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Introduction - a life in theory

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Practical Judgement in International Political Theory: Selected Essays

Chapter 1: Introduction – A Life In Theory

Readers of the essays collected in this book will find an account of how my thinking on a variety of subjects has evolved, in some cases undergoing at least a 90 degree shift; my contention is that this evolution is actually symptomatic of some of the things that have been happening in the wider discourse, and in the world which this discourse is attempting to understand. I will present an overview of this evolution and the individual essays later in this introduction, but first, since this very enterprise involves a degree of immodesty in presuming that the development of my thinking might be interesting, it seems not inappropriate to go the whole hog, as it were, and begin by setting out how I came to be involved in the field in the first place.

My involvement with higher education began where it is ending, at the London School of Economics and Political Science. I came to LSE in the mid-sixties to read for the BSc (Econ), an excellent degree that, sadly, no longer exists. The BSc (Econ) provided a broad education in the social sciences, with every student being obliged to study Politics, Economics and History for all three years of the programme; one's specialist subject actually covered no more one fifth of the first year, and, at most, five eighths of the next two, less than half of the degree as a whole. History was my subject at Grammar School, and I actually went to the LSE with the intention of becoming an Economic Historian, but in my first year took the option 'Structure of International Society' and was converted to International Relations by my class leader, Philip Windsor, certainly the most charismatic teacher I have ever come across. Philip's influence was important in persuading me that IR was an important subject, but also in shaping how I saw the discourse. He was clear then, as I am now, that International Relations is not an academic discipline in the sense that, say, History is a discipline, or Political Science; rather, it is the name of a field of study where a

range of different insights and techniques can be brought to bear, drawn from History, Political Science, Moral Philosophy, Law, Anthropology and so on. Philip himself had serious credentials as a moral philosopher, but his Oxford thesis (never submitted, but published as a book, *Berlin: City on Leave*[1] was a work of contemporary history, and his current interests in the mid-1960s focused on issues of arms control and nuclear strategy. This eclecticism seemed to me then, and seems to me now, highly admirable; in particular, I firmly believe that anyone who wishes to be taken seriously as a theorist of international relations had better be steeped in international history and have a very good knowledge of current affairs as well as familiarity with the classics of political thought.

Perhaps predictably, once into Part II of the BSc (Econ), I discovered that a great deal of the syllabus in International Relations consisted in learning more mundane subjects than those which interested Philip; in particular, the minutiae of the 'Foreign Policy of the Powers' and the United Nations system (the latter taught, for reasons neither he nor we could fathom, by an Assistant Lecturer whose interests lay in strategy, Robert Hunter, later US Ambassador to NATO - this was fun, although to this day I have difficulty remembering which is Chapter VI and which Chapter VII). Fred Northedge's lectures on the International Political System were more promising, likewise the courses in International Relations Theory mounted by Michael Banks and Peter Lyon, although I was never convinced by the latter's use of Martin Wight's 'three R's' framework (rationalism, realism and revolutionism). Still, and at the risk of appearing to betray the Department in which I now teach, the courses which I enjoyed most were International Law (quite rightly compulsory then for IR students) and those taken by all the 300 plus students on the BSc (Econ), namely Economics, History and, especially Political Thought. Nowadays one cannot claim to be an 'economist' without advanced applied mathematics but the three years I spent studying the subject certainly gave me a basic understanding of economic concepts that I have found invaluable. International

History was more immediately enjoyable, an old love rekindled, but the real pleasure was the study of Political Thought.

I was one of the last generation of students to attend Michael Oakeshott's lectures on the History of Political Thought, and I was privileged to have taken classes in the subject with one of his PhD students, Noel O'Sullivan, subsequently Professor of Politics at Hull University.[2] Oakeshott's lectures were mainly a leisurely examination of Greek and Roman thought – leisurely in the sense that he took five lectures on the Greeks to reach Aristotle who, rather surprisingly, he covered before Plato – and have shaped my thinking on classical political thought to the present day; in particular they are at the back of my suspicion of those scholars who treat the thinkers of antiquity as though they are our contemporaries, also those who privilege Athens over Rome. Oakeshott believed the Romans to be more practically-minded than the Greeks and perhaps less philosophically interesting as a result, but he never underestimated their importance, conscious as he was of the role of law (and thus of Rome) in the formation of the modern state. Noel's interest in Hegel – in those days rather unusual – had less impact on my thinking at the time, but perhaps resurfaced twenty years later. In parenthesis, one might note that, on top of Oakeshott's contribution , there were another forty or so lectures on the course over two years, covering various periods and thinkers, and given by scholars such as Ken Minogue and John Charvet. The final exam in Political Thought, taken at the end of the third year, invited the student to answer four questions from, as I recall, about eighty, on topics ranging from the Pre-Socratics to the English Idealists, with no restrictions on question choice. This is the sort of thing that would cause our current Teaching Quality Assessors to have kittens – but then virtually nothing that Oakeshott was involved in would be allowed nowadays and the fact that he was one of the two or three giants of 20th century Anglophone political philosophy would be of no concern to our Quality Police. I count it a privilege to have seen him in action.[3]

After graduation, I began to read for a PhD in International Relations, focusing on an over-ambitious study of the way in which historical knowledge was applied, or as I saw it misapplied, by scholars such as J. David Singer with his 'Correlates of War' Project. This subject seemed to combine my historical and theoretical interests, but I had bitten off more than I could chew, at least in those days, and little came of it. Fortunately from my point of view a PhD was not then a necessity for a university post and, after two years of desultory study, I was appointed to teach IR at the University of Kent at Canterbury (the PhD came some twenty years later, under Kent staff regulations). Kent provided me with a second education; the collegiate system there, since largely abandoned or at least attenuated, discouraged Departmentalism, and encouraged inter-disciplinarity not simply in the social sciences, but across the board. For an LSE student this was a real eye-opener. I came into contact with scholars of literature with an interest in literary theory, philosophers, and theologians as well as the historians, economists and sociologists I had known at the LSE. This undoubtedly broadened my interest in theory; for better or worse, I read a great deal of Marxist theory (much in vogue in the 1970s) and became very interested in radical approaches to International Political Economy (IPE), but I also read Foucault, Derrida and other post-structuralist theorists. The former interest was also stimulated by involvement in Susan Strange's project to establish IPE as a core aspect of the study of IR; I was the *rapporteur* for a week-long seminar on IPE at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great Park in 1971, which led to the establishment of the International Political Economy Group as part of the British International Studies Association. I found fewer opportunities to think in post-structuralist terms in the IR of the 1970s, but the reading I did then was of great value later; fortunately for me, in those days it was possible for young scholars to get away with reading a lot and publishing very little.

In the 1980s things began to come together for me, and I became set on the path that created the essays collected in this book. Looking back, I can identify three factors that shaped the

sort of work I would produce over the next twenty-five years. First, in 1981/2 I spent a year on an academic exchange at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. This was a very pleasant experience and I made a number of good friends, but, most importantly in career terms, I was privileged to spend a lot of time with William Connolly, one of the most important and creative of American political theorists. The son of a Flint, Michigan shop steward, Bill Connolly had been a student of C.B. Macpherson in the 1960s and had produced a number of fine books in the 1970s, mostly written from the perspective of the traditional left; in the 1980s he was reading Foucault and turning himself into the late-modernist political theorist he now is. Conversations with him were enormously stimulating, and although I no longer share many of his political attitudes I still regard him as one of the great intellectual influences on my work – his reading of the notion of pluralism being of particular importance.[4]

While in the course of the 1980s I remained deeply interested in radical political economy, Marxism and global inequality, increasingly I became convinced that the really important questions this interest generated were not to be found in the realm of explanatory theory, but rather were, in a broad sense, normative. Whether, or to what extent, the peoples or states of the rich world *were* actually responsible for creating the poverty of the global South was, and is, an interesting question, but equally interesting, and in those days less frequently asked, is the question whether they *should* be responsible in the other sense of that term: in other words, what do the citizens of one society owe to citizens of another? Do considerations of global justice require changing the world, or can the current inequality actually be justified? Conventionally, radicals had simply assumed the justice of such redistribution, but the debates in Anglo-American political philosophy stimulated by John Rawls showed that things were by no means as clear cut as one might have imagined.

This was the second factor that led to the essays collected in this book, but neither the stimulus of contact with Connolly, nor the impact of the burgeoning 'justice industry' would

have had the effect they did had it not been for a third factor, the emergence within International Relations of a number of young, or younger, political theorists who, while sympathetic to the concerns of the generation of Hedley Bull and Martin Wight, were abandoning the idea that IR theory had to be *sui generis* and bringing new resources to bear on the subject.[5] Aside from this intellectual community, I was also fortunate to meet, and be befriended by, the late Brian Barry, a major political theorist working in the shadow of Rawls and increasingly interested in the international dimension of theories of justice. In terms of my own politics and scholarly approach, I was actually much closer to the thinking of one of Brian's bête noirs, Michael Walzer, than to his own account of justice as fairness, but my knowledge of contemporary theories of justice was enormously enhanced by this association. Walzer for me was, and is, a role-model both for his communitarian liberalism, and for his problem-oriented style of reasoning, but Brian Barry was a friend as well as a kind of mentor, even though, increasingly, we disagreed on matters of substance. Friendships aside, the core point is that an audience for a different kind of international political theory was developing. Of course, the majority of scholars in the field of International Relations were not oriented to this work, but that in itself stimulated those of us who wanted to take a different approach; there was a kind of missionary zeal in the air, and like most missionaries we had the support of an (intellectual) great power, contemporary Political Theory.

This atmosphere goes a long way towards explaining the first of the shifts that have taken place in my work over the last twenty years. Back in the late 1980s I described what I was writing about as 'international ethics' or 'normative international relations theory' – now, my preferred description is 'international political theory'. Why the shift, and why might this matter? The names we use to describe what we do are important. Think of the change in the nature of the discourse that the shift from 'political economy' to 'economics' in the late nineteenth century both pre-figured and perhaps partly produced; the latter term has a

precise, scientific ring to it, the former suggests that the workings of the economy can never be divorced from the messy business of politics. Economists produce formal models which they test rigorously with the latest econometric techniques but which may not bear much relationship to issues in the actual economy; political economists, on the other hand, actually engage with the real world and might, just possibly, have something to say about genuine policy dilemmas, but their work is unlikely to be published in the best journals, because it is the economists who decide which are the best journals and what goes in them. Something not dissimilar happens in International Relations, where the leading figures (most of whom work in the USA, which is where the majority of scholars engaged in the field are to be found) have a strong sense of what good scholarship ought to look like, and have well established ways of marginalising work that does not follow the required pattern. And, cutting to the chase, in the 1980s when I and others used terms like 'international ethics' and 'normative theory' we were trying to change this – but actually, I believe, ended up by inviting the mainstream to marginalise our work.

The 1980s was a period when International Relations theory, especially in the US, was coming to terms with Waltz's structural realism, and the recasting of liberal international thought into neo-liberalism, or liberal institutionalism.[6] The anarchy problematic was dominant; the role of theory was to explain how egoists behaved under conditions of anarchy – restrained only by the balance of power said the neo-realists, capable of co-operation but only at sub-optimal levels said the neo-liberals. In neither case did the ethical dimension of state behaviour attract much consideration, and, more generally, an emphasis on the logic of expected consequences rather than the logic of appropriateness drew attention away from the role of norms in international relations.[7] Whereas the classical realists always had a strong sense of the morality of statecraft, and classical liberals were explicitly driven by ethical orientations towards co-operation and peace, their successors were much less interested in such matters. As noted above, modern analytical political

theorists on both sides of the Atlantic had begun to get interested in issues of global justice but International Relations as a discipline was uninterested. In the late 1980s I was one of those who thought that it ought to be interested, and who attempted to attract attention by writing about the global justice debates in IR journals, and by re-asserting the importance of the ethical considerations that actually the 'righteous realists' of an earlier age had taken for granted.[8]

International ethics seemed at the time to be a reasonable way of summarising what these issues were about, and it seemed equally reasonable to note the importance of norms by talking about normative International Relations theory. But this was a mistake for two, rather different, reasons. First of all, as suggested above, this terminology played into the hands of those within the discipline who were content to marginalise ethical concerns. Famously, Milton Friedman had drawn a distinction between positive and normative economics. The former, for example, produced objective accounts of the relationship between inflation and employment levels, while the latter concerned the political choice of the appropriate trade-off between these two indicators.[9] Friedman clearly believed the former task to be the more important and scholarly one, and mainstream IR theorists employed a similar argument to the same effect. The result was that normative theory was understood to be a kind of add-on which was essentially parasitic on the real task of IR theory, that of producing explanations of international behaviour. The notion that all theory was actually, in some sense, normative by virtue of the nature of the social sciences and the way in which they differed from the natural sciences could not get a hearing, and by defining oneself as a normative theorist one was in effect marginalising one's work. To be an international ethicist was, in some respects, even more limiting – just as Legal Ethics was a requirement for most Law degrees in the US so International Ethics 101 turned up on quite a few syllabi in American universities, but in both cases the programmes of study were seen

as subsidiary to the real business of scholarship, and the idea that all foreign policy behaviour has ethical implications was easily side-tracked.

The second reason why international ethics and normative international relations theory were unfortunate terms is because they inadvertently reinforced the idea that International Relations is a *sui generis* discourse. American International Relations scholars were usually to be found in Political Science Departments and, for better or worse, had Political Science training. However, in Britain, separate departments of IR were quite normal, and the general trend was to see International Relations as distinct from the study of Government, as Political Science was often called in Britain. What this meant in practice was that for most students of international relations the resources of two and a half millennia of political theorising were reduced to Thucydides, a nod towards Hobbes and Rousseau, and a misreading of Machiavelli.[10]

For both these reasons, International Political Theory is a far better term to describe what I do than the alternatives. It makes it very clear that what we are talking about here is theoretical reasoning that is deeply embedded in at least Western political thought, and not to be marginalised as parasitic on the allegedly more important task of producing explanatory theory. What of matters of substance? The early essays collected here exhibit a strong pluralist and cultural relativist bias – something similar is present in later papers as well, but in a muted form and with nowhere near the same confidence level. Most of the work on global justice produced in the 1980s and referred to above assumed the universal relevance of the concept of human rights – as the name suggests, these are rights one is believed to possess simply by virtue of being human – and attributed the weakness of the international human rights regime to the self-interest of oppressors, aided and abetted by Cold War politics. Against this position I argued then in a number of essays, some of which are reproduced in this collection, that it could not be assumed that human rights as a concept could be divorced from its European and Enlightenment origins, and that the West needed to

find a new way of engaging in dialogue with non-Western cultures. In the event, the Vienna Conference on Human Rights of 1993, which was intended to reassert universal values and re-boot the Human Rights Regime after the ending of the Cold War, produced a document widely regarded as a fudge, Samuel Huntington's thesis of a 'clash of civilisations' received much attention, and the notion of 'Asian Values', supposedly family- and community-oriented in opposition to Western individualism, was promulgated in East Asia.[11] After 9/11 gave dramatic evidence of the rise of radical Islam, Huntington's thesis was given new life, and the emergence of China as an authoritarian great power posed new challenges to an international society previously dominated by Western norms. All these developments suggest that the argument set out in e.g. 'The Modern Requirement' in 1988 was ahead of its time and anticipated much of the content of international political theory of the next two decades.

Unsurprisingly, I stand by the argument of that essay, and have reworked elements of it in other papers, criticising the idea that the notion of rights can be wrenched out of the context that produced them. The importance of understanding cultural pluralism remains central to my approach to international political theory. At the same time, readers will note that a certain uneasiness can be found in the later essays, a recognition that culture can easily become a kind of all-purpose alibi for awful behaviour. Equally, there is a realisation in these later essays that sometimes recognising cultural difference can involve condescension. Nineteenth century imperialists believed in the superiority of their 'standards of civilisation' and modern human rights advocates believe in their own set of standards – but the idea that there are no universal standards, that any practice is as good as any other so long as it is culturally embedded, is held in good faith by very few people in the West. Most of us actually do believe in the superiority of practices which recognise human equality, and insincere assertions of respect for contrary positions patronise those of whom they are made. Hence in these essays can be traced an increasing interest in approaches which attempt to

defend universal standards without resting on a history that is clearly not universal – figures like Richard Rorty and Martha Nussbaum feature here, but also John Rawls, for whose attempt to distinguish between those non-liberal societies that are decent and those that are not I have much sympathy.[12]

This shift is also reflected in the evolution of my thinking on the so-called cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. The revival in normative political theory which followed the publication of Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* in 1971[13] produced a divide in that discourse between liberal individualists such as Rawls himself and critics such as Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre who attacked the pre-social model of the individual that liberalism seemed to entail. Sandel coined the term communitarian to describe his position, and the individualist- or liberal-communitarian debate became a common way of describing the issues under consideration here.[14] In my 1992 book, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches,* and in various papers, I adopted this terminology, replacing 'liberal' or 'individualist' with 'cosmopolitan' in order to make a link between international political theory and the domestic variety while at the same time signalling that what was at stake were the international implications of liberal individualism.[15] This debate was a way of orienting contemporary international political theory with the work of past masters such as Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Mill, as well as linking to current controversies in contemporary political theory, thereby breaking out of the International Relations ghetto, and refuting Martin Wight's mischievous contention that there was no international theory.

This seemed like a good idea at the time, and, in context, perhaps it was. International political theory was effectively a new discourse and needed the support provided by a framework that allowed students to impose some kind of order on a very complex subject, and the notion that there was a cosmopolitan-communitarian debate provided exactly that. It also connected the contemporary discourse to a rich pre-history. But it is all to easy for a framework to become a cage, and once one goes deeper into the texts it is clear that the

thought of figures such as Kant and Hegel was far too complex to be covered by a label such as cosmopolitan or communitarian. As will be apparent from the essays collected in this edition, I have become increasingly sceptical of the value of referring to a cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, rejecting the crude binary involved in that debate and promoting an understanding of ethics that draws on both traditions. If pushed, I will still come down on the communitarian side of the divide – although, as noted above, with increasing scepticism about cultural relativism – but as far as possible nowadays I try to avoid being pushed.

An early essay in this collection ('The Modern Requirement') gives rather more than a nod towards a kind of post-modernism, and what is probably the most well-known piece collected here – 'Turtles All the Way Down' – is explicitly anti-foundationalist, and usually read as the work of someone who if not actually post-structuralist or post-modern is at least a fellow-traveller. Most of the early essays collected here are critical of what I called, rather too loosely, positivist social science and promote something called, equally loosely, post-positivism. Again this is an areas where my thinking has evolved, and for two reasons. First, although I still think there is something wrong with the way contemporary social scientists set up problems, I am nowadays more likely to look to pre-modern than to post-modern thought for the answer. It seems to me that Stephen Toulmin got it right when, in *Cosmopolis*, he identified the early seventeenth century as the point at which things went off the rails, when formal logic came to displace rhetoric, general principles and abstract axioms were privileged over particular cases and concrete diversity, and the establishment of rules (or 'laws') that were deemed of permanent as opposed to transitory applicability came to be seen as the task of the theorist.[16] Toulmin suggests, plausibly to my mind, that at this time moral reasoning became 'theory-centred' rather than 'practically-minded'.[17] From this perspective, and to put the matter rather provocatively, it now seems to me that for a good paradigm of moral reasoning on cultural pluralism, one should turn to Montaigne rather than Edward Said.

Being practically-minded means attempting to produce 'action-guiding' as opposed to 'world-revealing' work, to use Stephen White's helpful formulation, and this position has led me to become somewhat less critical of the project of an explanatory social science than I was two decades ago.[18] To put the matter a little more precisely, I no longer think that Robert Cox's famous distinction between 'problem-solving' and 'critical' theory holds.[19] All theory ought to be problem-solving – although defining what actually constitutes a problem can itself be problematic and Cox may be right to think that the current understanding of the problem of 'anarchy' serves the purposes of powerful states and thus a redefinition of this problem is desirable. But whatever the problem is, however it is defined, solving it should be the purpose of scholarly work – if not in an immediate, policy-relevant sense, then as a medium term goal. The shift over time towards action-guiding moral reasoning can be documented in those essays collected below which focus directly on 'real-world' problems, most of which were written in this decade rather than earlier.

Or perhaps another way of describing the shift would be to say that in my later work the theme of 'judgment' comes to the fore. A consistent theme of all the essays collected here has been hostility to the idea that decision-making on moral issues can be reduced to a mechanical process, the application of an algorithm. Whether the topic is the just war or duties to distant strangers, what is involved in forming a position is never adequately encapsulated by ticking boxes on a list and adding up the result. On the other hand, I am more willing now than I was twenty years ago to acknowledge that exercising judgment depends on the existence of good explanatory theory, and that what constitutes a good explanation is not a question that can be brushed aside by the proposition that all theory is normative.

All these points will, I hope, be more adequately defended in what follows. From around seventy essays published in the period I have chosen eighteen. Some of these essays more or less chose themselves in the sense that they already have a readership, but others are

included here simply because I think they are usefully illustrative of a point, even if they did not attract an audience when published; there are some papers which would have forced their way in had they not already been readily available on-line and, conversely, one or two which are here because they are more or less totally unavailable otherwise. For the sake of convenience I have organised these papers into three parts, focusing on cultural pluralism and justice, the discourse of IR and applied international political theory, but these divisions are somewhat arbitrary and several of the essays could plausibly appear in more than one section. In the rest of this introduction, I will comment briefly on the papers in the order in which they appear in the book with the intent of tracing the way in which the themes identified above are developed in the actual papers.

'The Modern Requirement?' is a short piece, written at quite high speed – but, I think, very revealing both in terms of identifying the themes which run through the rest of the essays and in pointing up some of the assumptions that I made then, but would no longer make now. For this reason it deserves to be looked at more closely than will be some of the other papers.

The opening sentence asserts that 'the most important task of international relations theory is to produce a coherent understanding of the moral underpinnings of North-South relations'. It seems to me that this is nearly right; what is unsatisfactory is the designation 'North-South' which shows the extent to which I was still caught up in an essentially economistic reading of world order, when the problematic should have been cultural pluralism not issues of development and underdevelopment. On the other hand, the next paragraph does indeed pick up this point, and conveys my belief that 'assuming that a generally agreed, cosmopolitan set of values exists or could be created, and that globally relevant normative theory can be erected on this base' is at the heart of the problem. I then go on to suggest that it may be in the nature of modernity and the 'Enlightenment Project' that this assumption will be made. I then argue that some anti-foundationalist trends in

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modern thought may be making cultural pluralism easier for the West to swallow, and that this trend is supportive of an 'ethic of coexistence' – moreover, such an ethic can be found in much of the thought of the Westphalian era and in the notion of a 'morality of states'.

I would not wish to back too far away from this position, but it is worth noting one feature of the way that the argument is set up that no longer rings true. I argue that those working within the Marxist tradition – and, by extension, progressive-minded liberals more generally – have been 'amongst the strongest defenders of the notion of modernity and have considered themselves to be carriers of the Enlightenment idea of critical self-awareness and rational discourse'. I'm quite sure that this ought still to be the case, but I'm equally sure it isn't; one of the most dramatic changes of the last twenty years has been the loss of faith in rational discourse of the liberal left. In the 1980s the standard left-critique of global capitalism was based precisely on 'critical self-awareness and rational discourse', but nowadays the anti-globalisation movement has bought into a romantic critique of capitalism which devalues reasoned analysis, and far too many figures on the left have been prepared to make common cause with anti-modernist political movements such as radical Islam. Whereas then anti-imperialism and anti-fascism went together, nowadays this cannot be assumed to be the case, and many of those on the left who see America as the main enemy have been willing to overlook the fascistic tendencies of many anti-American movements and factions.[19] This is a shift that I cannot personally countenance or indeed understand. I am glad that Barack Obama in now America's President, but I cannot understand the mind-set of those on the left who have been prepared to regard figures such as Fidel Castro or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as political heroes on the basis of their opposition to George W. Bush; in other words, those who cannot see a difference between political systems that are based on electorates who sometimes make poor choices, and those where choice is systematically denied or subverted.

Had I realised then that the natural defenders of the Enlightenment were going to make such a poor fist of the task over the next two decades, I would have been a lot less willing to endorse their critics. I suppose I am really acknowledging a degree of hypocrisy here; along with a great many late modern writers, I surmise, I was willing to kick against liberal rationalism largely because I thought it would always be there. Part of the story that unfolds in subsequent essays reflects a gradual realisation that this might not be the case. One final point before I leave this essay behind: back in the late 1980s, although the story of the *Requirement* was not in any sense a secret, neither was it widely known or discussed, but since then it has been picked up and taught quite widely in secondary schools. Yet, whereas I saw the *Requirement* as a kind of unsatisfactory and necessarily unsuccessful example of the need that actors in international relations have for moral justification, I fear that in the schools it is more likely to be taught as an example of Western insensitivity in the face of the 'other' – which it was, but that wasn't all it was, as I hope this essay demonstrates.

In 'Ethics of Coexistence', the notion of a morality of states is explored via an examination of the international theory of Terry Nardin. This is a much more conventional paper, but a couple of points are, perhaps, worthy of note. First, in order to present this position, I turn to an author whose intellectual roots lie with Oakeshottian political theory. I was aware that there were affinities between Nardin's position and that of some English School writers – those later elaborated by Nick Wheeler and Tim Dunne as English School pluralists – but I was impressed by his unwillingness to look in that direction. Second, one can see here the beginning of my prolonged engagement with the Rawlsian justice industry; the gentle sideswipe at Charles Beitz, and the favourable footnote on Rawls's own ideas have both been elaborated in a number of later pieces.

'International Theory and International Society: the Viability of the Middle Way' integrates Nardin's position with English School thinking, but also treats it rather more critically than

in 'Ethics of Coexistence'. The three-way distinction of system-society-community is set out, and the idea of an international society is cross-examined. Relating the discussion back to 'The Modern Requirement', the question of whether international society is actually *European* society is posed. Does a commitment to coexistence work without there being some kind of prior, unspoken sense of common values? The suggestion here is that it does not, but, on the other hand, that if such a sense does exists it is not clear why 'society' would not lead to 'community'. In other words, international society may be an inherently unstable location, liable to crash into system, or evolve into community. In passing, I should say that like many others in the collection, this essay was the result of a specific invitation, in this case from James Mayall to present at a seminar series he was organising – I find this very congenial; some people like to set their own agendas, but I actually enjoy responding to a commission of this kind.

The next two essays also grew out of conference/workshop presentations. In 'Universal Human Rights: A Critique' I draw out the implications of the position previously espoused on cultural pluralism for the international human rights regime, arguing that the foundations of the latter are deeply insecure. The notion of human rights grew out of a particular kind of society and could not be transplanted easily – at best, the result of such a transplantation would be the paying of lip service to ideas that had no local roots. I base this reasoning on a critique of natural law thinking, and on an essentially Hegelian account of the preconditions for an ethical community. All this sets out in detail a position that had been present much earlier, but it is, I think, interesting that I seem much less sanguine about the situation than in the past. I describe the societies out of which rights sprang as 'the freest, safest and most civilised' known to history, and go to some lengths in the second half of the paper to suggest that Richard Rorty's notion of a 'human rights culture' may be a way to preserve what could otherwise be lost in the wreckage of the current international human rights regime.

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This latter frame of mind is even more apparent in the next essay, 'Towards a Neo-Aristotelian Resolution of the Cosmopolitan-Communitarian Debate' which was written for a *Millennium* Conference. In *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* I set out what I took to be the terms of a cosmopolitan-communitarian confrontation; here, a few years later, I recognise that each position has both strengths and weaknesses, and, instead of simply describing this as opening up the possibility of an ongoing conversation – which is how the book treated this binary – I now look for some kind of resolution. This time it is the early work of Martha Nussbaum, and her explicitly neo-Aristotelian account of the virtues, rather than Rorty's pragmatism, that seems to me to offer a way through what I am now acknowledging as an unfruitful impasse. Nussbaum's later attempt to produce a definitive list of 'human capabilities' is less plausible because it abandons the flexibility that her earlier position, but the basic move to change the question from 'what should we do?' to 'how should we live?' – the key move of virtue ethics – is, I think, exactly right, as is the move away from trying to specify what the good life would entail towards identifying lives that could not be considered good under any circumstances.

The final two essays in the first section summarise and clarify the arguments set out above; they represent an ending, but also point to new lines of inquiry, followed up in the third section on the book. 'Cultural Pluralism and International Political Theory: From the *Requirement* to Mutual Respect' began life as an inaugural lecture at the University of Southampton, given in early 1998 – rather embarrassing timing since I left Southampton for the LSE later in the year. As the title suggests, the essay returns to the *Requirement* but with a slightly different argument. This time I recognise much more explicitly that although the *Requirement* was self-serving it also drew on universal values; the problem is that these values were not, and could not be, recognised as universal by the people to whom the document was read. I make a comparison with the so-called 'ethical foreign policy' of the then new Labour Government, which came into office in May 1997. 'Mutual respect'

is the term used for this policy in key documents and speeches, and I suggest here that although the content of mutual respect is very different from the content of the *Requirement*, the structure of the argument behind it is very similar. Later in the essay I again refer to neo-Aristotelian approaches, but now with greater emphasis on a shift away from 'theory-centred' to 'practical minded' thinking. This would come to dominate my work in the 2000s.

'The Construction of a "Realistic Utopia": John Rawls and International Political Theory' could be seen as an elaboration of a short footnote in 'Ethics of Co-existence', where I note that Rawls's own account of international justice is resolutely non-cosmopolitan. The latter essay was written in the late 1980s and its brief statement on Rawls was consistent with his subsequent *The Law of Peoples,* published first in 1993 in essay form and then elaborated in 1999 in the form of a short book – much to the dismay of cosmopolitan liberals who had wanted to claim Rawls as their own.[21] These cosmopolitans were distressed that Rawls was so explicitly rejecting global egalitarianism, and equally disturbed that his account of non-liberal but 'decent' societies involved toleration of what they considered the intolerable. It seemed to me that Rawls's argument, although not without its problems, actually represented a genuine advance, and certainly chimed with my own interest in cultural pluralism. I used the opportunity of an invitation to give the annual E.H. Carr Lecture at Aberystwyth in Autumn 2000 to suggest to an International Relations audience that even if Rawls was rejected by cosmopolitan liberals, he was a thinker who should be taken very seriously by international political theorists. The lecture was, I think, a success, but I don't think I made many converts to the Rawlsian cause. Although I returned to the issue of global and international justice in conference papers, my book *Sovereignty, Rights and Justice* in 2002[22], and in a number of survey articles later in the decade, 'The Construction of a "Realistic Utopia"' represented for me a kind of ending. It said pretty

much all I had to say about the question of justice, and, in any event, this discourse involved exactly the kind of theory-centred reasoning that I was turning away from.

The first essay in Part 2 of the collection – 'Not My Department? Normative Theory and International Relations' – actually illustrates the artificiality of the division into three parts, because, although making a case for normative theory, it does so partly by examining the issue of cultural relativism. Still, the main point made here is somewhat different, and is designed to counter the popular belief that moral values are simply matters of personal preference, inaccessible to analysis or rational argumentation. Everyone who has taught international ethics or normative theory will be familiar with the student who announces that something is 'just my opinion' in a tone of voice that implies that there is nothing else to say about the matter. This is, I believe, fundamentally wrong. It may be the case that ultimately our values do represent choices we have made, but it is certainly possible to trace the implications of these choices and their logical relationship to other things we value. This essay was written for the first volume of a graduate student-run journal at the University of Kent, then titled *Paradigms* – the journal is now *Global Society*, better known than *Paradigms*, but no longer edited by students.

'Hegel and International Ethics' was the product of a commission from *Ethics & International Affairs*, the journal of the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, an organisation with whom I have had a very happy and fruitful relationship over the last two decades or more. Joel Rosenthal – then editor of the journal, now President of the Council – felt that although this would be an unusually theoretical article for *E & IA*, it would perform a valuable task because in the immediate post-Cold War world Hegelian ideas of civil society, even of 'the end of history', seemed to be having some purchase, and it would be good to have a short, comprehensible, account of the fount of this wisdom. For me, it was an opportunity to attack the common but mistaken belief that Hegel was an obvious source of German militarism; unfortunately, one of the people who held this

common belief was Robert Myers, then President of the Carnegie Council, so getting the article published was a struggle for Joel. I claim no great originality for the arguments in this piece, but include it here because it is still one of the only short accounts of Hegel's international theory.

'Turtles All the Way Down' is a more substantial piece, one of the longest in the collection. In *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* I had looked at post-modern and critical theoretical approaches to International Political Theory in a rather unsatisfactory, somewhat unsophisticated, final chapter. Here I make amends with a more measured survey of the field, arranged around different approaches to the crisis of modernity. I distinguish between the Critical Theory (upper case) of the Frankfurt School and its descendants, which attempts to re-establish a firm ground upon which to base our analysis, and the wider notion of critical theory (lower case) which includes Critical Theory but also includes those who are happy to think without foundations. The argument here is complex and the authors covered are many, too complex and too many to summarise easily, but I think the basic story holds up quite well fifteen years later.

Still, this is a discussion to which I have not returned and in 'Liberalism and the Globalization of Ethics' – written for an Ethikon Conference in 2004 – I present a picture of liberal thought which, overall, is much more sympathetic than my previous efforts. Although I remain critical of cosmopolitan liberalism, here I make clear my commitment to the kind of communitarian liberalism espoused by Michael Walzer; indeed one reason for including this essay is that otherwise the enormous intellectual debt I owe to Walzer would remain unpaid. Visible also here is the way in which I have moved increasingly in the direction of a kind of Blairite liberal internationalism; this is one of my first major essays written post 9/11, and it shows. Lest it be thought that my emphasis on practically-minded work indicated a willingness to buy into rational choice thinking in International Relations, the final essay in this section, 'Tragedy, Tragic Choices and International Political Theory',

can act as a corrective. Here I show an increasing sympathy for classical realism because it recognises the tragic dimension to human existence, but little sympathy for the kind of work which attempts to work round this dimension in order to produce a scientific understanding of the world.

The last five essays all address current or recent controversies, and, I hope, represent the kind of practical-minded thinking that I wish to promote. 'Cosmopolitanism, World Citizenship and Global Civil Society' is the most 'theoretical' of the four, but it has a very practical purpose; namely, to unsettle those who promote the idea of a global civil society without giving sufficient attention to its preconditions. Like most of the proponents of global civil society, my ultimate focus remains on the welfare of the 'wretched of the earth', but it seems to me crystal clear that what the latter need is not some kind of meaningless global citizenship, but an effective and responsive state that will work on their behalf rather than oppress and exploit them.

'On Morality, Self-Interest and the Ethical Dimension of Foreign Policy' is devoted to undermining the belief that for a foreign policy to be 'moral' it must be altruistic. The latter position is held by both those I term 'saloon bar realists' and by the Chomskyan left, in both cases in order to undermine those who are committed to the idea of a morally-defensible foreign policy. I argue that there is nothing inherently immoral in being self-interested so long as the interests of others are also taken into account – an ethical foreign policy will be one that creatively marries these two motivations, not one that suppresses the former in the interests of the latter. In 'Selective Humanitarianism: In Defence of Inconsistency', I continue this argument by addressing one of the commonest critiques of humanitarian intervention, which asks 'why does the West intervene in Bosnia (Kosovo, East Timor, Sierra Leone) when conditions are so much worse in Congo (Chechnya, Tibet, Gaza)?' and answers that so-called 'humanitarianism' is simply a cover for imperialism. I suggest here that the desire for consistent rules to govern when an intervention is

legitimate, is actually, consciously or unconsciously, a desire that there be no interventions – principles such as 'do no harm' actually translate into an injunction to allow other people to do harm without external interference. Selectivity is a necessary part of any policy process, as is self-interest, and there is no reason to apologise for either.

'Practical Judgement and the Ethics of Pre-emption' is more controversial and more obviously a response to 9/11 and the Iraq War of 2003. I argue that antipathy to George W. Bush's Texan rhetoric should not blind us to the fact that pre-emption may sometimes be a necessity; the US *National Security Strategy* of 2002 contained some unfortunate flourishes, but was nonetheless, for the most part, a thoughtful document. The search for absolute security is doomed to fail, and realists are right to stress the importance of prudence, but sometimes the judgement that now is not the time for prudence has to be made. The decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003 may, in the event, have represented a failure of judgement, but there are other ways in which judgement can fail, and, for example, the 'prudent' refusal to stand up to Serbian aggression in 1990 and 1991 – praised by 'realists' at the time – led to the miseries of Bosnia and Kosovo through the rest of the decade. When I presented this essay as a paper at the International Studies Association Annual Conference in 2006 it attracted a great deal of criticism, the intensity of which leads me to think that the hatred for former President Bush present in the American intelligentsia, and for ex-Prime Minister Blair in their British equivalent, actually stands in the way of clear thinking. At the time of writing, President Obama is still very popular on both sides of the Atlantic – but I suspect he too will fall victim to similar hostility when he makes the decisions that all presidents sometimes have to make.

The final essay returns to the issue of contemporary cosmopolitanism, but this time addressing popular culture rather than the cosmopolitanism of the intelligentsia. 'Bob Dylan, Live Aid, and the Politics of Popular Cosmopolitanism' takes on the Geldofs and Bonos of this world, using a few words spoken by Bob Dylan at *Live Aid 1985* as the

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starting point for an argument that the right kind of nationalism – symbolised by the commitment of American singers to *Farm Aid* – is wholly compatible with a kind of generous internationalism that is of more use to the world than the phoney cosmopolitanism that Geldof and Bono symbolise. This is, I think, a suitable essay with which to end this collection – it brings together many of the themes that are present elsewhere, but it's also, I hope, fun.