therefore be summarized in the following way. Faced with the limitations of various first- and second-image theories (primarily those of Spinoza and Kant), Waltz lays the foundations for suggesting that third-image or systemic theories provide maximum explanatory potential as far as international politics is concerned. The system, with the incentives it offers states for conflict, becomes the crucial variable explaining international political outcomes. This system is constituted by the presence and interactions of egoist states whose genesis and constitution are assumed even if they are not, strictly speaking, theoretically deduced. With an eye to retaining plausibility, however, the egoistic character of the state and its resultant behavior is impressionistically corroborated by various inductive descriptions. Once the state as a unified, rational and egoistic actor has thus been postulated, the genesis and logic of the state system can be—from then on—logically deduced. Waltz's 1979 work, *Theory of International Politics*, set out to elaborate precisely such a deduction.

The *Theory of International Politics* begins with the explicit claim that it will, inter alia, "construct a *theory* of international politics that remedies the defects of present [systemic] theories"[215] (emphasis added). After a lengthy introductory discussion of "reductionist theories" (understood to mean second-image explanations, among which bureaucratic politics and physical

213. Ibid., 175.
214. Ibid., 175–76.
215. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1.

and chemical biology are cited as prominent examples), Waltz critically examines the Lenin-Hobson theory of imperialism as an example of reductionist theorizing. This discussion is concluded by noting that

> internationally, different states have produced similar as well as different outcomes, and similar states have produced different as well as similar outcomes. The same causes sometimes lead to different effects, and the same effects sometimes follow from different causes.[216]

Therefore, reiterating a judgment made about second-image explanations in his 1959 work, he concludes that "we are led to suspect that reductionist explanations of international politics are insufficient and that analytic approaches must give way to systemic ones."[217] Taking pains both to admit that "a priori, one cannot say whether reduction will suffice"[218] and to caution that "the failure of some reductionist approaches does not, however, prove that other reductionist approaches would not succeed,"[219] Waltz concludes with the hope "that the next try would lead to a viable reductionist theory"[220] even though he is somewhat pessimistic about this possibility, given his analysis of the flaws within the theories offered by Richard Rosecrance, Stanley Hoffman and Kaplan.

The objective of setting forth a consistent systemic explanation then motivates Waltz to define the international system as composed of "structure" and "interacting units." He stipulates that "any approach or theory, if it is rightly termed 'systemic', must show how the systems level, or structure, is distinct from the level of interacting units."[221] This stipulation addresses two different, yet related, questions: First, how is the international political system generated? Second, what are its distinguishing structural features?

Addressing the first question, Waltz argues that the international political system is generated by the interactions of its units, the states, just as markets are generated by the activity of its units, the firms, in neoclassical economics. The generation of the international system is, therefore, both spontaneous and an inadvertent by-product of the security-seeking character of its constituent units. The distinctness of this system from its units, then, is merely epistemological. In terms of generation, the system is ontologically caused and maintained by the continued subsistence of its units,

216. Ibid., 37.
217. Ibid.
218. Ibid., 19.
219. Ibid., 37.
220. Ibid.
221. Ibid., 40.

just as markets are ontologically generated and maintained by the number and character of its constituent firms. Once generated, of course, the system proceeds to constrain the behaviors of the units in various ways. Thus, it acquires, in some metaphorical sense, a life of its own, that is, a life apart from and independent of any given unit, but not a life independent of all the units taken together. The systemic approach to international politics is, therefore, a metaphor which describes the constraints imposed by the presence of other units on the behavior of any one unit. It is, in this sense, identical to the structural constraints referred to in Popper's conception of situational logic, where a rational actor is constrained by a given structure or situation and forced to act in a manner appropriate to that situation, if his utility is to be maximized relative to the costs and benefits imposed by that structure or situation.

If the international political system is thus spontaneously generated as an inadvertent byproduct of the interactions of security-seeking states, what are the distinguishing features of its constitutional structure? Addressing this second question, Waltz stipulates that the "definitions of structure must omit the attributes and the relations of units" since "only by doing so, can one distinguish changes of structure from changes that take place within it."[222] Structure, in this analysis, represents nothing other than "the arrangement, or the ordering, of the parts of a system"[223] and Waltz elaborates this definition of structure by means of three categories derived from empirical distinctions between domestic and international politics: the ordering principles, the specification of functions, and the distribution of capabilities. First, the ordering principles: domestic politics is asserted to be centralized, hierarchically ordered, and functions on the basis of command; international politics is decentralized, anarchically ordered, and the units (= states) stand in relations of coordination. Second, the specification of functions: domestic politics is asserted to result in a differentiation of units, as hierarchic relations of superordination and subordination result in functional specialization by the different units; international politics, on the other hand, results in the units (= states) remaining functionally similar, because the lack of hierarchization results in all units attempting to perform the same tasks which, loosely understood, are connected with ensuring survival. Third, the distribution of capabilities: because the extent and distribution of various capabilities are coordinated by the variety of functions that each unit has to perform in the hierarchic system of domestic politics,

222. Ibid.
223. Ibid., 81.

the distribution of capabilities serves to identify the character of the system; in international politics, the distribution of capabilities serves the same function except that here the functional similarity of states results in the character of the system being defined not on the basis of the relative weight of differentiated parts but on the relative weight of functionally similar units. Thus, the character of an international political system is defined by the number of great powers subsisting within it.[224]

Once the system has thus been generated and its structure defined, Waltz's general argument thereafter takes the following form: when states are assumed to exist; when they are assumed to be the principal actors in the system; and, when they are assumed to be seeking to survive in the absence of centralized rule, the resultant "anarchic" universe necessarily becomes a world of self-help where no one can be relied upon to ensure the safety of another. As a result, protection becomes simply a function of matching threatening capabilities by countervailing capabilities which are, in turn, garnered either through a constant transformation of internal resources into military outputs or via a transient external collaboration ("balancing") among some states against some others.

The critical task now lying before such a systemic theory of international politics is to explain what the behavior of its constituent units will be or, in other words, to provide static—single-exit, if possible—models that demonstrate how the structure compels the units into undertaking certain actions, actions which had previously been termed "characteristic behaviors." All neoclassical theories of the market provide at least static models depicting characteristic unit behavior and it is, therefore, surprising that Waltz's systemic theory, which is patterned heavily—at least rhetorically—on the logic of markets in neoclassical economics, suddenly concludes not with the claim that it will explain the characteristic behavior of some specified unit under carefully defined boundary conditions, but only that it will explain "why the range of expected outcomes falls within certain limits"; "why patterns recur"; and "why events repeat themselves."[225] This objective falls short of what may be expected of a structural theory of international politics, particularly one fashioned after the neoclassical theory of the market, because the superiority of structural approaches as theoretical explanatory systems derives from their ability to provide exit-models demonstrating how certain behaviors are logically entailed as a result of entities pursuing some a priori defined preferences. Once such exit-models are proffered, it

224. Ibid., 89–101.
225. Ibid., 69.

is possible to predict what the characteristic behaviors of any entity would be when confronted by the specific situations abstracted in the models and, from then on, to derive generalizations about how such behaviors would be reproduced when a larger number of similar situations are iterated.

Waltz does not provide any exit-models of this kind. As a result, he cannot present structure-constrained explanations of how any given state will behave under anarchy. Nor can he explain which specific behavior is to be treated as significant in the context of the vast range of conduct usually visible in international politics. Consequently, his systemic theory does not explain in any sustained sense what the anarchic constraints defining international politics imply for state behavior—except for the minimal inference that anarchy places a premium on self-help and accordingly concentrates attention on maintaining one's relative power. This minimal inference is appropriate to begin with, but any structural theory of international politics—qua theory—must explain thereafter exactly what this inference entails at the behavioral level for any particular state. Unfortunately for Waltz, this kind of explanation cannot be provided in the absence of some additional information about a state's relative size, its capabilities, and its location vis-à-vis a certain hypothesized number of other similar entities in the system. It is precisely here that deductive systematization in the form of exit-models would have been most useful insofar as they would have allowed Waltz to incorporate different alternative values about size, capabilities, location and number in order logically to infer one or more characteristic state behaviors which could then be offered as theoretical conclusions about unit action under some specified constraint. Without such models, Waltz cannot describe what any hypothesized state would do under anarchy and this crucial lacuna is justified by the misleading claim that to explain a given unit's characteristic behavior "we need not only a theory of the market, so to speak, but also a theory about the firms that compose it."[226]

Such a claim, while formally true, is still misleading because the neoclassical theory of the market on which Waltz models his systemic theory of international politics more than adequately explains what any individual firm's behavior would be under a defined market structure with only minimal information about the shape and position of the cost curves facing any particular firm. Take, for example, the question of a firm's behavior under perfect competition. If perfect competition is defined by the substitutability of products tending to infinity, the interdependence of sellers tending to zero, and the ease of entry tending to zero, with all firms assumed to be

226. Ibid., 122.

profit maximizers, it is easy to demonstrate what the characteristic behavior of any given firm both in the short run and in the long run will be. In the short run, each existing firm will attempt to earn supernormal profits by producing the largest possible output that can be cleared at the prevailing market price. The level of output and the location of the cost curves associated with it will vary depending on the efficiency of the firm in question. If a firm is efficient, that is, if at the given level of output its short-run marginal cost curve is higher than its short-run average total cost curve, the firm will earn supernormal profits (assuming, of course, that the relevant demand for its products actually exist). Thus, the short-run equilibrium of an efficient firm under perfect competition involves earning supernormal profits by producing the maximum output at the given market clearing price. If such supernormal profits continue to accrue to a firm while at the prevailing short-run industry equilibrium, new firms will enter the market while successful existing firms will expand their productive capacity. Such entry and readjustment will continue over the long term until all firms earn only normal profits (that is, where their long-run marginal and average cost curves intersect at their minimum point), at which point there will be no entry or exit from the industry.

The neoclassical theory of the market is thus able to explain, via a simple static single-exit model of a perfectly competitive market, not only how any given firm may be expected to behave but also what the response of other firms (that is, the system at large) to that behavior would be. Claiming, as Waltz does, that international politics is more akin to oligopolistic competition than to perfect competition[227] does not in any way obviate the need for (at least) static exit models which illuminate the characteristic behaviors of the units in a given situation. If international politics is analogous to oligopoly, it simply implies that multiple-exit rather than single-exit outcomes will be the norm. In such circumstances, making determinate predictions about unique—equilibrium—outcomes may be difficult. It is still nevertheless possible to demonstrate through situational logic how given units are constrained to behave in particular ways, even if it is not possible to predict accurately the final systemic equilibrium arising from these characteristic behaviors. By providing exit models which simulate unit behaviors under a wide range of conditions, neoclassical economic theory can be said to possess a theoretical understanding of how various alternative market systems operate and, should such behaviors recur over time and space, the theory is capable of explaining exactly how such recurrences are to be understood. In

227. Ibid., 134.

other words, the explanation of certain recurrent behaviors is possible only because explanatory exit models are adduced in the first place.

Since Waltz fails to produce similar models relating to international politics—models which incorporate minimal information about a state's preferences, relative size, and spatial location relative to a number of other units—his systemic approach is incapable of explaining how any given state behaves under anarchy. Incorporating such minimal information would serve as the functional equivalent of the "theory of the firm" in neoclassical economics. Pace Waltz, however, no full-fledged theory of the unit is required for purposes of either making useful predictions about unit behavior or systematically identifying the constraints compelling certain unit responses. All that is required is some ascribed information relating to variables such as preference, size, location and numbers. With such data, a variety of exit models producing testable conclusions about unit behavior can be generated but Waltz does not make any such effort in the *Theory of International Politics* because, among other things, he mistakenly concluded that producing such exit models requires a full-fledged theory of the unit. As a result, he lost the opportunity to emulate the methodology of neoclassical economics in its most fecund sense: by producing exit models that explain or predict unique unit (that is, state) behaviors under certain specified constraints (that is, anarchy).

While the failure to explain constrained unit behavior is attributable—in the first instance—to a lack of exit models, the failure to develop exit models can only be attributed—in the final instance—to an ambiguous, even defective, conceptualization of anarchy itself.[228] In *Man, the State and War*, anarchy is described fundamentally as a permissive cause: it forces states to do nothing, besides relying on self-help and being attentive to relative power.[229] As a result, all forms of state behavior are seen as fundamentally compatible with its constraints. A state can be status quo or it can be revisionist; it can choose peace or it can embark on war. All these pos-

228. The other substantive defect in the concept of anarchy—which will not be discussed here at all—is related to Waltz's conception of anarchy as the absence of government. This focus on the absence of superordinate authority merely describes a formal condition and loses sight of the underlying issue which should be of principal concern to a realist: the symmetry or asymmetry in the distribution of relative power. The notion of anarchy as a function of distributed capability and how it can be logically generated from a prior theory of state formation is explicated at some length in Tellis, "Deriving the Structures of International Politics," chap. in *The Drive to Domination*, 316–39.

229. As Waltz succinctly described the permissive quality of anarchy, "with many sovereign states, with no system of law enforceable among them, with each state judging its grievances and ambitions according to the dictates of its own reason or desire—conflict, sometimes leading to war, is bound to occur." See, *Man, the State and War*, 159.

sibilities are congruent since anarchy, being little other than a "general structure that permits [states] to exist and wreak their disasters,"[230] as such impels the units to do nothing in particular. States can therefore embark on various courses of action—all of their own choosing. This permissive conception of anarchy is somewhat modified in the *Theory of International Politics*, where certain causative powers are attributed to the system at large. In a later essay, Waltz clarifies this causative dimension further by suggesting that anarchy in international politics may in fact "shape and shove" [231] a variety of outcomes. Thus, unlike in *Man, the State and War*, where anarchy served only as the environment wherein states could wreak their disasters at will, in the *Theory of International Politics* and thereafter, anarchy is conceptualized as being able to penalize certain state behaviors ex post, even if it never quite compels any unique kind of state behaviors ex ante—at least none that have been identified as such by Waltz.

Thanks to such an inchoate representation of anarchy, Waltz succeeds in denuding his systemic approach of what is most distinctive to every structural explanation: the emphasis on structure as the fully efficient cause of all unit actions. Waltz's causal logic, in contrast, is diffuse and dualistic: the causative powers of anarchy are never self-sufficient and, for that reason, conjoint, if not predominant, emphasis is placed on the autonomous actions of the units, actions which are claimed to be sometimes capable of even overwhelming the embedded constraints of the structure.[232] The dualism characterizing this logic is most abundantly visible in Waltz's analysis of the origins of war, where in sharp—in fact, surprising—contrast to what may be expected of structural realism, both system and states are seen to share coresponsibility for the generation of war.[233] Such coresponsibility stems, at first, from an inability to distinguish between the formal and efficient causes of a given social outcome but, in the final analysis, it derives principally from Waltz's failure to treat anarchy exclusively as the compre-

230. Ibid., 184–85.

231. Kenneth Waltz, "Reflections on *Theory of International Politics*: A Response to My Critics," in *Neorealism and its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 343.

232. Ibid., 343–44. With such theorizing, Waltz's explanatory system in fact comes dangerously close to becoming a reductionist explanation of precisely the kind he decried when examining the "systemic" theories offered by the previous generation of scholars like Morton Kaplan. The issue of Waltz's dalliance with reductionism is discussed with great clarity (despite a lack of detailed discussion about what structural analysis entails) in Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 104–18.

233. Kenneth Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (spring 1988): 615–28. The limitations of such a dualist theory have been briefly explored in Tellis, "Conclusion," chap. in *The Drive to Domination*, 412–14.

hensive efficient cause which accounts for all phenomenic outcomes derived by his explanatory system. This, at any rate, is what a genuine structural theory ought to do.

What is unique about situationally determinist explanatory systems is, therefore, not captured by the logical character of Waltz's explanations where, instead of the constraining situation or structure providing the motive forces which fully account for all international political outcomes, both the constraints of the international system and the actions of the constituent states continually share the status of prime mover in some as yet undefined proportion. It is difficult to label such an explanatory system "structuralist" in the strict sense of the term, because the efficient causes do not run unidirectionally from the structure, or the situation, to the units. Rather, what masquerades as structuralism is actually a form of interactionism since "the [efficient] causes run not in one direction...but rather in two directions."[234] As a result, "causes at the level of the units [continually] interact with those at the level of the structure"[235] to produce the outcomes generally recognized as the warp and woof of international politics. This failure to accord complete theoretical primacy to the system or the structure at large—as would be expected of any genuine structural theory of international politics—then, explains why it becomes so difficult for Waltz to provide exit models of state behavior: without a conception of anarchy as an autonomous efficient cause, it is impossible to deduce how the constraining structure can compel a given state to do anything in particular and this, in turn, only results in the inability to provide those deductive predictions about unit behavior which are fundamentally required by a *theory* of international politics.

Consequently, it is not surprising that Waltz cannot—and does not—explain what the characteristic behavior of any unit will be in the face of some generated structural constraint. Instead, all he can do—and does—is to rest content with asserting—on the basis of some inductively garnered evidence from history—that "balances of power recurrently form, and that states tend to emulate the successful policies of others."[236] These two assertions, which constitute the principal "predictions" of his theory, however, cannot be shown to derive by logical necessity. They are instead merely selected from amidst the vast empirical record of modern European politics because they appear to cohere best with his conceptual framework.

234. Kenneth N. Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory," *Journal of International Affairs* 44 (1990): 34.

235. Ibid.

236. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 124.

Lacking a formal, deductively systematized, chain of causal logic, he is incapable of demonstrating whether the balances of power he sees recurring are actually significant phenomena in international politics or even whether "states will engage in balancing behavior"[237] at all.

This is borne out by the fact that when exit models addressing these issues have been adduced by others, characteristic behaviors quite different from Waltz's conclusions are seen to emerge. From R. Harrison Wagner's work, for example, it can be demonstrated that in any generic international system populated by egoist states, balancing dynamics become evident only in one single case: when the aspiring hegemon is perceived to be on the verge of acquiring over half the coercive capabilities residing in the system.[238] Consequently, not only is generalized balancing in the Waltzian sense not the customary behavior in international politics but, more importantly, it also appears to occur only when a certain transparency of relative capabilities is assumed.[239] If, in some situations, states are incapable of assessing the relative power of a rising state, the propensity to generate balances against the latter may be entirely dormant—and may never manifest itself until it is well and truly late. Exit models, such as that provided by Wagner and others, then, suggest possible causal explanations of how system-wide or subsystem-wide empires—which represent perfect counterexamples to the expectation of either efficacious or pervasive balancing—have repeatedly arisen as the dominant form of international political organization for vast periods of time in human history. Elsewhere, it has also been demonstrated that if there is any pervasively characteristic behavior of states under anarchy, it is not in the first instance the propensity to balance as it is the propensity to embark on a drive to domination: such a drive is seen manifested both in those situations when states are relatively equal in capability and in those situations when asymmetries in relative capability exist system wide.[240] This finding, echoing the teachings of the traditional realists, further suggests that even those behaviors which appear prima facie

237. Ibid., 128.

238. R. Harrison Wagner, "The Theory of Games and the Balance of Power," *World Politics* 37, no. 4 (July 1986): 546–76.

239. For an important argument that addresses the issue of transparency of power and the ability of states to balance effectively, see Craig Koemer, "Free Riding and Deterrence Failure: The False Linkage," forthcoming in *International Studies Quarterly*.

240. This argument is advanced via multiple exit-models in Tellis, "The Quest for Security in International Politics: Explaining Security in a Universe of Stable States," chap. in *The Drive to Domination*, 340–86. It corroborates Robert Gilpin's insight that security competition "stimulates, and may compel, a state to increase its power, at the least, it necessitates that the prudent state prevent relative increases in the power of competitor states." See, Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 87–88.

as "balancing" are only transient behaviors which are ultimately rooted in an imperative to dominate the political environment as a means of achieving permanent security.[241]

The failure to account for the drive to domination as the characteristic behavior of states engendered by an anarchic system, then, derives from Waltz's inability to exploit the implications inherent in those boundary conditions which all realists have traditionally accepted as characterizing international politics. Although this failure remains, in the final analysis, as much substantive as it is methodological, it represents a classic instance where the substantive deficiency derives primarily from an inadequate methodology. Because Waltz's argument is not truly structuralist in character and lacks exit models which capture situational constraint, he cannot provide an extended understanding of what is truly characteristic unit behavior under anarchy. In a methodological sense, then, his otherwise brilliant conjecture about how the international political system is generated lies bereft of the structural logic required to make it both an internally complete formulation as well as a more truthful account of international politics. As it stands, it can account for how the system comes to be (albeit at the cost of arbitrarily postulating the existence of its constituents), but it fails to account for how the system, once brought into existence, constrains the behavior of individual states in the direction of attempting domination and, consequently, it latches on to partial, inductive, generalizations—focused on balancing—which lack both precision and verisimilitude.

The inability to explain the behavior of individual states through single-exit models (which actually represents an incomplete use of structural logic), is also responsible for the peculiar character of Waltz's second prediction: the notion that states tend to emulate the successful behaviors of others. This prediction is peculiar because it confuses what is, at best, an appearance with an efficient cause. If states tend to emulate the successful behavior of other states in some recurrent way, a structural explanation must attribute such recurrent behavior to the constancy of the constraining structure and, therefore, any pervasively similar state behavior is actually greater evidence of the permanent anarchic constraint facing presumably rational states than it is evidence of any hypothesized "learning." This does not imply that real learning cannot take place in international politics; it simply implies that one cannot derive it from a structural theory of the kind generated by Waltz without a more careful specification of the kind of in-

241. Tellis, "The Quest for Security in International Politics," chap. in *The Drive to Domination*, 372–86.

formation available system wide and without some stipulation about whether such information actually conditions the goals of states, or simply the means used to pursue them, or both. All that can be derived from Waltz's theory as it stands is that rational egoist states, when faced with similar anarchic constraints over time, will behave similarly because what is rational for one actor in a given situation is also rational for another actor in a similar situation, given the uniformity of actor preferences. It is this characteristic of structural or situational logic which makes class predictions possible in the face of indeterminate individual behaviors and, given Waltz's ostensible acceptance of structuralism, his conflation of superficial appearances with underlying causes stems once again from an incomplete deductive systematization of his initial conjecture or an inadequate comprehension of the magnitude of his own achievement.

The internal critique of the Waltzian formulation can therefore be summarized simply in the following way. The international system generated by Waltz lacks autonomous and efficient causal powers, and the theoretical formulation offered by him lacks logical, deductive, systematization. This failure to treat the constraining structure as a sufficient cause combined with the lack of exit models, then, results in an inability to deduce the range of characteristic unit behaviors and to show that these behaviors entail by sheer logical necessity, rather than being produced by mere chance, accident or contingency. The fundamental internal weakness of Waltz's systemic approach, accordingly, lies in his failure to explain how anarchy in international politics forces states to behave in certain determinate ways which can be explicated simply and parsimoniously.

This internal deficiency, however, constitutes only one aspect of the handicaps afflicting Waltz's formulation of the scientific realist program. Its external problems are equally important from the viewpoint of a rational reconstruction and these relate principally to the theoretical completeness of his explanatory effort. Since Waltz's system is generated by smaller, invisible, security-seeking units, called states, the external problem with his system consists of explaining why these units must be treated as genuine theoretic entities and not merely as occult objects introduced ad hoc with the intention of "saving the appearances" of a hypothesized international political system. In other words, how is it possible to demonstrate that rational egoistic states actually are and come to be? Such a demonstration is possible only through a reductionist approach, where an invisible macroscopic entity like the state is first decomposed into its visible constituents, individuals, and then re-composed logically to demonstrate how it is little other than an abstract entity composed of real security-seeking individuals

in certain arrangements. Waltz, with his suspicions of reductionist approaches, has no such way of demonstrating the existence of states deductively; hence, all he can do is to assert their existence arbitrarily—thereby, reifying these invisible wholes and endowing them with certain unsubstantiated properties—which he does.

In the first instance, this approach could be exonerated if "unfinished or half-way explanations of large-scale phenomena"[242] are all that can be expected of a scientific theory of international politics. As J. W. N. Watkins described, half-way explanations are those explanations where the behavior of some large wholes is explained in terms of the behavior of other smaller wholes. The pressure inside a gas container, for example, can be explained in terms of the volume and temperature of the gas just as international political systems can be explained in terms of the properties and capabilities of states. Satisfactory as these unfinished explanations may be at first sight, however, Watkins warns that "we shall not have arrived at rock-bottom explanations of such large-scale phenomena until we have deduced their behavior from statements about the properties and relations of particles."[243] Simply stated, therefore, half-way explanations are theoretically incomplete explanations and, in the social sciences, such completeness can only derive from the explicit incorporation of acting individuals into a larger, generated system that accounts for social outcomes as unintended consequences of individual acts.

While it is unreasonable to expect any one theorist to provide a theoretically complete explanation (since such completeness is often a function both of the state of the discipline and of the level of knowledge attained), it is reasonable to expect that reductionist approaches to completeness would be welcomed whenever possible. Waltz's attitude toward this question is ambiguous. While in the *Theory of International Politics* he appears open to reductionist solutions, this openness to reductionism is questionable insofar as it appears to be synonymous with second-image explanations and not first-image theories of the kind sought by critical rationalism. In *Man, the State and War* (where his most elaborate discussions of reductionist approaches occur), he deliberately eschews the possibility of creating an international relations theory derived from the "particles" of the social system, namely, individuals. Thus, in his critique of first-image approaches, he defends the methodology of treating states as "givens" on the Durkheimian

242. J. W. N. Watkins, "Historical Explanation in the Social Sciences," in *Modes of Individualism and Collectivism*, ed. John O'Neill (London: Heinemann, 1973), 167.
243. Ibid.

contention that sociology is not reducible to psychology.[244] Accepting Durkheim's claim that states or societies, which are large-scale sociological phenomena, do not have to be explained by reduction to smaller entities, such as individuals, on the grounds that such reductionism involves "psychologism," he reiterates Durkheim's celebrated conclusion that "the psychological factor is too general to determine the course of social phenomena."[245] Ergo, the emergence of a given social form like the state cannot be explained by reductionist methods which are deemed to be exclusively psychological.

Such argumentation, which is distinctive to the French positivists, can, on a little reflection, be shown to be false. This is because explaining the emergence of macroscopic entities such as the state, in terms of reductionist strategies focused on the individual, does not necessarily entail psychologism. If individual behavior is conceptualized in terms of revealed preference orderings within a framework of given constraints, the psychologism of mental events is dispensed with altogether. Political science can therefore explain—just like economics does—how rational individuals, in the process of maximizing certain values, not only exhibit specific visible behaviors but also create certain social institutions as unintended consequences of their maximizing behavior which, after being created, proceed to constrain them inescapably. Through this methodology of "rational choice," the psychologism seen arising from a concern with mental states disappears entirely and it now becomes possible to demonstrate, as George Homans, using Alexander's and Simpson's words, phrased it, "how the kinds of microscopic variables usually ignored by sociologists can explain the kinds of social institutions usually ignored by psychologists."[246]

A rational choice methodology of this sort is particularly appropriate because what is important when explaining the character of large entities ("wholes"), whether they be "states" or "state-systems," is not so much the fact of emergence as how the emergence is to be explained. In the Waltzian system this issue is crucial because while on one hand he has elegantly demonstrated how the international system comes to be generated as the product of the unintended interactions of states possessing a particular character and pursuing certain preferences, he leaves underived, on the other hand, the very generative processes which give birth to states with these specific qualities. In some sense, then, this shortcoming parallels the

244. Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 30–31.

245. Ibid., 28.

246. George Homans, "Bringing Men Back In," in *The Philosophy of Social Explanation*, ed. Alan Ryan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 59.

limitation earlier described in Kaplan's approach. Kaplan had arbitrarily postulated a system and thereafter sought to derive explanations of unit behavior from it. Thus, the system which was supposed to make states behave in a specific way itself went unexplained and underived. Waltz remedies this shortcoming, but only partly: he does not arbitrarily impose a system-structure, but instead generates it on the basis of a certain preference attributed to the units and as a result of the interactions between them. Since it is the preferences of these units and their pursuant interactions that give rise to a structure which then constrains them to behave in specific, predictable ways, how these units come to be and how they acquire particular structural forms which embody these imputed preferences become questions of critical explanatory importance.

Yet, it is precisely these questions which remain unanswered in the Waltzian system and the units are endowed with existence and structure and are attributed specific preferences all of which irrupt unexplained and underived. As a result, a larger invisible entity, the state-system, is explained by a smaller invisible entity, the state, but no adequate reason is proffered as to why the existence of either of these entities must be accepted as significant for explanatory purposes in the first place. Thus, Waltz appears to lean on two opposing intellectual traditions in support of his theoretical framework. The British positivist insistence on reduction is utilized to explain how the emergence of the system (= the state-system) comes about as a function of the preferences and the interaction of the units (= states). When the logic of the emergence of these units has to be explained, however, the French positivist insistence on their irreducibility to their constituent atoms (= individuals) becomes a methodological rule on the grounds that such analysis would degenerate into psychologism. Waltz, therefore, fails to explain precisely that which is most necessary for his theoretical system to be complete: the emergence of the egoistic state.

What is equally perplexing about Waltz's approach is his continual insistence that the "reduced holism" of his "systemic" theory parallels the method employed in modern economics. The truth of this claim rests on his argument that markets are the true systems in economic theory and firms the true units. Therefore, just as interacting firms inadvertently create markets which then proceed to constrain them, interacting states similarly produce anarchic state systems which then proceed to constrain them in like fashion. On such grounds, Waltz repeatedly claims that his method mimics the method of modern economics. That this claim is partial and only superficially true is appreciated when the true nature of the economic method is grasped. As one classic statement described it:

> In macro- no less than in micro-economics pure theory rests on propositions about individual action. To generalize, it needs to take the individual agent as typical or representative of others. Generality is achieved by conceiving the individual as a rational economic man and asserting that mankind at large is as rational as he is. For instance the analysis of investment, savings and liquidity preference which occupies most of Keynes' *General Theory* takes just this form. Before low wages can be explained through the self-interest of capitalists as a group in keeping them low, it must be shown that each capitalist is acting rationally and in a way which, when aggregated, produces this effect. Before trade unions or shareholders can be treated as agencies, they are analyzed as coalitions of individuals each with an interest in subscribing to rules which bind them together and in acting jointly. Throughout pure theory macromovements are thus explained as the collective work of rational individuals and the pedagogic reasons why the pure economist starts with micro-economics also reflects his deepest ontological commitments.[247]

This statement clearly identifies how the Waltzian approach mimics the method of economics only incompletely. In failing explicitly to treat states as entities constituted by rationally egoist individuals (in just the fashion that economists today treat firms as entities constituted of individual profit-maximizers) Waltz draws an incorrect analogy between his systemic method and the method of modern economics. In fact, for all his criticisms of the reductionist theories that went before him, it is possible to suggest that his own approach is at least partly reductionist in the true sense that the system is constituted as a result of the interactions of smaller parts. The problem, however, is that it is insufficiently reductionist; as a result, the system appears to be constituted by a set of reified molecules. Built as it is on the assumed existence of states, the Waltzian explanatory system, fails to explicate that states (like firms) are molecular arrangements, "wholes," which have to be constituted by theoretical deduction from even tinier atomic elements, like individuals. A genuine deductive theory cannot take the existence of such wholes for granted for the simple reason that their existence cannot be definitively established or falsified by observation—and scientific realism itself can no longer uncritically accept the existence of states by assumption because the significance of these units for explanatory purposes is now contested by a variety of competing intellectual traditions. Therefore, no matter how much Waltz focuses on the effects of markets over

247. Frank Hahn and Martin Hollis, "Introduction" in *Philosophy and Economic Theory*, ed. Frank Hahn and Martin Hollis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 3.

firms as a justification for his own approach of system over states, he still does not engage the fundamental distinctiveness of the modern economic method which postulates the existence of a certain rational individual homo economicus and deduces every macroscopic institution from then on.

Despite these shortcomings, the Waltzian approach—when viewed within the evolution of the realist research program in terms of the criteria advanced by the critical rationalist methodology of science—can be accepted as the single most successful, even if incomplete, general summation of the project begun with Thucydides.

At the substantive level, its success, for most part, derives from the fact that it represents the first effort at incorporating some form of structuralism in order to explicate the system and pattern of international politics. The use of structuralism as a methodology, however, is imperfectly operationalized, but that defect notwithstanding, it does allow the theory to be appropriately reconstituted with the aim of providing genuine situationally determinist models of characteristic unit behavior, even though these have not been provided by Waltz himself. This shortcoming must not be allowed to overshadow the character of Waltz's achievement: he was the first theorist who provided a generative account of how the international system comes into existence and, therefore, advancing the rationalist tradition of explicating politics begun by Kaplan, he moved it beyond the stage of producing merely analog models to reach the then unexplored periphery of providing true causal explanations in international politics. The price of such advances, however, was paid in terms of moving the realist program even further away from the concerns of the traditional realists. The traditional realists explained the politics of security seeking as a continual striving for domination which arises—proximately or ultimately—from individual behavior grounded in an invariantly evil human nature. In contrast, the scientific realists (with the possible exception of Robert Gilpin), obscure the consequential logic of domination and obliterate human nature and individual behavior entirely from their explanations of security-seeking.

Beside these differences at the substantive level, the contrariety between the scientific and traditional realists also exists at the level of the units of analysis and the locus of causation. For Waltz, the international political system has analytical primacy and all analysis revolves around the effects of this system on the states within it. Theoretical primacy, however, is shared by both system and states in some undefined proportion as all international political events are caused by an interaction between systemic constraints and autonomous unit choices. The fountainhead of an egoist, evil, human nature as the causal source of all political action—a watermark of tradi-

tional realism—now disappears, and is replaced by reliance on ungenerated, holistic entities in lieu of the traditional emphasis on acting individuals.

Finally, the disjuncture between the two traditions is most visible at the level of methodological form. Unlike the traditional realists, who presented their explanations through an explicit interrogation of history and justified their conclusions through an unabashed inductivism (without any formal logical framework), the scientific realists cast their explanations self-consciously in scientific terms.[248] In the work of both Kaplan and Waltz, this takes the form of attempting to produce explanatory frameworks which are rational—a priori unjustified—constructions possessing strict internal coherence and, eventually, genuine external correspondence. Neither Kaplan nor Waltz, however, actually succeed in making good on their promise. Thanks to the defect of inadequate deductive systematization which afflicts their theories in different ways, their efforts at producing purely deductive and explanatorily complete social-scientific theories must be viewed as fructified more at the level of intention than of achievement. Thus, despite a desire to move away from the austere empiricism of traditional realist approaches (if Kaplan's and Waltz's explanatory systems are viewed in the best light), it must be concluded that the best available general realist theory today, that of Waltz, still remains internally deficient and externally incomplete. The task of the next generation of general realist theories must thus be to remedy these twin defects by constructing a purely deductive and fully reductionist explanation of international politics.

THE TASK AHEAD

AS A RESEARCH program, political realism has evolved in the direction of science since its beginnings as a "metaphysical research program" in the hands of Thucydides. Yet, the march toward producing adequate scientific formulations of its core intuitions has been slow, often hesitant, and marked by periodic reversals. As a result, political realism, even in its best scientific versions today, must be judged deficient when matched against critical rationalism's methodological criteria for good theory. It will not have crossed the threshold of acceptability as a minimally adequate scientific research program until it sheds the last vestiges of naive empiricism in

248. For excellent retrospective statements of how both Morton Kaplan and Kenneth Waltz viewed their scientific realism, see Morton Kaplan, *Towards Professionalism in International Theory: Macrosystem Analysis* (New York: Free Press, 1979); and Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory," 21–37.

favor of a rationalist-deductive system built around the construction of situationally-determined exit models explicitly incorporating acting individuals as the theoretical primates.

Most scientific realists today would readily admit that inductive enumeration is inappropriate as a method of formulating scientific theory. The naive empiricism of traditional realism is thus on the way to being jettisoned, even though there appears to be no universal consensus on what alternate methodology should replace it, now that positivist approaches have finally been declared dead.[249] In that sense, political realism as science has not yet reached the point that neoclassical economics reached in the early 1960s when, after a sustained methodological debate, the rationalist tradition finally triumphed over the empiricist approach to take economics in the direction of being a true theoretical science. Given this fact, several individual realists have responded to the methodological hiatus by adhering to the rationalist tradition where construction of "partial" realist theories (for example, those relating to alliances, polarity, arms races, etc.) is concerned. At the level of "general" realist theory, however, such thorough adherence to the rationalist tradition has not been similarly evident, though it must be acknowledged that most neorealists would prefer to subsist in the rationalist tradition than in any other.

It is important, therefore, that the gradual shift toward rationalism, visible at the level of "partial" theory, be extended to the level of "general" theory as well.[250] This implies attempting to produce general realist formulations which are a priori unjustified and which, being wedded to situational determinism as a methodology of explanation, provide deductively systematized explanations through various exit models in a manner akin to that of neoclassical economics. The need for such deductive explanations derives simply from the fact that general realist theories today need an increase both in falsifiable content and in internal coherence. Some efforts in this direction—attempting to build on the work of, and direction adopted by, Waltz—have already appeared.[251] These efforts are valuable and necessary, but they are still insufficient from a critical rationalist perspective. This is because they subsist predominantly within the problematique of existing

249. For a succinct summary statement on the status of the positivist project, see Paul Edwards, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 5 (New York: Macmillan, 1967), s.v. "Logical Positivism," by John Passmore.

250. On the distinction between "partial" and "general" theory, see Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Twenty Lectures: Sociological Theory Since World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 1–21.

251. See, for example, Barry G. Buzan et al., *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

realist theory. By adopting the interactionist methodology associated with Waltz (wherein "system" and "states" interactively combine to produce outcomes) but refining it, they help to rectify various internal deficiencies relating to how systemic constraints in international politics are to be discovered, understood and conceptualized. They do not allow, however, for the production of new explanations which can subsume the corrected content of Waltz's theory, while simultaneously increasing the range of phenomena explained without sacrificing either simplicity or coherence. Most current efforts at improving "systemic" realist theories from within the Waltzian framework, therefore, do not engender any significant increase in theoretical "depth."[252] They are unable to produce formulations embodying "higher degrees of universality"[253] which, in the case of scientific realism today, implies explaining adequately not only the relationship between "system" and "states," but the genesis and production of "states" as well.

A general realist theory of such universality cannot be produced unless the current analytically primary units of international politics, "states," are "reduced" into their constituent units, "individuals," so that the former may then be "synthesized" through a system of deductive logic. This theoretical task—which defines the work lying before the next wave of general realist theories—may be summarized, in Homans' phrase, as "bringing men back in[to]"[254] a fully deductive and causally generative theory of politics.

Such a task is appropriate today for both methodological and substantive reasons. For methodological reasons, because theories constructed on the basis of "unpacked" wholes are unsatisfactory as social scientific explanations. The inability to generate wholes like "states" "from statements about the dispositions, beliefs, resources, and interrelations of individuals"[255] has exposed realism to the charge of reification, understood as the material fallacy of treating hypothesized entities as real objects endowed with causal powers.[256] Most realists thus far have attempted to counter this charge by conceding—at a personal level—that "states" are merely economizing abstractions for various acting individuals who are positionally ordered in

252. An illustrated discussion of the concept of theoretical "depth" can be found in Karl R. Popper, "The Aim of Science," chap. in *Objective Knowledge*, 191–205, and in Popper, *Realism and the Aim of Science*, 131–49.

253. Popper, "The Aim of Science," 193.

254. The title of Homans' celebrated essay cited in n. 246.

255. Watkins, "Historical Explanation in the Social Sciences," 168.

256. See, by way of example, Richard K. Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism," in *Neorealism and its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 268–73.

terms of some social structure.[257] Such a preemptive concession, however, is of little theoretical value because, despite acknowledging that individuals alone constitute the true units of social science, scientific realism still cannot demonstrate how these acting individuals are to be accommodated within the analytical units postulated by its causal explanations.

For substantive reasons, entities like the "state" are under serious attack as worthwhile units of analysis for the explanation of international politics. A meaningful defense of these entities, therefore, cannot be mounted any longer on the basis of: a nominalist affirmation of their analytical primacy;[258] or, by a mere restatement of their primacy by assumption;[259] or, more problematically, by a naive empiricism that merely asserts their primacy to be a self-evident fact of history.[260] Rather, the nature of the debate has moved to the point where the hypothesized existence and the explanatory worth of such entities must be defended by the construction of a clear and indubitable deductive logic—the only kind of logic that can explain why these entities necessarily entail and why they must, therefore, be accorded privileged entitative and explanatory status.[261] Such a defense can only be based on a deduction generated from the solely visible unit of all social reality, namely, the individual, who can be attributed precisely those security-seeking preferences which have been clearly articulated in the writings of all traditional realists since Thucydides and Machiavelli.

Creating a deductive explanatory system of this sort, however, requires standing Waltz's methodological approach on its head. Rather than attempting to recreate a new "systemic" approach to international politics, it requires the construction of a new "reductionist" framework centered on the security-seeking individual as both the unit of analysis and the locus of causation. By utilizing the construct of Realist Man as the foundation for a new deductive-individualist explanatory framework, it is possible to create a fresh realist synthesis that is both comprehensive and robust. This synthesis allows political realism rigorously to deduce the existence of rational egoist

257. Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 18; Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 175–76; Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 5–34.

258. Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," 304–5; Krasner, *Defending the National Interest*, 5–34.

259. Waltz, "Reflections on *Theory of International Politics*: A Response to My Critics," 338–39.

260. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 93–95.

261. The consequences of neorealism's inability to account for how states are formed and structured has been usefully addressed in Fred Halliday, "State and Society in International Relations: A Second Agenda," in *The Study of International Relations*, ed. Hugh C. Dyer and Leon Mangasarian (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), 40–59.

states from among the interindividual struggles in the state-of-nature and, thereby, generate the anarchic state-system which is but a product of the as-yet incomplete drive to create a "universal imperium," while simultaneously explaining via various exit models what the behavior of all egoist units in such a competitive universe would be. This "ascendant" approach—beginning with individuals and then carrying on to states and, thereafter, state-system—involves developing a pure theory of anarchic relations which focuses on investigating anew the traditional realist problematique—the production of order—but this time in a genuinely scientific guise based on authentic structuralism. Investigating this problematique anew is important because it holds the promise of demonstrating that the problems of international politics—the state-of-nature among "states"—are but extensions of the more fundamental problems of order production arising from the state-of-nature competition between individuals.

When the question of how order is produced is itself interrogated, scientific realism will once again have the opportunity to engage the central issue defining all politics and to provide a new deductive theory of state formation that is built on the deepest core of the realist research program: conflict. A theory of state formation based on conflict rather than cooperation as a regulating principle will enable scientific realism to dissolve the fundamental contradiction lying at the heart of all current neorealist theories: a conception of the state which postulates cooperation within, while simultaneously being conflictual without. Through a fresh scrutiny of the logic governing an individual's search for security, scientific realism will be able to demonstrate that violence arising from security seeking is endemic to *all* politics and, consequently, the distinction between "domestic" and "international" politics is essentially illusory. A purely deductive and methodologically individualist formulation of political realism will indissolubly unify all three, hitherto theoretically disparate, categories of "man, the state, and war," explaining security seeking both within and outside states.[262]

Adopting the critical rationalist methodology of science is therefore productive, in the final analysis, both in an extrinsic and in an intrinsic sense. Extrinsically, it allows political realism to comport with the abstract standards of good scientific theory as specified by a modern philosophy of science. This is important from the perspective of ridding current neorealist formulations of their methodological defects. The intrinsic reason for adopting a critical rationalist methodology is even more important: it is the

262. For an interesting attempt made in this direction see, Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983). Unfortunately, this treatment achieves unity more by description than by causal generation involving deductive logic.

ability of such methodology to help scientific realism explain—in seamless fashion—how and why individuals form states, how states survive and disintegrate, and how states behave in the arena of international politics.[263]

The critical rationalist methodology of science thus holds the promise of improving the realist research program in three ways. First, it helps scientific realism explain political behavior at all three levels of analysis—individual, states, and state system—in terms of a single explanatory principle: conflict. Second, it helps scientific realism refine extant explanations of politics by specifying how all entities in an anarchic universe are inescapably constrained to seek domination. Third, it helps expand the explanatory ambit of scientific realism to account for the production of order across the entire political spectrum by describing the formation of states, by explaining the behavior of stable states in international politics, and by also deriving the possibility of unstable states and explaining their behavior in the international system. Critical rationalism thus takes scientific realism back to its roots in traditional realism—especially in the arguments of Machiavelli—and helps make it, for the first time, not simply an explanation of "international" politics but rather a scientific theory of egoist competition writ large.

263. See Tellis, *The Drive to Domination*, which endeavors to provide such a unified, generative, realist theory of egoist politics.