CHAPTER 1

BETWEEN UTOPIA AND REALITY: THE PRACTICAL DISCOURSES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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WHAT kind of work is this *Handbook*? Is it a reference book? Is it an introduction? Is it a commentary? Is it a contribution to research? Is it an account of international relations as a political practice, or of international relations as a field of study? If the latter, is it a statement of where the field has been or where it should be going?

It is, at once, all of these things and none of them. We hope that it will serve as a useful entry point to the study of international relations and global politics, a resource that junior and senior scholars alike can use to enhance their understandings of the multiple perspectives and approaches that constitute our field. It is thus, in

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part, an introduction and a reference work. But it is envisaged as much more than this. We want it to be read as a critical, reflective intervention into debates about international relations as a field of inquiry. It is much more than a commentary, therefore, as our goal is to push debate forward, not merely to recount it. Because ideas about what we study, and why we study it, condition what we do as scholars, we see it as a contribution to research into international relations and global politics as political practice.

These ambitions have informed the *Handbook*'s gestation at two levels. To begin with, they have informed the choices we as editors have made about the volume's central themes and general structure. Because we see the *Handbook* as more than a survey—as an intervention—we have deliberately sought to read the field in a particular way. As explained below, two themes structure the content of the volume: the first being the relationship between empirical (and/or positive) theory and normative theory; the second being the dynamic interconnection between different theories, methods, and subfields. Our ambitions have also informed the *Handbook*'s development at a second level. In addition to asking our fellow contributors to respond to the above themes, we have asked them to reach beyond simple commentary or exegesis to advance new, and hopefully thought-provoking, arguments and interpretations.

This chapter explains the *Handbook*'s broad approach and advances a series of arguments about the nature of international relations as a field, arguments informed by our reading of the chapters that follow. We are concerned, in particular, with three interrelated questions. What is the nature of the theoretical endeavor in international relations? How have the empirical and the normative aspects of theories interacted to shape individual theories and the debates between them? And finally, has there been progress in the study of international relations, and if so in what sense?

Although there is no singular answer to these questions, our contributors have led us to a number of general conclusions. First, they have encouraged us to formulate a distinctive understanding of the theoretical enterprise, one broad enough to encompass the diverse forms of theorizing that populate the field. We argue that the art of theorizing about international relations has come to integrate three components: questions, assumptions, and logical arguments. Second, international relations theories are best conceived as contending practical discourses that, despite their significant differences, are all, implicitly or explicitly, animated by the question "how should we act?" This abiding feature of international relations theories explains the persistence of both empirical and normative aspects in all of them. Finally, our contributors' discussions of diverse theories, methods, and problems in international relations invite comment on the question of progress in the field. Across the board their chapters report increased sophistication in theory and method, greater communication and learning across theoretical boundaries, and more artful borrowing of ideas from other fields. However, progress within different

areas remains heavily influenced by contestation among theoretical perspectives. Harnessed properly, such contestation is an engine of increased understanding even as it simultaneously explains the sometimes seeming lack of progress for the field as a whole.

1 Our Approach

There is no shortage of overviews and introductions to international relations and global politics, either as a field or as a realm of political practice. New introductions—more or less advanced—appear each year, and this is not the first "handbook" on the subject. With few exceptions, however, these all adopt variations on a common approach. A choice is made by authors and editors about the topics worthy of discussion (a choice we too have made), and chapters are crafted to do these topics justice. Seldom, though, do these volumes have a "voice" of their own, above and beyond that of their individual, constituent chapters. The most recent handbook to appear, for example, has neither an introductory framing chapter nor a general conclusion (Carlsnaes, Risse, and Simmons 2002). Although an excellent volume, it has nothing to say or conclude about the field it has surveyed. Our goal is to step beyond this general approach to give the *Handbook* a voice of its own.

The first thing to note about the *Handbook* is our emphasis on theory, on conceptions of international relations as a discipline, on contending ideas of theoretical progress, on different theoretical perspectives, and on the methodological ideas that drive the study of world politics. We have adopted this emphasis not because we value theoretical over empirical inquiry or the pursuit of abstract ideas over more "practical" forms of scholarship. We have done so because we believe that theoretical assumptions (and debates surrounding them) determine the contours of the field and inform even the most empirical research. An inquiry into the field of international relations ought, first and foremost, to be an inquiry into the ideas that animate it—the ideas that distinguish international relations (or global politics) as a domain of social and political life, the ideas that determine what constitutes knowledge of this political realm, the ideas that dictate the questions that merit answers, and the ideas that shape the field's relations with other disciplines. Without these ideas, international relations would have neither identity, skeleton, nor pulse.

One consequence of this emphasis is our decision not to devote specific chapters to empirical issue areas, such as great power competition, weapons proliferation, environmental protection, human rights, nationalism, and international trade and finance. Again, this does not reflect a lack of interest in such issues; to the contrary. Rather, it reflects our belief that it is the ideas and debates canvassed in this volume that have informed and structured analyses of these issues. Theoretical and

methodological ideas have determined which issues are legitimate foci of inquiry for international relations scholars, and they have provided the intellectual tools that scholars have taken up in the pursuit of understanding. The complexities of particular issue areas—especially new ones—do, of course, serve as catalysts for theoretical innovation, and grappling with them has often driven international relations scholars to conscript new ideas from other fields of inquiry. Our strategy, however, has been to concentrate on international relations as a milieu of ideas, and to ask our contributors to draw on their diverse empirical expertise to illustrate their arguments and propositions. This choice of strategy has been reinforced by our sense that the literature is now so saturated with survey chapters on new and old issue areas that yet another compendium is unwarranted.

The most distinctive feature of the *Handbook* is not its focus on theory but our reading of theory as *both* empirical *and* normative. Most surveys of international relations theory concentrate on empirical (and/or positive) theory; if normative theory receives any attention, it is left for a final chapter or two on "ethics and international affairs." Interestingly, this is as true of surveys originating outside the United States as from within (see Carlsnaes, Risse, and Simmons 2002; Baylis and Smith 2005; Burchill et al. 2005). The assumptions appear to be that empirical and normative inquiry can be segregated and that international relations theory is almost exclusively an empirical or positive project. Although it is acknowledged (in some limited fashion) that there is another body of theory—normative theory—that treats the international as its subject, this is the preserve of philosophers or political theorists. Thus the default position is that international relations is an explanatory endeavor, concerned with the "is" of world politics not the "ought."

We find this segregation both unsustainable and unhelpful. All theories of international relations and global politics have important empirical *and* normative dimensions, and their deep interconnection is unavoidable. When realists criticize national governments for acting in ways inconsistent with the national interest, or for acting in ways that destabilize international order, they base their criticisms on values of interest and order that can be defended only normatively. When postmodernists recommend a scholarly stance of relentless critique and deconstruction, they do so not for interpretative reasons (though this is in part their motive) but because this constitutes a practice of resistance against structures of power and domination. Indeed, as the *Handbook* authors demonstrate, every international relations theory is simultaneously about what the world *is* like and about what it *ought* to be like. One of the axes of diversity in our field is the different orientations scholars, and their attendant theoretical traditions, have had to the relationship between the normative and empirical aspects of theory. Some have embraced the intersection, many have sought to purge their theories of normative traits, and still others have gone in the opposite direction, privileging philosophical reflection over empirical. But the terrain between the empirical analysis and the normative is one trodden by all theorists, explicitly or implicitly.

The conventional explanation for why our theories all exhibit empirical and normative aspects is epistemological. Critical theorists have long argued that our values enter our enquiries from the moment we ask questions about the world, from the moment we make choices about what we will study to answer those questions, and from the moment we decide how we will study whatever it is we have chosen (for a classic statement, see Taylor 1979). Nothing we say here challenges this line of argument. Our explanation is different.

From the outset, international relations theory has been a practical discourse. We do not mean this in any deep Habermasian sense of the word, or say this to promote simplistic notions of the practical over the theoretical. Rather, we mean that all international relations theories, in one form or another, have at some level been concerned with the question "how should we act?" This is true for realists and liberals, Marxists and feminists. It is true of those who congregate under the umbrella of critical theory as well as those who pursue problem-solving theory. Different perspectives emphasize different issues that demand action, and arrive at different conclusions about types of action required. But whether they are concerned with the promotion of peace, order, institutional development, economic well-being, social empowerment, or ending global forms of discrimination, or whether they recommend the balancing of power, the promotion of free trade, the intensification of social contradictions, or resistance to all institutions and discourses of social power, they are nonetheless animated by the practical question of how we should act.[1]

This abiding nature of international relations theory as a practical discourse explains (above and beyond the epistemological reasons) the persistence of *both* the empirical *and* the normative in all our theories. We cannot answer the question of how we should act without some appreciation of the world in which we seek to act (the empirical) and some sense of what the goals are that we seek to achieve (the normative). This was E. H. Carr's central proposition in *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, that neither unadulterated realism nor idealism could sustain international relations if it were to be a practical discourse. Without idealism, realism is sterile, devoid of purpose; without realism, idealism is naive, devoid of understanding of the world in which one seeks to act. For Carr, international relations had to be a political science that brought the "is" and the "ought" together: "Utopia and reality are thus the two facets of political science. Sound political thought and sound political life will be found only where both have their place" (Carr 1946, 10).

Carr was appealing to the emergent field of international relations when he made this claim, appealing for it to take a particular form and direction. Our claim is not that his vision has guided the evolution of the field. For one thing, his message has been consistently lost in the misinterpretation of his work. Rather, our claim is that Carr identified a truth about all discourses with practical ambitions, that, once this

[1] The same is true for the field of public policy, of course. See Goodin, Rein, and Moran (2006).

ambition exists, however subterranean and unacknowledged it may be, theorists are forced onto the difficult terrain between the empirical and the normative. This is clearly the case for scholars who wish their work to have direct relevance to the question of action whether in the form of policy advice or in the form of political resistance. But even those whose concerns are mainly "scholarly" must tiptoe beyond the bounds of either empirical or normative theory to engage subject matter that is intrinsically intertwined with practical problems and so cannot be neatly partitioned. The field has never been able to reside comfortably in pure empirical or normative inquiry and this is destined to continue.

Instead of suppressing this duality of international relations theory, we have chosen to highlight it, to draw it out into full view. Our motive is not simply that this promises to be a particularly interesting and illuminating way to read the field, although we have certainly found this to be the case. We believe that it is important for international relations scholars to reflect on the status of international relations theory as a practical discourse and its consequences for what we do. As many of our contributors (from diverse quarters of the field) reinforce, we want international relations to be a field that ultimately speaks to the most pressing problems of political action in the contemporary world, even if we always speak with diverse voices, from diverse perspectives. But accepting this as an ambition means accepting that international relations scholars must navigate the difficult terrain between empirical and normative theory. Understanding how this terrain has been navigated to date—by realists and postmodernists, Marxists and constructivists—is an instructive first step. Furthermore, highlighting the empirical and normative aspects of all theories has the advantage of unsettling many of our established assumptions and conceits about the field. It challenges us to see different perspectives in different lights, and to reconsider the theoretical terrain of the field in different ways.

The second organizing theme of the *Handbook* is the dynamic interplay between different theoretical and methodological perspectives. Again, this is a departure from established practice. Most surveys, introductions, and compendia treat perspectives as isolated bodies of thought—this is realism, this is liberalism, this is constructivism, and so on. Individual chapters almost always cast their subject theory against theoretical "others," but the purpose is usually to highlight what is distinctive about a particular theory and only secondarily do they consider its evolution as part of a wider theoretical milieu. There have, of course, been many attempts to see the evolution of the field as the product of discussion, the most frequently invoked being the tale of recurrent great debates: realism versus idealism, classicism versus scientism, and reflectivism versus rationalism (Lapid 1989). But, whatever the merits of such accounts (and over the years they have helped acclimatize many students to the field), they work at a macro-level, obscuring much of the detailed interplay, conversation, and contestation between different perspectives. It is this level of interplay that interests us. How have the limitations of existing approaches prompted the development of new ones? How have established perspectives responded to new challengers? How have the ensuing debates and contestations shaped the

nature of contending approaches? How have theories borrowed from each other to bolster their heuristic, interpretative, or critical power? Is the field, in the end, one marked by interchange and co-constitution or territoriality and mutual incomprehension?

These two organizing themes run through the *Handbook*, serving as both structuring devices and reference points for our contributors. The broad organization of the volume reflects our judgment about where the major debates over ideas are taking place. We open with a series of contending perspectives on what the central empirical focus of international relations ought to be: should its central concern be relations between sovereign states (Lake, Chapter 2, this volume), or should it address the wider constellation of political relationships operating at the global level (Barnett and Sikkink, Chapter 3, this volume)? More provocatively, are the very ideas of "international relations" or "global politics" misplaced, ontological frameworks that privilege certain standpoints over others (Cox, Chapter 4, this volume; Darby, Chapter 5, this volume)?

Having considered these questions, our attention shifts to the volume's largest part, that addressing the field's principal substantive theories and their ethics: realism, Marxism, neoliberal institutionalism, new liberalism, the English School, critical theory, postmodernism, and feminism.[2] It is here that our concern with the empirical and normative aspects of theory is most apparent. Instead of having one chapter on each of these theories, which is the established practice, the *Handbook* has two: the first providing a general overview of, and engagement with, the theory in question; the second drawing out its underlying ethical standpoint and propositions. We open this part with an essay on the merits on eclectic theorizing by Peter Katzenstein and Rudra Sil (Chapter 6, this volume). There appears to be a greater interest today in bridge-building across the theoretical traditions of the field, and it is appropriate to lead with a piece that explores systematically the merits of such dialogue.

The next part considers ideas about method. Our conception of method is broad and eclectic. For some, method is a positivist preserve, a preoccupation only of those who see international relations as a social science modeled on the natural sciences. But method, like theory, is unavoidable. Every table of contents betrays a method, a set of choices the author has made about how best to go about answering the question that animates his or her research. Sometimes this is the product of systematic reflection, at other times of intuition. But just as method is unavoidable, there is no "one size fits all" method—different questions demand different methods. Some questions are best answerable through quantitative methods, some through qualitative, some through historical, some through philosophical, deconstructive, and genealogical methods, and some through artful combinations of two or more of these approaches. Our contributors explore the principal

[2] These are complex and contested categories so we do not offer thumbnail sketches of them here but refer readers to the respective *Handbook* chapters. Table 1.1 below characterizes the different approaches in terms of three key dimensions of particular relevance to this chapter.

methodological approaches—rational choice (Kydd, Chapter 25, this volume), sociological and interpretative (Kratochwil, Chapter 26, this volume), psychological (Goldgeier and Tetlock, Chapter 27, this volume), quantitative (Mansfield and Pevehouse, Chapter 28, this volume), qualitative (Bennett and Elman, Chapter 29, this volume), and historical (Quirk, Chapter 30, this volume) methods—privileged by the substantive schools of thought examined in the previous part, although we readily acknowledge that our selection is not exhaustive.

The *Handbook* then turns to the borderlands of the field: the internal borders between international relations' subfields, and the external borders between international relations and its near neighbors. As the "international" issues animating scholarship have multiplied—from an initial focus on questions of war and peace to a contemporary agenda that encompasses everything from global finance to population movements—two tendencies have been apparent. On the one hand, there has been the proliferation of distinct communities under the broad umbrella of "international relations." Some of these are so self-contained that their relationship to the broad umbrella is an active topic of debate: are strategic studies, foreign-policy studies, or international ethics subfields of international relations or distinctive fields of study? On the other hand, there has been a tendency for international relations scholars to push out toward other disciplines, most notably economics, law, and continental social theory. In some cases this has involved re-engagement with realms of scholarship that were once seen as integral to the nascent field of international relations, international law being the prime example. Part V of the *Handbook* investigates the dynamics of these borderlands, paying particular attention to developments within international political economy (Ravenhill, Chapter 31, this volume), strategic studies (Ayson, Chapter 32, this volume), foreign-policy analysis (Stuart, Chapter 33, this volume), international ethics (Nardin, Chapter 34, this volume), and international law (Byers, Chapter 35, this volume).

Alongside debates over the substantive focus of the field, the nature of theoretical progress, the relative merits of various "isms," the appropriateness of particular methods, and the integrity of individual subfields, persistent anxiety has surrounded the appropriate relationship between the scholar and the policy-maker. For some, the scholar's role is "to speak truth to power," a stance reinforced by Robert Keohane in one of the *Handbook*'s final chapters (Chapter 42, this volume). For others, policy relevance and engagement with government are the true test of scholarship. And for yet others, it is the very pretence of speaking truth that makes international relations scholars so easily complicit in practices of power and domination. At the heart of these debates are issues of scholarly identity, the relationship between power and knowledge, the nature of social and political engagement, and the relationship between "science" and objectivity. These issues are taken up by a range of scholars across the various sections of the *Handbook*, but in Part VI they are taken up directly by Henry Nau (Chapter 36, this volume) and Joseph Nye (Chapter 37, this volume).

Part VII addresses the field's diversity, or lack thereof. Within the United States it is often assumed (often subconsciously) that the theoretical, methodological, and substantive concerns of American scholars define the nature and contours of international relations as a field of political inquiry—"American international relations is the field." Outside the United States, this chauvinism is frequently observed and linked to a widespread concern that the American academy exerts a hegemonic influence on the field, privileging those concerns, perspectives, and methods favored by American scholars and publishers—"international relations is an American social science." But, while the American academy exerts an undeniable centripetal pull on the field, a pull characterized by clear relations of power, the actual diversity of international relations scholarship globally deserves recognition. International relations scholarship in Britain, Canada, Australia, China, India, France, and Germany varies greatly, and none of it is identical to that conducted within the American academy. It is these issues of the field's homogeneity or heterogeneity—of the potential for diversity within hegemony—that our contributors address, focusing in particular on the "subaltern" view of international relations "from below" (Blaney and Inayatullah, Chapter 38, this volume), and on the perspective of international relations from within a former hegemon (Little, Chapter 39, this volume).

The *Handbook*'s final part consists of five short essays, each providing a different account of where the field has been and, more importantly, where it ought to be going. For much of its history, international relations has been a male-dominated field, and by some measures it remains so today. But in the past twenty years a significant demographic change has occurred, one that has seen the number of women undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty in international relations grow dramatically. Women's voices are central to multiple debates in the field, and often they are at the leading edge of conceptual, theoretical, and analytical innovation. We have sought to acknowledge and reflect this changing demographic by seeking the views not only of three eminent men—Robert Keohane (Chapter 42, this volume), Richard Rosecrance (Chapter 43, this volume), and Steve Smith (Chapter 44, this volume)—whose work has been influential in shaping the field, but also those of two women—Janice Bially Mattern (Chapter 40, this volume) from the United States, and Toni Erskine (Chapter 41, this volume) from the UK—who have established themselves as significant new voices.

2 Theorizing in International Relations

Our understandings of international relations are organized by theory—and our multiplicity of understandings is reflected in the broad range of contending

theoretical approaches canvassed in this *Handbook*. Some of these approaches are closely connected and largely complementary to one another (for example, rationalism and liberal institutionalism; feminism and critical theory), whereas other approaches are usually seen as competitive or even mutually hostile to one another (for example, realism and liberalism; rationalism and postmodernism). International relations further embraces a wide range of substantive topics and questions, some of which have an elective affinity with particular theoretical approaches. This cacophony of theoretical approaches reflects its subject matter and is key to understanding how the field has developed.

The tendency has been for international relations scholars to think divisively about theorizing, about the nature of theory in general and about particular theories. In a field centrally concerned with territoriality, fence-building is a prized craft. But our fellow contributors have encouraged us to think expansively about theorizing, to seek a conception of the theoretical endeavor that is broad enough to encompass a wide variety of theoretical projects without homogenizing them. Not only do many of our contributors advocate bridge-building, but we see in their work as many commonalities as differences.

The definition of theory is contested, and resolving that issue, even if it were possible, would be against the spirit of our enterprise of examining how the interactions of theories organize and drive the field. We have chosen, therefore, to focus on the art of theorizing in international relations rather than the nature of theory. We propose here that theorizing in international relations—in all its diverse manifestations—has come to exhibit three principal components and the dynamic interplay between them.

First, theorizing takes place in relation to the questions (empirical and normative) we ask about the "international" political universe. On the one hand, we construct theories to answer questions. These questions might be highly abstract—such as those animating formal theorizing—or very empirical. They might be broad in scope, or narrowly focused. But international relations theory always presupposes a referent question about the world we live in or could live in. On the other hand, theorizing often generates questions. For instance, theories that assume that anarchy generates like politics encourage questions about political variations across anarchic systems (Reus-Smit 1999). Secondly, theorizing rests on assumptions we make about what matters (empirically and normatively) in the "international" political universe, assumptions such as "states are the most important actors," "agents are rational utility maximizers," "norms constitute identities and interests," "discourses are politically constitutive," "truth statements condition power relations," "human rights are universal," "community is the source of all value." A distinction is often made between our ontological, normative, and epistemological assumptions (Price and Reus-Smit 1998). But in reality these are often inextricably linked. Postmodernists do not reject the ontological assumption that states are the most important actors, or the normative assumption that human rights are

universal, because they are empirically false, but because they are epistemologically unsustainable (George 1994). Thirdly, theorizing necessarily involves logical argument. It is through argument that we mobilize our assumptions in relation to our questions to infer new conclusions. Arguments are the creative media through which we combine, enliven, hierarchize, and give meaning to our assumptions, and we do this in the process of answering our questions.

Logical coherence with heuristic or deductive power is the one criterion that all theoretical approaches accept and to which they give pride of place: Logical contradictions and non-sequiturs are no more tolerated by feminists than by neoliberal institutionalists. Good theory is distinguished by how well its internal logic leads us to new insights and conclusions. Like a good story, theory has an internal logic that drives the argument. Once certain elements are specified, conclusions begin to follow, new lines of argument develop, and other elements emerge as logical candidates for inclusion in the theory. This internal dynamic leads to new implications and arguments about the world. Indeed, when a theoretical logic is especially powerful, it not only drives the research but can even change and shape the very questions that are asked and create its own inward-looking theoretical "world." Good theory also opens up our assumptions and understandings about what is fixed and what can be changed—both in the theory and as a guide to action in the world.

This conception of the theoretical endeavor encompasses the wide spectrum of theoretical approaches in international relations. It is as applicable to ostensibly normative theories as it is to empirical ones. Charles Beitz's classic argument (1979) for a cosmopolitan ethic is concerned with the central question of what principles of justice ought to apply globally and rests on the primary assumption that practical interdependence (an empirical idea he draws from Keohane and Nye 1977) necessarily leads to moral interdependence. It is also as applicable to critical theories as problem-solving. Andrew Linklater (1998) has been centrally concerned with understanding patterns of inclusion and exclusion in world politics, and his argument about the expansion of moral community globally rests on assumptions about the logic of communicative action. Similarly, Keohane (1984) has focused on the question of explaining patterns of international institutional cooperation by building on assumptions about rational state action under conditions of interdependence. Finally, this conception is as applicable to theories addressing interpretative "how" questions as those concerned with explanatory "why" questions. The scholar who asks how chemical weapons have come to attract such high moral approbation (Price 1997) will build logically on the basis of assumptions about the international political universe as readily as the scholar who asks why states engage in balance of power politics (Kaplan 1957; Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001).

Because international relations theory addresses questions about the world, it necessarily has empirical content. Even our normative questions have empirical referents—the nature of the use of force between states, patterns of global

inequality, the subordination of women, the hierarchy of cultures. Although the boundaries of international relations are fluid and contested, the field is defined in large part by its evolving empirical domain and the questions we ask of this domain. Questions of security and order are enduring, but changing interrelations at the global level from transnationalism to interdependence have expanded the set of enduring issues to include prosperity and growth (Risse-Kappen 1995; Gilpin 2001) and, increasingly, rights and freedoms (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999). This evolution has been punctuated by important events including world wars, decolonization, the oil crisis, the end of the cold war, and the attacks of 11 September, events that have shaped and directed international relations scholarship. Of course, different theories and areas of international relations emphasize different aspects of the empirical domain, and even different aspects of the "same" empirics. Security and international political economy define themselves in terms of different though partially overlapping substantive problems, which lead them to contending understandings of world politics and possibilities. Differences reign even within areas. The meaning and origins of "security" are contested (Wæver 1995), as are the important questions and theoretical constructs—interdependence or dependency or globalization—of political economy (Ravenhill, Chapter 31, this volume). Even specific empirical "facts" are contested—is the world unipolar (Brooks and Wohlforth 2002)? Is globalization homogenizing or fragmenting (Scholte 2005)? Does free trade alleviate or accentuate global inequality (Rodrik 1997)? Often these disagreements provide the puzzles to be explained and the inspiration for introducing new elements into theory.

Most international relations theorizing relies on empirical evidence to distinguish good arguments from crazy ideas. While this position is most often identified with positivism, it undergirds most international relations scholarship. To take a seemingly hard example, postmodernists make the signature claim that texts are open to multiple interpretations, and that there is no Archimedean standpoint from which to determine the truth of one reading over another. But their increasingly sophisticated analyses of diverse political discourses nevertheless rest on the assumption that texts and events are amenable to better and worse interpretations (Price and Reus-Smit 1998; Hansen 2006). Pointing out that a broad spectrum of international relations theories rely on empirical evidence to support their arguments is not the same, however, as treating falsification as a paramount value. Insofar as positivism gives unreflective primacy to falsification, or treats theory only as a hook upon which to hang empirical results, it misses the fact that theory can be important even when it cannot be empirically validated or falsified. This is as true of positive theorizing, such as the Arrow (1951) theorem that establishes that every international voting or decision rule must fail to meet certain democratic aspirations,[3] as it is of normative theorizing, such as the claim that human rights

[3] The Arrow theorem is also an excellent example that positive theory can be deeply normative. Some of Arrow's conditions (e.g. nondictatorship, Pareto) are directly motivated on normative grounds while others (e.g. independence of irrelevant alternatives, universal domain) raise implicit normative questions about what we desire in a "democratic" social choice process—the very desirability of which is itself a normative question.

are universal (Donnelly 2003). Neither can be validated or falsified empirically. Conceptual theorizing is also vitally important but not empirically verifiable. Thus, while theorizing is never independent of empirical questions, international relations theory has an autonomy from, and must take priority over, empirical analysis.

While many different stripes of international relations theory peacefully coexist, disagreements are the most prominent feature of the landscape. Two axes of division stand out. The first is between critical and problem-solving theories. Robert Cox famously argued that the latter "takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and political power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework of action," while the former "allows for a normative choice in favor of a social and political order different from the prevailing order; but it limits the range of choice to alternative orders which are feasible transformations of the existing order" (Cox 1986, 208, 210). This distinction remains an important one, pointing us to the crucial difference between theorizing that focuses on the emancipatory transformation of the "social and political complex as a whole" and that which concentrates on the technical management of particular aspects of that complex. The following chapters suggest, however, that it may no longer be a straightforward guide to differentiating particular international relations theories. As Richard Shapcott (Chapter 19, this volume) explains, one of critical theory's contributions to the field is that concern with the normatively oriented transformation of world politics is no longer the sole preserve of self-identified critical theorists: in different ways, constructivists, liberals, and English School scholars are all plowing this field. Equally important, it is now clear that theoretical approaches not traditionally associated with the critical project may fruitfully be conscripted to its aid. Notable here is the contribution methodological individualists have made to understanding the origins of the contemporary system of sovereign states (Spruyt 1994; 2007).

The second axis of division is between verbal and formal mathematical theory. Proponents see the formal approach as the highest form of theory whereas critics see it as the ultimate in abstract irrelevance. Neither position is correct. A theory that can be modeled mathematically engages a particularly powerful form of deductive reasoning. But even here the art is in the "modeling dialog" (Myerson 1992), which entails the pursuit of substantive as well as mathematical arguments. Moreover, many problems that cannot be modeled productively through mathematics are amenable to verbal theory as a means of advancing our theoretical understanding. Defining our questions by our techniques misses the point of developing theory about the world we care about. To reduce the field to what can be mathematically modeled would narrow it to a barren landscape; conversely, not to take advantage

of formal deduction when possible is to risk missing important theoretical insights and possibly allowing inconsistent arguments to stand.[4]

It is often contended that different international relations theories are fundamentally incompatible with one another. Approaches such as postmodernism and liberalism often seem irreconcilable, while others such as sociological (Kratochwil, Chapter 26, this volume) and psychological (Goldgeier and Tetlock, Chapter 27, this volume) may just have little to say to each other. Unfortunately, the field has a tendency to exaggerate and even glorify these differences: One purpose of theory is to clarify fundamental from nonfundamental differences and, where possible, to establish common ground. This has been occurring, for example, in the much discussed and somewhat overblown debate between rationalism and constructivism. There has already been some convergence with regard to the role of ideas—to which rationalists pay increasing attention (Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Snidal 2002)—and of strategic rationality (which constructivists are increasingly incorporating into their accounts; Keck and Sikkink 1998). Even the purported differences (Wendt 1999) between the causal theory of rationalism versus the constitutive theory of constructivism is exaggerated. After all, rational choice's central equilibrium concept is a constitutive statement that a set of elements are in harmony with each other; equilibrium analysis becomes causal only by asking what happens when one element is displaced and harmony disrupted. Conversely, constructivist theorizing about norms has been increasingly used as the theoretical underpinning for causal relations and empirical testing (Checkel 1999; Ruggie 2005). Even where common ground does not exist, lessons can migrate across perspectives, as, for example, has happened with the critical theory challenge to the positivist ideal of value-free research. This is not to argue that deep incompatibilities do not exist, only that international relations theorizing at its best serves to clarify which differences are fundamental and which can be bridged.

3 The Empirical and Normative Faces of Theory

Security studies have long been driven by the impetus to understand war so we can control and reduce it; human rights analysis is motivated by the desire to

[4] Relevant examples are myriad. Some involve fairly technical mathematical presentations (Downs and Rocke 1995; Powell 1999; Kydd, Chapter 25, this volume), but many other ideas founded in technical analysis have entered international relations through more accessible translations. Examples of the latter category include James Fearon's discussion (1995) of rational war, the widespread use of Mancur Olson's collective action analysis (1965, based on Paul Samuelson's quite technical analysis of public goods), or Thomas Schelling's discussion (1960) of credibility and deterrence.

stop atrocities ranging from genocide to slavery to torture; international political economy is ultimately about promoting mutually beneficial economic interactions among states, firms, and individuals; and we study institutions such as the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization to understand how to improve global health and food, respectively. Although international relations theories often present themselves as scientific and even objective, the underlying choice of assumptions is never objective and neither are values that animate them. All theories contain significant normative elements through the questions they ask, the concepts they use, the factors they exclude or hold constant, and the values they seek to further. Nevertheless, much of contemporary international relations neglects and even denies its normative underpinnings out of concern that it will impede intellectual progress. In this section we argue the opposite position—so long as international relations remains a practical discourse, one ultimately (though often implicitly) concerned with the question of "how we should act," scholars will be compelled to occupy the difficult terrain between the empirical and the normative. Furthermore, closer attention to the variety of ethical underpinnings in the field can strengthen our understanding of what we do and, channeled properly, can motivate research progress as it enhances our ability, individually or collectively, to speak to the most pressing issue of political action in contemporary world politics.

The normative component has been falsely suppressed in international relations for a combination of substantive, methodological, and theoretical reasons. The traditional realist emphasis on national security as a seemingly uncontroversial goal, and the state as the uncontroversial actor, eliminated any need to problematize the goals of action. Early English School (Cochran, Chapter 16, this volume) and liberal American approaches (Richardson, Chapter 12, this volume) echoed this neglect of normative concerns in their emphasis on equally uncontroversial goals of order and efficiency, respectively. Of course, as Jack Donnelly (Chapter 8, this volume) shows, even the most hardcore security realism entails some ethical content; the English School has also invested heavily in normative theorizing, and liberals are increasingly aware of the shortcoming of efficiency as its singular normative concept. And questions of just war, treatment of foreigners, and fair exchange have long been with us. Currently, the changing and expanding range of questions of international politics—including new dimensions of security such as terrorism and ethnic conflict, new twists on long-standing North–South issues and new political economy issues such as regulation that penetrate into the domestic workplace and home, and deepened concern for issues such as human rights, the global environment, and effects beyond the great powers—all present issues where goals are contested and the myth of normative consensus is unsustainable.

Behavioralism, positivism, and the effort to create a "science" of international relations provided a second motivation for the neglect of ethical considerations. Although most positivists accept that normative considerations are relevant to

what questions to ask and to the uses to which those answers are put, "science" is seen as the intermediate stage involving production of knowledge that is ostensibly value-free.[5] However, normative considerations are deeply, though often implicitly, embedded in this scientific stage itself. Thus quantitative international relations now pays close attention to selection bias within its analyses, but quantitative analysis itself is an important form of selection bias driven by measurability and data availability (Mansfield and Pevehouse, Chapter 28, this volume). Further value judgments are necessarily lodged in the definition of contested concepts such as power, liberty, and equality. These normative assumptions can be varied through alternative conceptualizations and measurements but they cannot be eliminated. Perversely, the choice to limit research to questions where it is (falsely) believed that value-free assessment is possible can have the unfortunate side effect of limiting the questions asked—itself an implicit value judgment. An outside example that has had profound effects on international relations is the "ordinalist revolution" of economics in the 1930s in which economists discovered that they could derive key market results without recourse to cardinal individual utility or interpersonal comparisons of utility—both of which raise thorny normative issues (Blaug 1985). This reorientation allowed economics to make important and fundamental progress—but at the cost of largely abandoning the social welfare questions that had been central to the discipline up to that time. The heritage of this methodological move is reflected within international relations in the emphasis on Pareto efficiency rather than distribution in liberal institutionalism, which in turn, implicitly gives the status quo normative pride of place. Liberals are well aware of this bias, but their analytic tools are not as powerful for addressing other values, which are therefore slighted. Of course, the procedures of science—especially its efforts at being systematic, comparable, and transparent—provide means to highlight these normative elements and perhaps evaluate their implications. But at best they can illuminate not eliminate the normative element.

The tendency to set aside ethical considerations has been reinforced by misleading efforts fully to substitute logic for values. This underlying impetus is well captured in the rational choice adoption of the distinction between "normative" theory as being about "ought" and "positive" theory as being about "is." Positive theory analyzes the consequences that logically follow from interactions among a set of actors, given their goals and their capacities without any evaluation or judgment of those goals. Of course, the assumptions regarding the actors, their goals, and their capacities are themselves partly normative assertions, while the normative content of the predictions is what motivates our interest in the analysis in the first place. More importantly, rational choice shortchanges itself by denying its normative heritage and possibilities. In addition to emanating from the distinctively normative utilitarian tradition, rational choice can be viewed as a normative theory about

[5] We thank Alex Wendt for suggesting this formulation.

what actors should do given their circumstance—what is rational action?—as much as an empirical prediction about what actors will do. This is especially important insofar as rationality is often impaired, so that actors cannot be assumed to be fully capable of achieving their goals (Levy 1997). Moreover, much of rational choice is directed toward understanding how to ameliorate the adverse consequences of individual rationality (as evidenced in problems such as the Prisoner's Dilemma, collective action, or principal–agent relations) and how to achieve better outcomes either through individual remedies such as precommitment (Martin 2000) or reputation (Tomz 2007), or through collective remedies such as arms control or institutional design (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001). Such solutions are justified in terms of efficiency as the primary normative value in rational choice and one that is typically presented as a neutral or even "scientific" value. But efficiency claims can mask other values such as distribution or rights (Gruber 2000). Andrew Kydd (Chapter 25, this volume) argues more generally that rational choice is premised on liberal normative biases, including respect for the individual, and that it has an elective affinity for specific substantive outcomes such as free exchange and decentralized power. Thus, far from being a purely logical rather than a partially normative theory, rational choice is a logical theory based on normative premises that provides guidance regarding how to further our normative goals.

The problem of separating empirical from normative analysis has been reinforced by the tendency of scholars who do take normative considerations seriously to distance themselves from social scientific approaches. This is most pronounced among those whose central concern is philosophical, determining what constitutes right conduct in a variety of international situations, from global aid provision to humanitarian intervention. Very often the process of ethical reasoning is defined narrowly, to encompass only the logical determination of ethical principles. But ethical reasoning is in practice much broader than this, combining empirical propositions and assumptions with philosophical speculation (Reus-Smit 2008). Defining it narrowly, however, encourages a neglect of empirical inquiry and the theories and methods it necessarily entails. This tendency is also apparent, though to a lesser extent, among approaches that take normative concerns seriously but shun more "scientific" approaches to empirical inquiry. Until recently, this has been a weakness of the English School, whose critically important meditations on the relationship between order and justice have historically been limited by its unsystematic approach to the nature of social and institutional relations among states (Reus-Smit 2005). Instead of a proper engagement between normative and scientific positions, we typically see either mutual neglect or mutual critiques that fall on deaf ears. The result is a divide, with "science" on one side and "normative" on the other.

This separation severely impairs the ability of international relations to speak to practical concerns. On the one hand, the unwillingness of "scientists" to tackle ethical and seemingly unscientific problems means it often has little to say on

the important problems of the day; on the other hand, insofar as normative international relations is insufficiently well grounded in empirical knowledge, it is not competent to say what we should do in specific cases. Advice on whether or not to intervene in the next Rwanda or Darfur, for example, rests both on an analysis of what is possible (do sanctions work? can military intervention be effective?), and on a judgment as to who has the right or obligation do so. In order to connect international relations theory back to the practical questions that motivate it, both normative and empirical legs of the analysis must be firmly in place. This is the long-standing position of critical theorists such as Cox and Linklater, who seek normatively compelling transformations of international order that are "realistic" and consistent with the empirical dynamics of the global system (Cox 1986, 208; Linklater 1998). It is also the position advocated more recently by Keohane (2001; see also Buchanan and Keohane 2004), who has called on international relations scholars to help bring about a new international institutional order, a project that demands the integration of empirical and normative theory.

Our purpose here, however, is not simply to encourage greater interaction and integration between empirical and normative theorizing; it is to show that all international relations theories already have empirical and normative dimensions. There are two reasons why this is necessarily so. The first, and most commonly observed, is that we as scholars can never escape our values; they permeate the questions we ask, the puzzles we seek to fathom, the assumptions we make, and the methods we adopt. There is, however, a second reason that we wish to highlight here. As explained in the first section, international relations has always been a practical discourse, in the sense that the question of "how we should act" has undergirded and informed scholarship across the field. This is no less true of postmodern scholarship—concerned as it is with how to respond to structures of domination—than realist scholarship with its concern for the effective prosecution of the national interest under conditions of anarchy. Because their practical questions exist as a motive force, however implicitly, scholars are drawn onto the difficult terrain between the empirical and the normative. Answering the question of "how we should act" in terms of the values we seek to realize demands an appreciation of "how we can act" in terms of the context of action we face.

This interconnection between empirical and normative theorizing exists not just at the stages of the questions we ask and the purposes for which we use theory but also at the intermediate stage of knowledge production. We made the point earlier that normative biases permeate this stage. But with practical discourses the empirical and the normative are even more deeply entwined in processes of knowledge production. Answering the question of how we should act requires empirical knowledge production that examines the causal, constitutive, and discursive structures and processes that frame political action. But it also requires normative knowledge production that examines who the "we" is that seeks to act, what principles we seek to realize, and what resources we are prepared to sacrifice

to achieve our ends (such as the loss of compatriots to save strangers) (Reus-Smit 2008). With practical discourses, therefore, knowledge production cannot be confined to the "scientific" realm of empirical theory; it is necessarily more expansive, encompassing normative inquiry just as centrally.

One of our central goals in this *Handbook* has been to draw out these empirical and normative dimensions of international relations theories, and this has been done most systemically in our survey of the principal substantive theories. In the remainder of this section, we draw on our contributors' insights to map these theories' empirical and normative aspects, leading we hope to a markedly different characterization of the field than is common. We have found it illuminating to map them against three empirical and two normative axes, though others are no doubt possible.

With regard to their empirical–theoretic aspects, we have focused on their assumptions regarding agency and structure, ideas and materiality, and the nature of power. With the first of these, we have distinguished between theories that are agential (emphasizing individual choice in determining political outcomes), structural (emphasizing the opportunities and constraints that social structures place on individual choice), structurationist (emphasizing the mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structures), and poststructuralist (stressing the way in which systems of signification and meaning constitute subjectivities). With the second, we have differentiated between theories that are ideational (attributing constitutive power to intersubjective ideas and meanings), rational institutionalist (emphasizing the role of ideas in mediating the relationship between material or other interests and political outcomes), and materialist (highlighting the causal force of material factors). With the third set of assumptions, we distinguish between four different conceptions of "power" in different international relations theories. We have conscripted Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall's typology (2005, 3, emphasis in original) where:

> *Compulsory power* refers to relations of interaction that allow one actor to have direct control over another . . . *Institutional power* is in effect when actors exercise indirect control over others . . . *Structural power* concerns the constitution of social capacities and interests of actors in direct relation to one another . . . *Productive power* is the socially diffuse production of subjectivity in systems of meaning and signification.

When it comes to the normative–theoretic aspects of theories, we have concentrated on two axes of variation: value commitments and orientation toward change.[6] The first refers to the values or purposes that theories seek to realize, implicitly or explicitly. Drawing on our contributors, we have identified five distinct

[6] These are not the only axes of variation that could have been chosen here. For instance, we could have disaggregated value commitments into deontological and consequentialist subcategories, and we could have added an axis categorizing theories according to how they treat the relationship between means and ends.

value commitments: (1) the prudent pursuit of the national interest; (2) international cooperation (ranging from order through minimal norms of sovereignty to achievement of higher-order social values through international governance); (3) individual freedom (including negative freedom through the removal of constraints on individual liberty as well as positive freedom through the protection of individuals' basic rights); (4) inclusivity and self-reflexivity; and (5) responsibility to otherness. Our second axis—orientation toward change—refers to theorists' general inclinations to the question of moral and practical change: are they (implicitly or explicitly) optimistic or skeptical? The normative aspects of international relations theories are determined not only by the values scholars embrace, but by their willingness to entertain that moral change is possible. We have treated this as a separate axis on which to map theories, as the orientations toward change of different theories are reducible neither to their empirical understandings nor to their substantive value commitments—are realists generally skeptical about moral change because of the empirical assumptions they make, or do they favor these assumptions because they are moral pessimists?

Table 1.1 maps nine substantive theories of international relations against these empirical and normative dimensions. Our purpose here is not to reify these theories, reducing their complexities to singular, homogeneous, forms.[7] Nor is it to suggest that our chosen axes of comparison are the only relevant dimensions of similarity or difference. Our goal is to show (*a*) that indeed all theories of international relations entail empirical and normative dimensions, and (*b*) that a number of interesting patterns and overlaps emerge when theories are viewed in this way. Among other things, this reveals that a number of ritual characterizations that are used to divide the field are vastly overworked. The most notable is the much brandished distinction between realists and idealists, scientists and utopians—a distinction that rests on the purported ability to quarantine empirical theories from normative influence. A second is that the field is fundamentally riven by epistemological differences, by differences over what constitutes true knowledge. But while these differences are all too apparent, and their implications for how we conduct our scholarship important, they obscure multiple other significant points of convergence among theoretical approaches.

Our comparison reveals three patterns of note. The first is that of value resonance across seemingly opposed theories. This is perhaps most striking between critical theorists and new liberals. As Robyn Eckersley (Chapter 20, this volume) explains in her chapter on the ethics of critical theory, at the level of "normative ethics, critical

[7] Such categorizations are necessarily vulgar and disguise important internal variations within approaches. For example, some realists are optimists and some constructivists are pessimists. Elements of the English School are more structural than structurationist, while institutionalism might sometimes handle compulsory as well as institutional power. While our categorizations are necessarily imperfect, we believe they capture the general tendencies. The exceptions suggest other overlaps and intersections among perspectives.

Table 1.1. Empirical and normative faces of theory

THEORIES	EMPIRICAL ASPECTS			NORMATIVE ASPECTS	
	Agency–structure	Ideational–material	Conception of power	Value commitment	Orientation toward change
Realism	Structural (anarchy)	Material	Compulsory	National interest	Skeptical
Marxism	Structural (capitalism)	Material	Structural	Individual freedom (Negative—emancipation)	Skeptical
Neoliberal institutionalism	Agential (states)	Rational institutionalist	Institutional	International cooperation	Optimistic
New liberalism	Agential (individuals)	Rational institutionalist	Institutional	Individual freedom (Negative—liberty)	Optimistic
English School					
(ES pluralists)	Structural (anarchy)	Rational institutionalist	Institutional	International cooperation	Skeptical
(ES solidarists)	Structurationist	Ideational	Structural	Individual freedom (Positive—universal human rights)	Optimistic
Constructivism	Structurationist	Ideational	Structural	Individual positive freedom/ International cooperation	Optimistic
Critical theory	Structurationist	Ideational/material	Structural	Individual freedom (Negative—emancipation)	Optimistic
Postmodernism	Structurationist	Ideational	Productive	Responsibility to otherness	Skeptical
Feminism	Structurationist	Ideational	Productive	Inclusivity/Self-reflexivity	Skeptical

theory's overriding ethical goal is to promote emancipation, or remove constraints on human autonomy, by means of ever more inclusive and less distorted dialogue." The similarity between this normative standpoint and the priority given to individual liberty by new liberals is difficult to ignore. For both, the good of human individuals has ethical primacy and, for both, the removal of constraints on their freedom is prioritized. This is not to obscure important differences between these theories' ethical positions, but their similarities should not be surprising given their common Enlightenment origins. Value resonance is also apparent between English School solidarists and constructivists, both evincing a central concern for clarifying the conditions under which sovereignty can be compromised better to promote the positive freedom of individuals, particularly in the form of international human rights. Again, important differences should not be obscured, particularly over methodology and the priority given to philosophical inquiry, but convergence at the level of values is all too apparent.

Secondly, our comparison reveals a strong correlation between the orientations toward change of theories that adopt a compulsory conception of power and those that embrace a productive one. The prime example of this is the relation between realism and postmodernism. Both are skeptical of the possibility of moral change in international relations. For realists this is because the politics of morality is always eclipsed by the politics of power; for postmodernists it is because moral discourses are necessary for the production of power: all processes of moral signification produce relations of domination. Peter Lawler (Chapter 22, this volume) observes correctly that the postmodernists' critique of moral universalism does not lead them to the "moral despair" of realists, only to a preference "for localized, contingent responses to ethically troubling cases." However, theories that embrace compulsory or productive conceptions of power share a view of power as ubiquitous to international relations. For realists this is because it is the struggle for power that defines politics; for postmodernists it is that all processes of signification are constitutive of power. Both ultimately encourage a position of moral skepticism, even if this does not amount to despair.

The third pattern of note is the consistent correlation between structural theories and skepticism and between agential or structurationist theories and optimism. Realists, Marxists, and English School pluralists are all structural, in the sense that they see the structure either of anarchy or of capitalism providing the incentives and constraints for social actors. Not surprisingly their relative neglect of the role such actors can play in the constitution of social structures leaves little room for the possibility of moral change in international relations—with the partial exception of the Marxist view of the structure itself being unstable in the long term (Teschke, Chapter 9, this volume). Conversely, theories that are agential or structurationist—such as new liberalism, solidarism within the English School, or constructivism—leave greater space for the creative power of individual or collective human agency, providing the social theoretic foundations for more optimistic positions on the

question of both moral and practical change. Of course, agency can work to bad ends as well—neoliberal institutionalists understand that cooperation can be aimed against third parties while constructivists recognize the possibility of bad norms leading to pathological consequences (Rae 2002). Finally, postmodernism and feminism are exceptions in being structurationist and skeptical, possibly because their emphasis on productive power overwhelms the impact of structurationism, encouraging skepticism not optimism.

4 The Question of Progress

While the above comparison reveals the diversity of contemporary theorizing in international relations, as well as diverse ways in which theories have traversed the difficult terrain between the empirical and the normative, has such diversity led to progress in the field? It is unfashionable to speak of progress in international relations, but it is also the case that some notion of progress informs all our scholarship. If we do not believe that our work makes some contribution to improving our understanding of world politics, and that our collective endeavors as a field yield some knowledge gains, what justifies our research? For this reason, we believe that progress in international relations can be evaluated in terms of the extent to which we have expanded our understanding of the subject matter—viewed broadly to include explanatory, interpretive, normative, and other approaches to understanding—and whether this has improved our ability to act effectively in international affairs. Simply put, can we do things better now than before in these two related spheres? An important distinction here is between progress within sub-areas of international relations—defined by substantive topic, methodology, or theoretical approach—versus progress of the field as a whole. We argue that the seeming lack of progress in the field as a whole is intimately related to the nature of progress within its subfields.

Evaluating progress is difficult for several reasons. We have no agreed criteria by which to measure what we know or how effectively it has been (or could be) applied to real world action. International relations' dynamic character makes it a moving target as both an object of inquiry and a field of study. Although some questions are enduring, others are changing with both world events and intellectual fashions. Most importantly, the field is inherently political and contested, so that any measure of progress is inherently value laden and depends significantly on beliefs regarding what is possible and what is desirable.

Nevertheless, the contributions to this volume clearly document multiple ways in which progress has been made. Conceptually, the field is much more rigorous;

even where it comes to no settled consensus, it is clearer about its differences. Fundamental concepts like power remain "essentially contested," but in differentiating types of power (Barnett and Duvall 2005) we have substantially advanced our understanding of its different facets. Similarly, the presumption of state-centrism has been increasingly challenged by analyses incorporating transnational and subnational actors (Moravcsik, Chapter 13, this volume), but the theoretical sophistication of both state-centric approaches and its competitors has advanced considerably. William Wohlforth (Chapter 7, this volume) shows how realism has flourished and multiplied in terms of more finely tuned arguments and debates, such as those between offensive and defensive realism; Ian Hurd (Chapter 17, this volume) and Friedrich Kratochwil (Chapter 26, this volume) show how constructivism has incorporated philosophical and sociological arguments to develop a novel ideational theory and norm-based explanations as a counterpoint to overly materialist traditional theory based solely on power and interests. Postmodernism, for all its skepticism about progress, has also developed ever more sophisticated methods of deconstruction, discourse analysis, and genealogical inquiry, yielding important insights into the discursive construction of post-cold war international relations (Burke, Chapter 21, this volume).

Other important aspects of the field's progress have been the incorporation of new approaches to long-standing questions, the opening of new areas of inquiry, and the asking of questions that either are new or have been neglected. These shifts have sometimes been prompted by emerging problems in the world, sometimes by the internal logic of theoretical approaches, sometimes by changing intellectual forces, and usually by a combination of all of these. For example, post-cold war and post-11 September security research has shifted to new concerns with ethnic conflict and terrorism, and its logics of assurance and deterrence have been adapted in light of the new challenges these problems present. The concept and boundaries of security (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998) have been contested and seen to involve much deeper elements of personal security rather than simply military matters or state interests. International political economy has moved beyond its traditional concerns with trade and money, though those remain important, to look at emerging issues of standard-setting, transnational business regulation, and money-laundering (Abbott and Snidal 2001; Mattli and Büthe 2003; Drezner 2007). Institutions have been reconceptualized, with increasing attention paid to their different forms and specific properties (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001). Similarly, the emergence of global warming as an issue and new regard for human rights around the globe have challenged traditional theories and sparked increased interest in new ones.

The field, or at least part of it, has become less complacent about the questions being asked. The proliferation of questions and approaches has been connected to a greater appreciation that questions asked are never neutral but always reflect underlying values and power relations. Critical approaches and feminism have

challenged long-standing biases of "mainstream" realism and liberalism, while interpretivist and more historically oriented work have challenged the more universalistic ambitions of positivism. Ironically, some of these differences emerge because realism can also be criticized for being substantively less ambitious in assuming that the fundamental nature of international politics is unchanging, whereas liberals see possibilities for change within the system that need to be explained and more radical approaches problematize the existing international system to open up the need to explain large-scale system change.

The continuing relative neglect of Third World issues reminds us that the biases of our intellectual community, which remains a Northern and a Western one, continue to shape our discipline and limit its progress in at least some areas. Phillip Darby's critique (Chapter 5, this volume) of international relations as a discipline, Anthony Burke's discussion (Chapter 21, this volume) of postmodernism, and David Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah's "view from below" (Chapter 38, this volume), all argue that international relations theory excludes the questions and analyses most relevant to the Third World and continues to define progress in Western terms. Postcolonialism, postmodernism, and feminism all challenge the predominant focus on states and sovereignty, as well as the neglect of non-Western cultures and issues such as global injustice that receive little more than lip-service in the North. Blaney and Inayatullah (Chapter 38, this volume; see also Gilroy 2006) propose that such approaches need to engage "international relations from above" to expose their hidden assumptions and political purposes.

Progress in the use of increasingly sophisticated methodology is easy to document. Statistical and formal mathematical approaches have become both more widespread and more carefully tailored to substantive problems of international relations (Mansfield and Pevehouse, Chapter 28, this volume). There has been a continuing development of improved data-sets on an expanding set of questions, now including human rights (Hathaway 2002; Hafner-Burton 2005), the environment (Sprinz 2004), domestic institutions (Howell and Pevehouse 2007; Mansfield, Milner, and Rosendorff 2002), and democracy (Russett and Oneal 2001; Pevehouse and Russett 2006). Formal models (Snidal 2004) have become more common and more complicated and have driven theory in certain areas such as deterrence and cooperation. These approaches have also become better at recognizing and dealing with their limits—as reflected in increased attention to selection and identification problems in quantitative work (Drezner 2003; Vreeland 2003; von Stein 2005) or the use of agent models (Cederman 2003) to address problems not amenable to closed-form mathematical analysis.

Importantly, methodological progress has not been limited to these more technical approaches. Case study methods have advanced significantly not only in their use of historical and interpretative methods but also in the use of techniques such as process-tracing to combine careful causal analysis with close attention to underlying mechanisms (Bennett and Elman, Chapter 29, this volume). Postmodernism

has advanced in its argumentation, as reflected in its genealogical analysis of discourses of security (Hansen 2006) and its practices and, more generally but perhaps also more controversially, in its closer attention to historical events and contemporary policy (Burke, Chapter 21, this volume). The different methods have also interacted to their mutual benefit. Statistical analysis of selection problems spurred considerable attention to selection problems in qualitative research, which in turn has led to a richer understanding of selection issues and research designs that go beyond the pure statistical models (Signorino 2002). The complementarity of different approaches has also been revealed by the widespread use of the combination of case studies and large-n analysis, which has almost become formulaic in some areas. In this vein, whereas early constructivist work was criticized by positivists as not being testable, constructivists have more than demonstrated their capacity to produce methodologically rigorous, empirical research (for a recent example see Acharya and Johnston 2007)—and positivists have been able to include some of the factors raised by constructivists in their own work (Tierney and Weaver 2007).

Methodologically driven progress has significant limits, however. While judicious use of methods improves empirical and theoretical analysis of international relations problems, methods are the means and not the goal. Overemphasis on methodological criteria can discourage research in areas that are not (yet?) amenable to the most advanced techniques. Just as it was valuable to study war before extensive data-sets had been developed for quantitative analysis, so it is useful to study problems such as human rights even if we cannot formally model normative action or if our statistical data are limited. Important research questions cannot always wait for method.

A related problem emerges when research is expected to meet the multiple standards of empirics and theory. Research can be first rate without doing everything. For example, inductive research that improves our knowledge of what the world looks like—and of important relationships that we care about—is useful even before the relationships are well theorized. Indeed, theoretical progress necessarily requires empirical facts even before they are deeply theorized. Conversely, theoretical analysis can improve the quality of international relations arguments even if they are not yet tested or, in some cases, cannot be tested: Good theory often takes us beyond our current empirical knowledge. In short, there is a virtue in a division of labor where not every article has to do everything—some papers should be largely theoretical with limited empirics, others largely inductive with thin theory, and others mainly normative, or even methodological. The corollary to this division of labor is that no piece of research is fully complete in and of itself. The meaning and value of individual projects depends vitally on their interconnections with international relations research in general.

How then does progress occur? It is useful to distinguish progress within individual research areas from progress in the field as a whole. *Handbook* authors who discuss a specific approach or issue all report on some type of progress within their

area,[8] even if they sometimes express dissatisfaction with the rate or direction of progress. It might seem that, if all its areas have advanced, then presumably so has the field. However, there is no consensus that the field has advanced in the sense of moving toward a common and integrated understanding of international politics. International relations remains a diverse and contested field whose different areas are often claimed to be, and sometimes probably are, incompatible. To reconcile this coexistence of progress within areas with the seeming lack of overall progress, we need to consider the different ways that progress is made within and across areas.

Progress within areas often results from pursuing the internal logic of a theoretical argument and/or investigating the empirical realm that it identifies. In some cases, a key theoretical puzzle (for example, why is there cooperation?) or empirical fact (for example, democracies do not fight one another) has motivated enormous research effort and substantial advancement. Thus folk theorem results about the possibility of cooperation in anarchy have developed into a rich analysis of the institutions that surround cooperation; a few empirical facts about the relationship of democracy and war (Doyle 1986) has launched a thousand articles addressing the relation between domestic regimes and international outcomes (for a discussion see Mansfield and Pevehouse, Chapter 28, this volume). These more inward-looking logics of inquiry can be highly productive but, in isolation, promote relatively narrow specialization within areas, sometimes leading to some splintering of the areas itself. A prime example of this is Wohlforth's discussion (Chapter 7, this volume) of how the development of realist theory has increased the variety of different camps or types of realists.

The opposite extreme is when progress is based on the importation of external ideas. International relations always has been a deeply interdisciplinary enterprise, and one of its most important sources of progress has been borrowing from outside the field. The various chapters of this *Handbook* document extensive borrowing of theoretical ideas, substantive arguments, and methodological tools from the disciplines of sociology (Hurd, Chapter 17, this volume; Kratochwil, Chapter 26, this volume), history (Quirk, Chapter 30, this volume; Bennett and Elman, Chapter 29, this volume; Blaney and Inayatullah, Chapter 38, this volume), economics (Kydd, Chapter 25, this volume; Stein, Chapter 11, this volume), philosophy (Burke, Chapter 21, this volume), psychology (Goldgeier and Tetlock, Chapter 27, this volume), and political science (Donnelly, Chapter 8, this volume; Moravcsik, Chapter 13, this volume). We also see the incorporation of ideas from theoretical approaches such as feminism, critical theory, and postmodernism that cross over the social science disciplines as well as the humanities. Of particular note in this volume is the reinvigoration of international relations' borrowing from political theory. This is hardly

[8] Despite the obvious selection bias in terms of the criteria by which we solicited authors and that they accepted, the authors generally make compelling cases for progress within their areas—at least by that area's criteria.

new, since, as Donnelly notes, many of international relations' intellectual icons—including Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes, Hugo Grotius, and Immanuel Kant—are theorists of more than international relations. More recently, the field has begun to build on a wide range of more contemporary political theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, Carl Schmitt, Michel Foucault, John Rawls, Giorgio Agamben, Judith Butler, and Axel Honneth.

External borrowing is an important way to advance the field but poses problems of its own. One danger is that international relations problems will be adapted to fit to the theory rather than the other way round, as is appropriate. Theories developed in other contexts may not provide a good match: there is no reason to believe that states are socialized in the same way as individuals, that rational international actors are like marketplace consumers, or that individual psychology transfers to how leaders and bureaucracies act in international crises. Thus external borrowing needs to be carefully tailored to the circumstances of international relations in order to be valuable. Although there is no simple way to measure it, the quality of our intellectual "borrowing" and especially of our adapting it to the specific circumstances of international relations, has significantly improved. The probable reason is that international relations scholars are increasingly well versed in the particular external intellectual terrains from which they draw. However, this leads to a second danger that such borrowing fragments international relations as a field by connecting its sub-areas more to their respective external source than to each other. Even if we do not care whether international relations coheres as a "discipline," the commonality of our questions makes it desirable for different approaches to seek productive engagement with one another. Fortunately, there has also been extensive interaction across various international relations communities. Some of this has been in the form of borrowing ideas developed in one area better to understand another. In other cases, borrowing has been more competitive or even conflictual in nature. A prominent example is liberal institutionalism's adoption of realist premises to develop a nonidealist account of cooperation. This has led to competition and even conflict between the two areas on topics such as relative gains or the importance of institutions, since they have very different and even opposed explanations for the "same" phenomenon.

Contestation can be both productive and destructive. It is most productive when it is over what questions matter, and over the answers to those questions. This type of engagement can reveal shortcomings, challenge presuppositions, sharpen argument, and raise new questions. Debate also reinvigorates the contending theories and challenges the complacency toward which internal research programs sometimes gravitate. Contestation is least productive when it degenerates into defensive discussions that impede communication across areas. Arguments over ontology and epistemology, while sometimes important, are too often deployed in this fashion. Contestation also becomes destructive when vindication of the theory

becomes more important than understanding the world—as illustrated by the so-called paradigm wars, where different international relations traditions engage in intellectual gladiatorial combat more focused on "victory" for their perspective than on explaining the world.[9] Whether contestation is productive or not depends on how we collectively channel our efforts. Trespassing across sub-areas of international relations is necessarily treacherous and difficult, but the goal is to make it easier not to raise barriers against it. Bially Mattern (Chapter 40, this volume) offers an interesting assessment of how contestation of the "power" concept has advanced international relations. On the one hand, it has helped broaden the discipline; on the other hand, it has separated international relations into niches. As she points out, this contestation can be productive only if it is channeled through enough common ground that diverse elements of the (un)discipline can truly challenge one another.

One of the key questions is whether different international relations approaches (or which ones) are sufficiently compatible that their competition can be productive. The realist–liberal interchange over relative gains suggests that the possibilities may be limited even among two traditions that share a rationalist underpinning. Perhaps surprisingly, the rationalist–constructivist interaction offers more grounds for optimism. Sometimes the debate has centered on questions of whether the two schools (which are themselves internally quite diverse) are sufficiently compatible in terms of either epistemology or ontology to allow a constructive exchange. Yet recent work has found substantial common ground, including successful efforts to accommodate key insights from the other. Table 1.1 above shows many points of intersection across ostensibly separate theoretical traditions at a very broad level. Such intersections can also be seen in the specific details of ongoing research. Constructivists have incorporated collective action and principal–agent relations into their analyses (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Nielson, Tierney, and Weaver 2006); rationalists have increased their attention to norms to deepen their analysis of institutions. The second generation of feminist work is much more empirically oriented, perhaps in part due to earlier criticisms, and more attuned to drawing connections to other factors that affect international politics. Sandra Whitworth (Chapter 23, this volume) illustrates this in terms of looking at the different ways in which various international institutions from the World Bank to the military use gender, while Jacqui True (Chapter 24, this volume) engages the compatibility of feminist theory with other international relations theories. Of course, the more radical postmodern and critical theorists suggest that mainstream international relations "doesn't get it" and holds out little hope that it will. Even here, however,

[9] Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger (1997) provide a useful overview of the interaction among neorealists, neoinstitutionalists, and constructivists that highlight areas where the interaction has been positive (cooperation theory and institutions), where it has been more negative (relative gains), and where the ability of theories to improve each other is still unclear (ideas).

the criticism can still be valuable in raising awareness of hidden assumptions and presumptions and may cause some shift in the other work, although probably not to the satisfaction of the critics, who will be viewed as impossible to satisfy from the initial group. Finally, a striking challenge for more integration at an epistemological level is raised in Burke's endorsement (Chapter 21, this volume) of Lene Hansen's call (2006) "for poststructuralism to take methodology back [from rationalism]."

This then is the paradox of international relations theory—progress in individual areas does not aggregate into progress for the field as a whole—at least in the sense of developing a unified and synthetic understanding of the subject matter (Kitcher 1981). Instead of a grand synthesis based on a single logic of inquiry, we see the ongoing contestation among many diverse strands of theory using multiple logics. But, whereas this has generally been seen as a failure of international relations, it can also be seen as one reason for its success. Contestation provides vitality to the field that keeps it open to changing questions and provides access points for new ideas. This *Handbook* aims to further progress by bringing these different points of contention together in a constructive way. In particular, by emphasizing the importance of underlying normative arguments to all international relations theory, we locate common ground among seemingly uncommon approaches and elucidate these more fundamental reasons for our differences.

5 Conclusion

A central insight of postmodernism is that actors construct their identities through the construction of radical others—who we are is defined against an other who is everything we are not. Sadly, identity politics has been an all too prominent feature of international relations scholarship. Our theories have become our social identities, and in constructing these theoretical identities we have reified other theoretical positions to accentuate difference and suppress convergence. Our purpose in this chapter—and in how we have organized this *Handbook* more generally—has been to cut across these lines wrought by identity politics. We have not ignored genuine points of difference—in fact we have drawn attention to previously underacknowledged differences. Nor have we downplayed the significance of such differences. Indeed, we have argued that they can be productive. We have, however, highlighted two similarities among all theories: the broad style of theorizing that approaches share, a style that integrates questions, assumptions, and logical argumentation; and the presence of empirical and normative aspects in all theorizing. While these similarities cut across existing theoretical differences, they do not

homogenize international relations theory. Instead, they bring to the fore axes of difference and convergence previously obscured.

The existence of both empirical and normative aspects in all international relations theories is fundamental to their nature as practical discourses, concerned in their diverse ways with the question of how we should act. Only through practical discourses can international relations scholars speak to the complex problems of political action in the contemporary global system. And, if we embrace this as an objective for the field, then we must accept that the terrain between the empirical and the normative is one that we will need to tread, and to do so systematically. This interaction of empirical and normative considerations is what gives international relations its vitality. It is the source of the questions the field studies and the reason why it is never satisfied with the answers. The world is changing both because of shifts in international problems and because of shifts in what we care about. The scientific effort to wall off the normative issues is fundamentally misguided, as is normative theorizing that is innocent of empirical research.

This does not mean that the field has to be preoccupied by normative debates any more than it should be preoccupied by epistemological ones. Nor does it mean that every individual research effort need (or can) constantly engage the full panoply of empirical and normative issues. International relations is sufficiently developed and professionalized as a field that no individual scholar can cover everything and every project must "bracket" important considerations—which is not to say ignore or be unaware of them—for research to proceed. Thus scholarship closer to the empirical end may stipulate its research questions, assumptions about the actors, and the evaluation of the issue outcomes as relatively unproblematic, while focusing on developing explanations of how interactions occur. Conversely, a more normatively oriented project might stipulate certain "facts" about how the world works, and what is possible, as a prelude to evaluating prevailing circumstances and what we should do about them. This sort of basic research where scholars pursue the internal logic of their arguments, and competition among arguments is pursued for its own sake, is an important means of advancing the field. Such a division of labor is also inevitable and highly productive in a field where the questions are incredibly complex and always changing.

What is important, however, is that individuals recognize the partial nature of their research, acknowledge that their theorizing is infused with both empirical and normative elements, and accept that the parts must interact and communicate if divisions of labor are not to fragment into separate production lines. This latter task is something that can be implemented by the field as a community even if individual practitioners are not always attentive to the interconnections. Of course, it is important that individual researchers be kept aware of this intermittently—which is exactly what a diverse and interacting international relations community can achieve and which this *Handbook* highlights.

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