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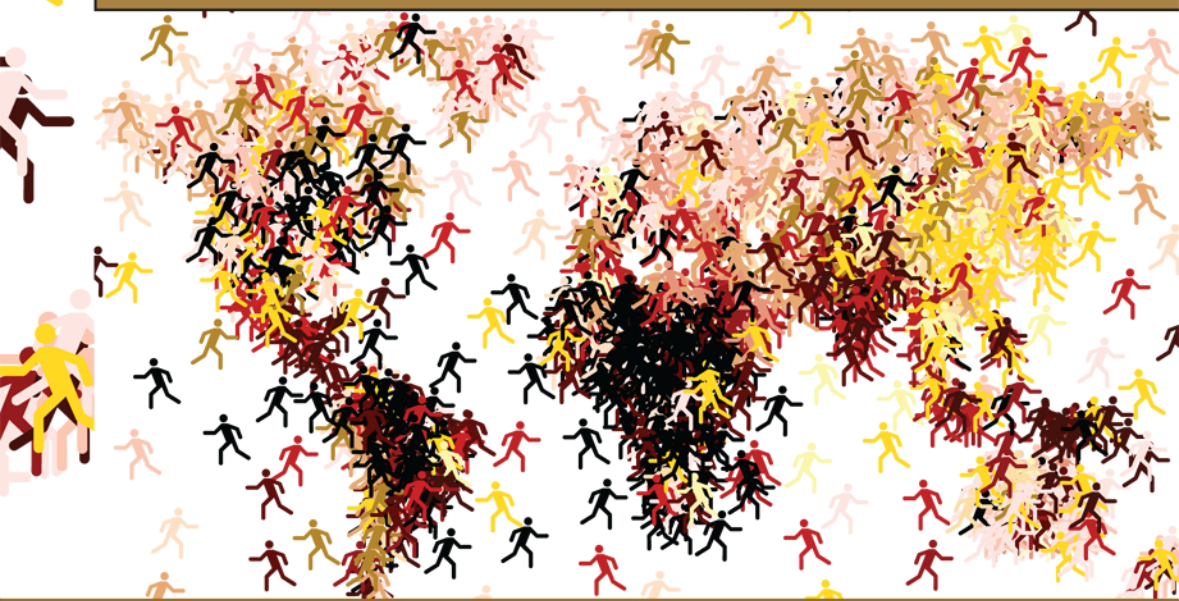
Nicholas Greenwood Onuf



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PREFACE

In this world of our making, scholarship is social construction, and any piece of scholarship has many authors. Most of the authors of this book I cannot name because I do not remember who they are and how they helped. The influence of others I acknowledge by reference to their written work as the book proceeds. A few people have made contributions I cannot forget and deeply appreciate.

Among them were my teachers. As I worked on this book, I repeatedly encountered the names of Frederic Lane, Maurice Mandelbaum, and Hillis Miller. These scholars were teachers of mine respectively in History, Philosophy and Literature during my first year at Johns Hopkins University. They and their like provided me with a matchless introduction to the world of scholarship. Later, other teachers made more specific contributions to this work. Robert Tucker introduced me to International Relations as a field of study and then taught me how to read closely. George Liska imparted both a love of theory and a view of international relations that finds it clearest expression in the last pages of chapter 6. Harold Lasswell's and Myres McDougal's shared concern for categories and classificatory schemes pervades this book. Karl Deutsch's advice to distinguish between constitution and regulation for the purposes of a paper I was writing for him proved to be a bomb with a very long fuse. It goes off in chapter 1. A paper I wrote for Robert Osgood saw the first, tentative articulation of one of chapter 8's major themes.

Louis Henkin's invitation to address a seminar at Columbia Uni-

versity early in 1982 prompted my first sketch of what was to become the book's conceptual structure. Work subsequently undertaken with Spike Peterson decisively advanced this structure, with chapter 4 one consequence. At her urging, I also engaged postpositivist social theory seriously and found myself rethinking most of my scholarly convictions. Chapter 1 is only the most tangible result. Friedrich Kratochwil and I discussed issues raised in chapter 2 on many occasions, always to my benefit. His support and critical assistance also made a mark on chapters 5 and 6. Theodore Couloumbis played a similar role in the development of chapter 7, as did Frank Klink in the instance of chapter 8. Robert Keohane's careful reading of what was to become chapter 5 significantly affected the final version. A remark of his about the project overall, and a similar remark of Peter Cowhey's, both made at a critical juncture, clarified for me choices I had yet to make about the book's form and thrust. Neither of them will find me having chosen as they recommended.

I am grateful to Fouad Ajami and my brother Peter Onuf for their encouragement over the course of my labors. Both read the full text, and Peter most of its pieces before their assembly. My wife Sandra Keowen and Jason Wittenberg also read the full text, and in so doing provided me with indispensable editorial assistance. Timothy Buch, Kurt Burch, William Olson and, as readers for the University of South Carolina Press, Fritz Kratochwil (again), Donald Puchala, and R. B. J. Walker all made useful suggestions for the final revision. I must also acknowledge the innumerable ways in which my graduate students at American University shaped my thoughts on so many of this book's concerns.

Much of the material in these pages first took an independent form. At Raymond Duvall's invitation, I presented a version of the introduction at the American Political Science Association's 1987 Convention under the title, "After International Relations: The Constitution of Disciplines and Their Worlds." Substantial parts of chapter 2 first appeared in 1985 under the title, "Do Rules Say What They Do? From Ordinary Language to International Law," *Harvard International Law Journal* 26: 385–410. They are copied with permission. Copyright © 1988 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Chapter 3 incorporates material first appearing in 1987 in *Human Development* 30: 257–267, under the title, "Rules in Moral Development." Reprinting is with the permission of S. Karger A. G., Basel.

A small grant from the College of Public and International Affairs, American University, expedited the development of chapter 3.

Chapter 5 grew out of my comments on papers presented by Hayward Alker and Richard Ashley at the Griffith Lecture Series, School of International Service, American University in 1986. Another version will appear in a volume entitled *After Anarchy,* with Alker and Ashley its editors. Chapter 6 first took the form of a paper Frank Klink and I presented to the International Studies Association's 1986 Convention. Much of it is appearing this year in the *International Studies Quarterly* under the title "Anarchy, Authority, Rule." Anonymous reviewers and Rick Ashley, as one of the journal's editors, deserve credit for many improvements in the published versions of this material. Chapter 7 began as a presentation before a postgraduate seminar in the Law School of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Another version was to have appeared in the *Hellenic Review of International Relations,* which has regrettably ceased publication. Excerpts from *Goethe's Faust, Part I,* translated by Randall Jarrell, are reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc. Copyright 1959, 1961, 1965, 1973 by Mary von Schrader Jarrell.

I thank Charles Kegley and Don Puchala for their invitation early in 1984 to undertake a book for the Series in International Relations which they edit for the University of South Carolina Press. Ted Couloumbis and Dimitri Constantopoulos provided me with superb working circumstances in Thessaloniki in the fall of 1984, and Amal Jayawardane and Stanley Wijesundera did the same in Colombo, Sri Lanka, during the first six months of 1987. Wherever I have worked on this book, my wife Sandi made the circumstances ideal.

INTRODUCTION

The point of this book is to reconstruct a self-consciously organized field of study, or discipline, called International Relations. To do so necessarily involves reconsideration of international relations as something to study.[1] I use the term "reconstruct" deliberately, both because my goal is ambitious and because I am committed to a philosophical position, detailed in chapter 1, which I call "constructivism." In my view, people always construct, or constitute, social reality, even as their being, which can only be social, is constructed for them.[2]

In order to show how, why, and in what degree I part company with other scholars, I begin this introduction with a brief construction of their endeavors. This I do first by defining the terms "politics" and "international relations" and then by showing that their routine sense constitutes Political Science and International Relations as disciplines. By presenting an informal history of International Relations and then, more abstractly, the properties of disciplines, I situate myself in respect to my own discipline and its constitutive premises.

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1. For convenience, disciplines and fields of study will always be designated in the Upper Case, their subjects of concern in the lower case.
2. Hereafter I will use the terms "construct" and "constitute" interchangeably. This is the usual practice of scholars taking a position like mine.

Finally I state my difficulties with the discipline as constituted and announce an alternative. The rest of the book is given over to this alternative.

THE QUEST

The term "international relations" is generally understood to be lacking in precise definition. Nevertheless, it would seem to have a core meaning both in ordinary language and current scholarship. "International relations" refers to an ensemble of activities that is recognizably political despite its sweep and diffuseness. Activities are political when members of a social unit construe those activities to be the most important ones engaging their attention. When those activities extend beyond the immediate, established locale within which members of a social unit ordinarily act on their urgent concerns, international relations result.

I am not aware that any one scholar has proposed just this definition of politics. On the contrary, I find myself chastized for its vagueness and context dependence; it cannot be made operational (compare Connolly 1974: 15–17). The same can be said of many other definitions of the term. Take Vernon Van Dyke's:

> Activity is political when it relates to a public issue, and it relates to a public issue when two conditions are met. In the first place, it must relate to the decision making of a group, i.e., it must concern group policy, group organization, or group leadership, or it must concern the regulation of intergroup relations. In the second place, it must come within the realm of the controversial (1960: 133).

Surely everyone agrees that politics are a social activity. Thus for Van Dyke, politics "must relate to the decision making of a group. . . ." He went on to say that politics reside in "the realm of the controversial." Not all controversies yield to decision. To say, as is often said, that not deciding is indeed a way of deciding is to rob the term "decision" of any content. Rather, we quite often speak as if failure to decide identifies what is controversial for any group. Further-

more, politics may well concern "the regulation of intergroup relationships," but, in Van Dyke's terms, decision is a group, and not an intergroup, activity.

Problems raised by Van Dyke's attempt to specify conditions necessary for politics disappear if one resorts instead to importance as a criterion of political activity. We know that any given group takes matters to be important when controversy attends them. We know that matters are important when groups establish sites and methods for deciding them. While controversy and established venues for decision are undoubtedly the two most reliable clues that politics are present in people's affairs, we can hardly suppose that they exhaust the possible manifestations of politics. Notice also that words and phrases like "controversy" and "established venues for decision" foster the illusion of concreteness without being any less vague or context dependent than the term "importance" (compare Van Dyke 1970: 135 on the term "institution").

Does Van Dyke's more general definition of politics as activity relating to public issues do better? The term "issue" would seem to substitute for "controversy" as well as for matters available for group decision without any great change in specificity. The term "public" adds nothing if it does no more than describe a group. I suspect that Van Dyke had something more in mind. Nevertheless, what one can mean by "public"—beyond that connoted by reference to matters subject to decision, controversy, that which is at issue or matters of importance to members of a social unit—I cannot begin to say.

I know of two alternative definitions of "politics" that avoid the problem of vagueness. One finds any social unit's politics confined to formally and specifically designated sites and methods for deciding important matters—government and law in the usual sense. The other finds politics in everything social. In the first instance, precision is achieved by excluding activities as sweeping and diffuse as those covered by the term "international relations." In the second, precision is offset by the mass and diversity of those activities that are included. Locating politics between these poles is both necessary and contentious.

Disagreement over the term "politics" suggests the relativity of its subject. My recourse to the criterion of importance suggests the same. Yet acknowledgment that politics are relative need not be taken as capitulation to the position that everything social is politi-

cal. On this I concur with William E. Connolly (1974: 13–15) and Fred M. Frohock (1979: 860–862). Politics is a "cluster concept."[3] As such it has a limited number of "structural features" identified by "core terms" (Frohock 1979: 865). Frohock found two such terms, "directiveness" and "aggregation" (pp. 865–867).

Obviously my definition includes the second of these terms. Only in aggregates can people practice politics. I am also persuaded by the first term, "directiveness," which for Frohock "denotes agents acting on one another, 'directing' one another's behavior" (1979: 865), but not by his explication of it.[4] Frohock held that directiveness

> is suggested by traditional concerns for power, authority, in the history of political thought, but also describes more modern transactions like bargaining, gaming (action in conditions of no-authority), providing rational incentives . . . , control of agendas and general social conditions. 'Directiveness' also concerns human behavior originating in both *decisions* and *non-decisions,* where the latter can accommodate tradition, habit, unconscious behavior in general (maps can give 'directions,' for example), as well as that species of politics emphasized of late . . . where people act upon one another by *not* making decisions which could transform some state of affairs (p. 865, two citations deleted, his emphases).

The difficulty with Frohock's attempt at specificity is inclusiveness. Everything is thrown in, from "*general* social conditions" to "un-

3. Both Connolly and Frohock discussed the concept of "cluster concept" in the context of W. B. Gallie's influential idea that some concepts, including many that are political (his examples are democracy and justice), are "essentially contested" (1962). Gallie argued that one of the conditions defining such concepts is that they derive "from an original exemplar whose authority is acknowledged by all the contestant users of the concept" (p. 131). While this condition effectively delimits contested concepts, it does so too narrowly. The clustering of invocations and applications to which a given concept may be subjected can have other bases.
4. Although I am persuaded by Frohock's criterion of directiveness, I will abstain after the discussion at hand from using the word "directive" or any of its cognates as he did. This is to avoid confusion with the terms "directive speech act" and "directive-rule," which I introduce in chapter 2 and use extensively thereafter.

conscious behavior in *general*" (my emphases). Lost is any conceivable gain from the kind of terms that Van Dyke and I have used.

The term "directiveness" can help, however, if it is taken to exclude much of what Frohock included. Members of an aggregation tell, or somehow make it known, what others in that aggregation should do. They can do the telling directly, as the authority of "the history of political thought" directs us to believe, or indirectly, through controlling agendas, deciding what maps should say, and so on. If directing is at the core of politics, it is because some or all members of a social unit treat some matter as important enough to expend resources to affect the disposition of that matter. Direction results when some member or members prevail. What they say serves as a direction to others, with consequences that we think of as mapping the direction in which a matter goes.

The nexus of directing and direction, giving and taking, suggests that politics has to do with contests of wills or, as Van Dyke emphasized, struggle—"struggle among actors pursuing conflicting desires on public issues" (1960: 131; see also p. 134). It suggests that contestants use resources to prevail. In popular understanding and most treatments of international relations, power and struggle are inextricable elements of politics. (Consider the title of Hans J. Morgenthau's legendary textbook: *Politics among Nations, The Struggle for Power and Peace,* 1948.) Finally, the directiveness of politics suggests that contests and consequences are asymmetrical. Some members of a social unit prevail more often than others do, and they benefit more from having done so.

This last conclusion is difficult to resist insofar as politics is understood mainly by reference to specific institutions like the state. It is resisted when such institutions are not in evidence, international relations being a case in point. Since these activities escape the confinement of established venues, collisions of wills and endless contests make for uncertainty among the diverse people affected by them and foster an unwillingness by at least some of those affected to accept the consequences. As most people see it, the result is plenty of struggle but little of the stable asymmetry implied by politics' directiveness. Depending on one's perspective, international relations are politics at the limit, perhaps the limiting case of politics, perhaps beyond.

The ambiguous way in which politics and international relations

come together is not just a matter of sloppy usage or popular misunderstanding. Scholars reproduce this ambiguity when they refer to international relations in terms of decentralization, self-help, and especially of late, anarchy.[5] These terms are nearly synonymous, conveying as they do the same two notions. First, international relations form a bounded and distinctive social reality. Second, what makes this particular set of social relations distinctive is that they are manifestly political even though directiveness in its fullest sense is not to be found. As Political Scientists are wont to say, the element of authority is lacking.

Political Science is a discipline marked by its preoccupation with relations of authority—stable and accepted asymmetries in capacities and outcomes. One need only recall David Easton's extraordinarily influential decree that "political science be described as the study of the authoritative allocation of values for a society" (1953: 129; see also later in this chapter). Most scholars who devote their attention to international relations are trained in Political Science. Yet they profess to work in a discipline of their own, one which is only a few decades old. The insecurities of youth are compounded by ambiguous relations with neighboring disciplines. Stanley Hoffmann has suggested that the need to be free from History and Law while maintaining proprietary interests in diplomatic history and international law inspired early disciplinary claims (1977: 44). I would add to this the need to be free of Political Science while professing that international relations, as a bounded and distinctive social reality, is nevertheless manifestly political.

At least in the United States, most scholars identifying themselves with International Relations hold appointments in departments of Political Science. Many more of these scholars are active members of the American Political Science Association than of the American Historical Association or the American Society of International Law. They are more frequently members of editorial boards of scholarly journals in Political Science than in History or Law. In these circumstances, we could reasonably expect that in recent decades scholars

5. Illustratively: "International systems are decentralized and anarchic" (Waltz 1979: 88). "Self-help is necessarily the principle of action in an anarchic order" (p. 111).

of international relations have been more mindful of their uncomfortably initimate relation to Political Science than of their distant, occasional, even opportunistic association with other disciplines, including Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology.

The situation is less clear outside the United States. In Britain, for example, History and Law have always appealed to scholars with interests in international relations. Nevertheless, as Hoffmann (1977) so forcefully demonstrated, International Relations is substantially an American discipline. As such, its initiatives and achievements, detours and disappointments are the work of a small band of scholars. They share many assumptions, not least about politics and Political Science. They find in each other support and solace, and they follow each other like zigzagging shoals of minnows.

To a degree unmatched in the proliferation of disciplines in the modern university, International Relations was shaped from the beginning by the exhortations and example of one scholar—the same Hans Morgenthau whose textbook I remarked on a page or two back. Morgenthau's lasting gifts to the discipline were two. One was his preoccupation with clashes of power and interest (see further in chapters 7 and 8), which wrested a piece of politics for the new discipline. The second was his commitment to "scientific inquiry . . ." (1948: 4; see also Hoffmann 1977: 44).

The first edition of *Politics among Nations* fails to mention theory specifically. Morgenthau nevertheless saw theory as the centerpiece of scientific inquiry. "Science is theoretical, or it is nothing" (1959): 16). Thus the opening words of a later edition of *Politics among Nations:* "This book purports to present a theory of international politics" (1967: 3).

Morgenthau held that "a scientific theory is a system of empirically verifiable, general truths, sought for their own sake" (1959: 16). He believed in objective "laws of politics" and "in the possibility of developing a rational theory that reflects, however imperfectly and onesidedly, these objective laws" (p. 4). This is, as Hoffmann observed in 1960, "theory as a set of answers" (p. 30). Morgenthau presented no such theory. Instead his "peremptory pronouncements . . . incited readers to react and by reacting, criticizing, correcting, refuting, to hold onto other designs. He was both a goad and a foil" (Hoffmann 1977: 45). Theory as a set of questions invited alternative assumptions, more rigorous formulations, the kind of science

that Morgenthau did not himself pursue. Only then could a better, clearer set of answers eventuate and the promise of a discipline be fulfilled (Hoffmann 1960: 40).

Hoffmann later called this complex response to Morgenthau "the quest for certainty" (1977: 57). For Hoffmann, this quest is specifically an American concern. Peoples with longer histories and a less self-conscious will to change the world are less likely to take up the quest. For James N. Rosenau, "the restless quest" (although, properly speaking, scholars are restless, not the quest) is shared by all those who engage in science, whatever their specific disciplinary concerns (1976: 1). Restlessness defines the enterprise. For Yale H. Ferguson and Richard W. Mansbach, the vicissitudes of international relations are responsible for "the elusive quest," as their book is entitled (1988). Although it is the goal of theory, not the "quest for theory" (p. 3), that eludes us, their point is clear: The comforts of theory as a set of answers, and with it a tidy discipline, seem farther away now, forty years later, than they ever did (see, for example, pp. 23–24).

Not every scholar holding forth on the subject speaks of quest. To me the metaphor hints that theory is a holy grail. Once found, it will give us some kind of transcendental knowledge that I for one do not believe is possible (see chapter 1). Yet I share with almost everyone committed to the discipline a sense of disarray and loss of well being, to paraphrase K. J. Holsti (1985: 1–2). How have we gotten here?

Even to ask this question is to invite the charge of historicism, the presumption that history is going somewhere in particular (Mandelbaum 1971: 41–138). I risk this charge to follow the convenient historicist practice of breaking up history into epochs. For this purpose, I start, as Hoffmann has (1977: 43–47), with the Second World War and the response in the United States to its end. The discipline's formative period, dominated by the redoubtable figure of Morgenthau, continued for about a decade. (See also Liska 1966: 5; Olson 1971 used a different periodization, retained by Olson and Onuf 1986, noting two prior phases in "an emerging discipline," p. 6) The next period, 1955–1965, George Liska aptly called "the heroic decade" (1966). If the "first decade was one of discovery," then the second "was one of heroic effort at conquest . . ." (p. 5). The conquerors were few in number and mostly younger scholars. Each proposed a highly generalized account of the way that international relations

work. Each account was unrelated to the others. Yet each was held to get at the core of international relations.

This was a time of high hopes. Liska, himself one of the decade's heroes and writing at its end, eloquently captured both the hopes and soon to be realized fears of the time.

> Here was an effort to break through to a really new mode, level, and scope of theoretical investigation which would make conventional styles of analysis and generalization obsolete and would lift international relations to the self-same exact and social sciences by which new approaches were largely inspired. The problem from the outset was how to connect refined and rigorous abstract formulations with the crude and contingent data of international relations, to produce new insights and explanations rather than elaborately overlaid restatements and tautologies, and to do so with reference to questions and data which were at once amenable to the new techniques of inquiry and intrinsically significant (p. 6).

The decade from 1965 to 1975 saw proliferating efforts to cope with the problem Liska foresaw. Inevitably attention turned from theory to methods. Coincidentally substantial funding and powerful computing machinery became available in the United States to support empirically directed research into international relations. Such theory as we find is carefully bounded. For example, Dina Zinnes (1976) elaborated formal models of arms races. Robert Jervis (1976) ransacked social psychology for hypotheses on misperception. In each instance, formal rigor or empirical credibility was achieved by locating theory at the edge of what Morgenthau had held to be the discipline's core concerns. Under the influence of Thomas S. Kuhn's depiction of "normal science" (1970a), many scholars saw themselves engaged in "puzzle solving" and identified "the cumulation of knowledge" as their primary concern (Rosenau 1976a: 145–215).

The next decade, 1975–1985, is one in which funding for large research projects evaporated and interest in problems of method diminished. There was also a modest revival of theory. The intrusion of doubt in the United States about Morgenthau's view of the world, long ensconced in public policy, played a part in this change (Ferguson and Mansbach 1987: 104–106). The American discipline of In-

ternational Relations opened up to a larger, previously uncongenial world of ideas on how international relations take place and what activities they properly encompass. Terms like "dependency," "world-system," "interdependence," and "transnational relations" were much discussed.

The late 1970s amplified the incoherence of competing theoretical orientations left over from the heroic decade. Perhaps in response to this incoherence, and certainly in response to widely held anxieties about the changing position of the United States in the world (Ferguson and Mansbach 1988: 106–107), many scholars returned to Morgenthau's vision of politics not beholden to authority as the core of international relations. That core was enlarged by recognition that matters of economy are indubitably political and stiffened by a renewed commitment to rigor. This new-old theoretical orientation secured important, though hardly similar, expositions from Kenneth Waltz and Robert Gilpin (1979 and 1981 respectively). By the end of this period, we find a younger scholar (Snidal 1985a) making claims on behalf of theory worthy of the young heroes of an earlier time (for example, Kaplan 1961).

While International Relations experienced a revival of theory between 1975 and 1985, many other branches of intellectual and scholarly life experienced their own, more spectacular, changes. The common point of departure was a repudiation of the positivist model of science as a canonical characterization of theory and its relation to methods of inquiry. This model had, of course, dominated all the social sciences from the time of their emergence as disciplines, or soon thereafter, until the mid-1970s. To read outside of International Relations in recent years is to drink from the swirling waters of postpositivism. This is a heady experience, disorienting in its critical assaults against established ways of systematic thinking and refreshing in its challenge to think differently.

Since 1985, most scholars in International Relations seem to have been intent on consolidating the gains of the preceding decade. This entails substantiating available theoretical propositions. The problem is to do so without the cost and distraction of returning to the methodological concerns of an earlier time. For many of these scholars, the solution is to undertake case studies and submit them to informal comparison. They guide their students into doing the same. While there is an attractive modesty to this kind of activity, its effect

is to deny the discipline any direction at all. Sensing stasis, a few scholars have begun to test the critical currents washing through the rest of the social sciences.

Conspicuous among them is Richard K. Ashley, who has emerged as champion of a "critical social theory of international politics" that is poststructuralist in inspiration (1987, 1988). Poststructuralism centers on the deliberately provocative work of two French writers, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, and has become especially prominent in literary criticism in the United States. Poststructuralist critics use "language against itself," a practice Derrida called "deconstruction" (see Norris 1982 for a useful introduction, quoting here from a chapter title, p. 18). As will become clearer in the next chapter, poststructuralism repudiates the deepest assumptions of Western rationalism and all that is built upon them. Given that all is built on words and with words, deconstruction is the method of choice in pursuing this extraordinary reversal.

One of the crowning achievements of the West over the past several centuries is the edifice of theory: theory as an idea and objective, theory as an enterprise, theory as an economic statement of what we think we know about the world and ourselves, theory as the grounds for judgment. Much, most of what poststructuralists and indeed most postpositivists have to say against this edifice is well taken. I subscribe to it without drawing the conclusion that the quest for some kind of theory must be abandoned. Thus I take to heart Foucault's injunction to "dispense with 'things'" (see the quotation introducing part I), not just as a critical strategy, but as a guideline for constituting a social theory of international politics.

This is where Ashley and I differ. For all his talk of theory, Ashley cannot do theory without doing what is incorrigibly implicated in the Western project he would cast off. The best he can achieve is "a view from afar, from up high" (1987: 408). I think it would help to quote at length the passage in which these words appear.

> Eschewing any claim to secure grounds, the appropriate posture would aspire to an overview of international history in the making, a view from afar, a view up high. The appropriate posture is disposed to a view very much like that of Michel Foucault's *genealogical* attitude: "a form of history which accounts for the constitution of knowledge, discourses, domains

> of knowledge, etc. without having to refer to a subject, whether it be transcendental in relation to the field of events or whether it chases its empty identity throughout history."
>
> From a distant genealogical standpoint, what catches the eye is motion, discontinuities, clashes, and the ceaseless play of plural forces and plural interpretations on the surface of human experience. Nothing is finally stable. There are no constants, no fixed meanings, no secure grounds, no profound secrets, no final structures or limits of history. Seen from afar, there is only interpretation, and interpretation itself is comprehended as a practice of domination occurring on the surface of history. History itself is grasped as a series of interpretations imposed on interpretations—none primary, all arbitrary (pp. 408–409, Ashley's emphasis, two parenthetical references to Foucault deleted).

Evidently method, including interpretation as the only method admissible to most postpositivists, must be discarded along with theory in favor of the view from afar. What does this leave for dealing with the close at hand? Poststructuralists variously suggest politics as rhetorical subversion and play as rhetorical exercise. Lacking any direction, denying theory, parodying method (Megill 1985: 227–231, 284), these activities will not satisfy everyone. Nor will they turn around a discipline like International Relations, which is predicated on premises quite different from Literature. For the latter, criticism and not politics is its primary vocation, and the notion that one reads for pleasure its deepest claim.

PARADIGMS

Claims that international relations are matters of politics falling outside the purview of Political Science constitute that set of relations as a bounded and distinctive social reality. At the same time, they constitute International Relations as a discipline. There is nothing unusual about this. That all disciplines are constituted by claims of distinctiveness makes them conspicuous examples of the general, and more generally diffused, phenomenon of social constitution.

Claims constituting a discipline do more than this, however. They serve a paradigmatic function. The term "paradigm," now so widely if carelessly appropriated from Kuhn (1970a), suggests a "construction project." In Kuhn's famous account of natural science paradigms, such a project offers an exclusive community of scholars a "paradigm theory" (pp. 26, 27) demarcating the limits of their interests and a series of puzzles—empirical questions unanswered by the theory as initially proposed—waiting to be solved.[6] Most solutions that come along clarify and strengthen the theory orienting this kind of activity. This is normal science. Those not doing so cumulatively threaten the theory's integrity, and conditions are met for the consolidation of dissonant puzzle solutions under the terms of a new, more powerful paradigm theory. The process then repeats itself.

In the natural sciences, theories that plausibly represent reality and allow for puzzle-solving orient science; in the social sciences, claims about reality—constitutive claims, as argued above—orient puzzle-solving as science duly leading to theory.[7] At best the social sciences possess proto-theories, which assemble constitutive claims

6. Gary Gutting (1980: 2, 12–13) has called the contents of a Kuhnian paradigm a "super-theory" inasmuch as "a diverse assemblage of law, method and metaphysics" is included (p. 2). While I think Gutting has aptly characterized the contents of a paradigm, Kuhn meant to separate out laws and their explanation when he referred to theory.
7. Richard Bernstein (1978: 243–246) has contended that Kuhn never wanted theories to be central to his scheme. When pressed to clarify what he had meant by the term "paradigm," Kuhn identified just two mutually reinforcing elements: "community structure" as shared commitments and "exemplars" or shared examples of problem solving. He was careful to say that exemplars are not theories or theory statements (laws and rules), but rather "physical situations" to which theories relate in an especially revealing way (1970a: 191). Unhappily this attempt at precision weakens Kuhn's model of the growth of science, because growth comes not from challenges to exemplars, but from exemplars that challenge theory and thereby bring on a revolution, necessarily in theory. In keeping with this model, Kuhn elsewhere remarked that "the proto-sciences, like the arts and philosophy, lack some element which, in the mature sciences, permit some of the more obvious forms of progress. . . . These conditions are, of course, tantamount to the description of a good scientific theory" (1970b: 244–246). For a position similar to the one taken here, see Pocock (1971: 13–14).

in a reasonably coherent doctrine. Yet social science proto-theories look enough like the theories of natural scientists to persuade people that the communities of scholars espousing them are warranted in their disciplinary claims and projects. They also provide scholars with a stock of puzzles.

These same scholars are keenly aware that their proto-theories fail to provide much help in recognizing either puzzle solutions as such or their role in supporting or challenging those proto-theories. The response to these limitations is a quest, the same quest animating scholarship in International Relations. Each discipline's scholarly community seeks a proper paradigm theory. Those theories that are proposed are either too narrow or too vague to satisfy. Thereupon follow ceaseless self-criticism and finally dejection.

In the instance of International Relations, the puzzles in question are the presence of or need for order, equilibrium, or cooperation in the face of unconfined political activities. Why does not anarchy always give way to chaos? In short, constitutive claims about international relations supply puzzles. A prospective paradigm theory must generalize puzzle solutions to explain what is only now stipulated for constitutive purposes—explain, that is, how the social reality of international relations works as a decentralized order, self-help system, or anarchy.

I do not believe a paradigm theory for International Relations is forthcoming. I do not believe it is even possible. This is because I have grave doubts about the claim that anarchy is the central and defining feature of international relations. I would not deny the incidence of anarchical events, but these events always take place under conditions that must be characterized otherwise.

Later I propose and defend a different set of claims responsive to those conditions. In so doing, I question whether, or to what extent, international relations constitute a "paradigm of an operative kind," to borrow Sheldon Wolin's provocative extension of the Kuhnian idea of paradigm (1980). Operative paradigms are those ensembles of human practices seen by those engaging in or observing them to have a coherence setting them apart from other practices. Those that are seen as coherent in furthest degree are taken as having a natural objective reality.

Kuhn's model presupposes that while natural science disciplines

constitute themselves, they do not constitute what I have here called the operative paradigms to which they respond. Physicists believe that physics is a discernibly independent part of "nature," the coherence of which stems from features exclusive to it; so does almost everyone else. That this is how people treat the matter makes it true for operative purposes. Even when Physics as a discipline undergoes paradigmatic changes, it is seen as having a continuous identity corresponding to the operative paradigm of physics, itself subject to incremental redefinition in the face of disciplinary changes.

For Kuhn's purposes, it does not matter whether operative paradigms are naturally real or socially constructed.[8] Either way, claims constituting natural science disciplines only marginally affect their operative paradigms. Those claims do not generate paradigmatic activity. Theories do that. The latter's generative power, at least in Kuhn's model, stems from the fact that they are never entirely adequate representations of what is taken to be a substantially independent reality. Fully the opposite situation holds for a discipline like Literature. If natural reality in the form of operative paradigms is safely construed as separate from corresponding disciplinary paradigms, literature is indistinguishable from paradigmatic assertions that particular texts are, or are not, Literature. In other words, literature is not an operative paradigm; no set of human practices can be identified as such in the absence of disciplinary cues.

The social sciences fall somewhere in the middle of this continuum. Far more evidently than with the operative paradigms attributed to nature, social reality, and thus its operative paradigms, can only be constituted by human practices. Constitutive claims on behalf of social science disciplines, and the projects they engender, are among these practices. Clearly they affect the ensemble. So do an indeterminately large number of other practices, not to mention material conditions. In degree an economy is what Economists instruct us to think it is; in degree it operates as an economy whatever Economists

8. There is currently a furious debate among philosophers of science, prompted in part by Kuhn's work, over whether science discloses a reality independent of human construction. I touch on it in chapter 1.

say about it. Nevertheless, because Economics was constituted long ago, any operative paradigm inspiring its development has itself been transformed by the discipline created in its name.

The situation is somewhat different for international relations. The discipline of International Relations constituted itself on the belief that it corresponds to an operative paradigm. This is exactly the meaning of claims that international relations make up a bounded and distinctive social reality. Such claims have some plausibility, if they are taken to refer to the ensemble of activities engaged in by a bounded and slowly changing set of entities conveniently denominated by the term "states." Historical concreteness, as conveyed by the term "Western state system," reinforces the propensity to see international relations in operative terms. Indeed, these claims are persuasive to a great number of people who have no stake in constituting a discipline on them. Were International Relations not to exist, international relations would still be seen rather much as they are now—and always have been.

All this said, I must reassert my doubt that international relations constitute an operative paradigm in nearly the degree presupposed by the constitution of International Relations as a discipline. As much is revealed by the ambiguity in International Relations' constitutive claims and early development. While it was claimed that anarchy is the distinctive condition to which the discipline responds, it is by no means clear that the Western state system is the only concrete instance of international relations available for study. Yet from the 1950s on, this is the overwhelming if largely unarticulated judgment of scholars in the discipline (for details see Onuf 1982a). Nor, as intimated above, do I find the Western state system to be a particularly good example of an operative anarchy, even if the incidence of important but uncoordinated activities is high and, on occasion, the conditions of anarchy achieved. (Chapter 5 treats this matter more systematically.) What's worse, recent scholarship has stridently insisted that international relations are overwhelmingly anarchical in character, with the result that those within the discipline are dissuaded from an examination of the operative paradigm as it is—heterogeneous, amorphous, elusive.

The way to proceed should now be clear. It is to look for a substantial ensemble of practices, the coherence of which is not reflected in, much less produced by, the constitutive claims of established so-

cial science disciplines. In other words, we must stop thinking that each disciplinary paradigm corresponds to its own distinctive operative paradigm. If viewed skeptically, claims constituting these disciplines, especially claims made by more than one of them, can lead us to operative paradigms cutting across the current map of social science disciplines. Three such paradigms are discernible.

Surprisingly the first possibility is suggested by what may be taken as the strongest, most plausible disciplinary paradigm in the social sciences. Microeconomics, as the central part of liberal Economics, is covered by a theory of high formal specificity and enormous explanatory power—properties achieved by postulating that autonomous individuals act rationally, that is, use whatever means at their disposal to maximize benefits to themselves. (On rationality so conceived, see further chapter 8). To keep matters simple, microeconomic theory confines this postulate to a particular slice of social reality known conventionally as the market.

A market is any large set of exchanges (paired choices) among autonomous entities, in which exchanges are expedited through a medium of exchange, allowing a rate of exchange, or price, to be calculated, but which are otherwise uncoordinated. By specifying its range of application, microeconomic theory constitutes Microeconomics as a distinctive disciplinary endeavor. That market exchanges are not coordinated, on the presumption that no single one of them is important enough to warrant intervention, demarcates the discipline from its neighbors like Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Psychology, which do not preclude the presence of politics, and even more, Political Science and International Relations, in which politics in one form or another prevails.

After World War II, scholars versed in microeconomic theory sought to extend its range of application, in the first instance to cover a new slice of social reality brought into being by public welfare policies. In so doing, these scholars poached on the disciplinary domain of Political Science most successfully—they produced elegant and satisfying solutions to a number of puzzles that had either defied Political Scientists or had eluded their attention. This move beyond the market came at no cost to microeconomic theory's formal specificity and explanatory power. Indeed microeconomic theory was seen as a special, highly developed case of a more general, and rapidly developing, theory of social choice. (For an accessible intro-

duction to social choice theory, see Bonner 1986, and, for a formal presentation, Schwartz 1986). Adherents argue that all relations of authority should be considered in its light. This of course is a claim to constitute a new, far-reaching discipline, now dubbed Political Economy, for which the theory of social choice is said to be a proper paradigm theory.[9]

Social choice theorists recognized the applicability of their theory whenever a discipline assigned paradigmatic significance to terms like "rational actor" or "interest," whether the context was marketing, voting, or fighting. The range of relevant practices stretched across several, perhaps all, of the social science disciplines. As soon as we abandon disciplinary preconceptions, we see a coherence so readily identified that it has a longstanding label: the operative paradigm to which Political Economy is a latter-day response is liberalism.[10] That Microeconomics, as the source of Political Economy's paradigm theory of social choice, is the core of Liberal Economics comes as no surprise under the circumstances. Nor does the fact that liberalism posed a series of paradoxes for Political Science that could only be solved with help from the theory of social choice. Finally there is no surprise to renewed assertions, influenced by the theory of social choice, that international relations are purely anarchic (Young 1978, Oye 1985a), for anarchy is liberalism carried to its logical ex-

9. Proponents of Political Economy as a new discipline have settled on this label at least in part because they claim to recover the original, wider scope of Economics when it emerged and when it was appropriately called Political Economy. Of course Marxists never accepted the subsequent division of labor between Liberal Economists and Political Scientists, with scraps going to Sociology, and held on to the term "Political Economy" for themselves. The result is considerable confusion, with two rival camps of Political Economy making incompatible constitutive claims and conducting unrelated disciplinary projects.

10. By liberalism I mean the view of human beings as individually autonomous, "related to each other as proprietors of their own capacities and of what they have acquired by their exercise" (Mcpherson 1962: 3.) This account of liberalism's premises by no means exhausts the content of liberalism as an operative paradigm. Thus the liberal presumption of equal opportunity is implicit here, as it is in the theory of social choice (Frohock 1987: 45–72). More generally, liberal concern for the condition of society as a whole yields Political Science its many puzzles and the theory of social choice its particular relevance (see further Frohock 1987).

treme: The only limits on rational conduct are those imposed by material conditions.

If international relations are purely anarchic, then Political Economy is their perfected description. If anarchy is the general condition of international relations, then Political Economists can puzzle over exceptional instances of international cooperation undertaken in response to market failures (Keohane 1982: 332–337, 1984: 80–83). If, as I have insisted, international relations are not primarily anarchic, then they stand largely outside the operative paradigm of liberalism. International Relations constituted itself on the assumption that international relations constitute a coherent operative paradigm. Behind this assumption is another one—that the practices identified with international relations come as close to unalloyed liberalism as human practices are ever likely to. Insofar as international relations resist encapsulation and incorporation in the operative paradigm of liberalism, International Relations is a liberal illusion.

Marxism offers a second operative paradigm crossing existing disciplinary lines. Relations of production parallel liberalism's relations of exchange, and they are no less abstractly conceived than is the market. After criticizing liberals for taking the operative centrality of the market for granted, Marxists situate historical manifestations of their alternative in a materially grounded, logically necessary succession of modes of production. Liberals are deeply suspicious of this feature of Marxism for a variety of reasons. They find its determinism philosophically alien, its dialectical logic unduly simplified, its formulation in the universalizing language of nineteenth-century evolutionism outmoded, and its conception of material grounding muddled.

While most of these suspicions have some merit, they do not add up to a decisive rejection of relations of production as an operative paradigm. Nor is that the intent of liberal criticism. After all, liberals acknowledge that feudalism and capitalism are significant and connected historical experiences exhibiting distinctive modes of production, just as Marxists say. Rather, liberal criticism targets the ideological and programmatic implications that Marxists draw from their construction of an undeniable operative paradigm. Many scholars today are more interested in clarifying the operative paradigm than in saving a particular construction of it for partisan reasons. The result is a burgeoning of a disciplinary paradigm long estab-

lished under the name "Political Economy." As noted, there are thus two disciplines called Political Economy, one Liberal, one Marxist. On the face of it, relations of production are important to a social unit; they are political. The operative paradigm of Marxism is indisputably centered on political economy. Yet this is not so clearly the case with the Marxist disciplinary paradigm.

Karl Marx oriented his systematic work on capitalism with a theory of considerable elegance and power—the labor theory of value (see Weeks 1981 for an exposition). It is the closest thing to a paradigm theory that Marxist Political Economy has today. This theory gains its power by excluding from its terms most of the activities that members of capitalist societies take as important enough to be called political. Instead politics is confined to the direct connection between the valuation of products and the appropriation of surplus value.

The labor theory of value gives an economic account of what happens to appropriated surplus—it comes to a market—but not a political account, except in the vaguest sense—some of that surplus may be used to support relations of authority, pay for international relations and so on. Secondary, ad hoc theories abound, such as V. I. Lenin's theory of imperialism, but disciplinary coherence is lost. Evidently Marxist Political Economy, like its Liberal counterpart, is not a discipline with a paradigm theory suited to the whole of political economy. Thus the discipline cannot replace its rivals—Liberal Political Economy, Political Science, and International Relations—whatever their limitations and defects.

There is a third possibility for an operative paradigm reaching across disciplines. This one overlaps the operative paradigms of liberalism and Marxism, though its coherence depends on neither. As an operative paradigm, it is matched historically to a long tradition of political and social theory which, though relevant to Liberal and Marxist paradigms, is coterminous with neither. Wolin had it in mind when he proposed that

> we conceive of political society as itself a paradigm of an operative kind. From this viewpoint society would be envisaged as a coherent whole in the sense of its customary political practices, institutions, laws, structure of authority and citizenship, and operative beliefs being organized and interrelated. A po-

> litically organized society contains definite social arrangements, certain widely shared understandings regarding the location and use of political power, certain expectations about how authority ought to treat members of society and about the claims that society can rightfully make upon its members. . . . This *ensemble* of practices and beliefs can be said to form a paradigm in the sense that society tries to carry on its political life in accordance with them (1980: 183–184).

Wolin's sense of the social reality at stake is inclusive but still bounded. His formulation is wanting to the degree that it depends on both tautology and organic imagery for bounding (political society is a paradigm insofar as it tries to carry on political life). To his credit, however, he used the term "authority" (twice) without giving it pride of place, much less claiming that relations of authority delimit the paradigm. Were Wolin to have used authority to bound the ensemble of practices constituting the operative paradigm of political society, then he could have aligned it neatly with Easton's paradigmatic claim that Political Science describes "the authoritative allocation of values for a society" (1953: 129). The next step, which Easton himself did not take, but Harry Eckstein did in refining Easton's claim, would have been to exclude international relations from the operative paradigm (Easton 1953: 138–139, Easton 1965: 387, Eckstein 1973: 1157–1158).

Wolin refused a narrow view of what politics is about, such as the term "authority" connotes when it is used by paradigm guardians like Easton and Eckstein. This left Wolin without a better idea of what the operative paradigm is than can be provided by a checklist of evidently political practices, including those associated with international relations. Wolin's checklist is even less helpful in guiding us toward a disciplinary paradigm corresponding to the operative paradigm of political society.

What is required first is an effort, however preliminary, to identify the common denominator in Wolin's or any comparable checklist. In other words, we must characterize the operative paradigm in terms sufficiently general that they fit any set of practices we would want to include in the paradigm. I believe there are two such general properties pertaining to political society in all its manifestations. One is the pervasive presence of rules which, in guiding, but not de-

termining, human conduct, gives it social meaning. Whenever rules have the effect of distributing advantages unequally, the result is rule, which is the second general property of political society. The prevalence of rule reflects the importance that people attach to the advantages rule—through rules—helps them secure and maintain. Of course people also use resources to their advantage, but never without rules being implicated. The paradigm of political society is aptly named because it links irrevocably the sine qua non of society—the availability, no, the unavoidability of rules—and of politics—the persistence of asymmetric social relations, known otherwise as the condition of rule.

I dwell on these properties and their implications later in this book. I assert them now as a plausible construction of the properties of the operative paradigm of political society and note that, as such, they should also constitute essential elements in any disciplinary paradigm corresponding to this operative reality. Accepting this, however, does not mean that an equally plausible theory centered on the general properties of political society and orienting any such disciplinary paradigm is just around the corner.

Wolin understood that "great theories" of the Western political tradition are responses to the operative reality of political society (1980: 182; see further 1969: 1078–1080 on "epic theorists"). Yet none of them suffice as a paradigm theory. That they were put to selective use in the constitution of Political Science and International Relations and thus contributed to their respective proto-theories suggests the same procedure could help in the construction of a new disciplinary paradigm. Although it is immodest to say so, I see my work here as a tentative first step toward that paradigm. Taking a cue from Wolin, I support this step by having recourse to the great theories of the past, but not just those of the Western political tradition. If the emphasis is on political society, then comparable theories of society are equally pertinent.

Use of these materials is necessarily selective. Once selected, I subject them to the most careful scrutiny I can manage. The close reading of texts is a favorite method of Philosophy. My endeavors here should be construed not as Philosophy but as a philosophically informed foray into the social sciences. One might ask, to quote Jeffrey C. Alexander, "why engage in readings rather than embark on

a more straightforward and contemporary discussion of telling empirical problems, . . . ?" (1982: 1). My answer is Alexander's. I do close reading "because, in certain critical respects, it is by interpreting and reinterpreting 'classical' works that fundamental argument is conducted in the social sciences" (p. 1). In other words, I think this method pays off with a supply of materials for a disciplinary construction project.

In this work I propose to take a second step as well. My close reading is intended to render the operative paradigm of political society in an overarching set of categories. More precisely I believe I have identified three categories of rules—categories understood in the traditional sense of the term as "abstract containers, with things inside or outside the category" (Lakoff 1987: 6). These categories derive from a consideration of language as enabling people to perform social acts and achieve ends by making statements of assertion, direction, and commitment.

Once aware of these categories, I encountered various formulations of them in many of the texts, classic and contemporary, to engage my attention. They are discernible in great theories from which International Relations scholars have adduced the centrality of anarchy for international relations, and they are conspicuous in discussions of the conditions of rule. Because these categories apply equally to rules and rule, I see them significantly supporting the rules-rule coupling as decisive for political society. Because they bear on the full range of human practices for which political society is the operative term, they are indispensable for sorting out the materials that close reading provides for the disciplinary construction project.

Again there is nothing original or surprising in my method—It goes back to Aristotle. To establish categories presupposes that within the operative paradigm are nodes of practice. These we may see as response to the puzzles that humanity repeatedly confronts in its social existence. Puzzle solutions are passed on, diffused, or reinvented with such consistency that they lend themselves to observers' typification, which then contributes to their social constitution. They are Max Weber's ideal types (Shils and Finch 1949: 90–110). This is a misleading label, however, because it is so widely taken to mean that the act of typification takes place only in the observer's mind.

As we saw with the term "paradigm," tendencies in practice and