9 New Approaches to International Theory

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READER'S GUIDE

This chapter summarizes the most recent developments in international relations theory. It starts from the inter-paradigm debate represented by the three preceding chapters, and brings that story up to date. It then looks at how international relations theory maps out in the late 1990s. It offers a framework for thinking about contemporary international relations theory by looking at the differences between those theories that are explanatory and those that are constitutive, and between theories that are foundationalist and those that are non-foundationalist. In this light the chapter divides contemporary theories into three categories: first, the mainstream theories of liberalism and realism, represented by the neo-realist/neo-liberal debate, which are defined as rationalist theories; second, the chapter looks at the most influential contemporary theoretical developments which differ from the shared assumptions of rationalist theories, namely normative theory, feminist theory, critical theory, historical sociology and post-modernism. These theories are termed reflectivist theories. Third, the chapter looks at social constructivism, which is an attempt to bridge the gap between the previous two categories. The chapter provides a clear context for thinking about these new approaches, and concludes by posing the question of which of them paints the most convincing picture of world politics in a globalized era, is it the rationalist theories, the reflectivist theories or social constructivism?

Introduction

The three previous chapters have given you overviews of the three dominant theories of international relations, originally discussed in the Introduction of this book. Together these three approaches have dominated the discipline for the last fifty years, and the debate between adherents of them has defined the areas of disagreement in international theory. The resulting '**inter-paradigm debate**' has been extremely influential in thinking about international relations, with generations of students told that the debate between the various elements effectively exhausts the kinds of questions that can be asked about international relations. The problem has been that the inter-paradigm debate by no means covers the range of issues that any contemporary theory of world politics needs to deal with. Instead it ends up being a rather conservative political move because it gives the impression of open-mindedness and intellectual pluralism; whereas, in fact, as Timothy Dunne has clearly pointed out in Chapter 6, of the three theories involved in the inter-paradigm debate one, realism, has tended to be dominant, with its debate with liberalism being the central theme of what debate has existed in international theory. It is important to note that one major factor supporting the dominance of realism has been that it seems to portray the world we common-sensically understand. Thus alternative views can be dismissed as **normative** or **value-laden**, to be negatively compared with the **objectivity** of realism. These two thoughts (the common-sense relevance of realism and its objectivity) lead us to what has changed in recent years to subvert the dominance of realism.

In the last decade or so this picture has changed dramatically, with a series of new approaches being developed to explain world politics. In part this reflects a changing world, as the end of the cold war system significantly reduced the credability of realism, especially in its neo-realist guise where the stability of the bipolar system was seen as a continuing feature of world politics; as that bipolarity dramatically disappeared, so too did the explanatory power of the theory that most relied on in neo-realism. But this was not by any means the only reason for the rise of new approaches. There are three other obvious reasons: **first**, there were other changes underway in world politics that made the development of new approaches important, and mainly here I am thinking of the kinds of features discussed previously under the heading of **globalization**. Whatever the explanatory power of realism, it did not seem very good at dealing with the rise of non-state actors, social movements, radically expanding transactions, and the like. In short, new approaches were needed to explain these parts of world politics, even if realism was still good at dealing with the power politics aspects. **Second**, there were major developments underway in other academic disciplines, especially in the social sciences generally, but also in the philosophy of science and social science, that attacked the underlying methodological (i.e. how to undertake study) assumption of realism, a position known as **positivism** (we will discuss this below); in its place a whole host of alternative ways of thinking about the social sciences were being proposed, and international relations simply caught the bug. **Third**, realism's dominance was called into question by a resurgence of its historical main competitor, liberalism, in the form of **neo-liberal institutionalism**, as discussed in Chapter 8. In fact, as we will see below, the debate between neo-realism and neo-liberalism has become one of the main features of international relations theory in the 1990s. But there are others and these involve movements away from the main assumptions of the mainstream approaches.

Key Points

- Realism, liberalism, and structuralism together comprised the **inter-paradigm debate** of the 1980s, with realism dominant amongst the three theories.
- The **inter-paradigm debate**, despite promising intellectual openness, ended up naturalizing the dominance of realism by pretending that there was real debate, whereas 'common sense' and the seeming 'objectivity' of realism did the work.
- The dominance of realism has in recent years been undermined by three sets of developments: first, **globalization** has brought a host of other features of world politics to centre-stage; second, **positivism**, the underlying methodological

assumption of realism, has been significantly undermined by developments in the social sciences and in philosophy; third, **neo-liberal institutionalism** has become increasingly important in challenging realism in the mainstream literature.

Explanatory/Constitutive Theories and Foundational/Anti-Foundational Theories

In order to understand the current situation with regards to international theory I want to introduce two distinctions that might help you see the differences between the theories that we are going to look at below. The terms can be a little unsettling, but they are merely convenient words for discussing what in fact are fairly straightforward ideas. The first distinction is between **explanatory** and **constitutive** theory. An explanatory theory is one that sees the world as something external to our theories of it; in contrast a constitutive theory is one that thinks our theories actually help construct the world. Whilst this is a distinction adopted in both scientific and non-scientific disciplines, a minute's thought should make you realize why it is more appealing in the non-scientific world: the reason of course is that in a very obvious way our theories about the world in which we live make us act in certain ways, and thereby may make the theories we hold become self-confirming. If, for example, we think that individuals are naturally aggressive then we are likely to adopt a different posture towards them than if we think they are naturally peaceful. Yet you should not regard this claim as self-evidently true, since it assumes that our ability to think and reason makes us able to determine our choices, i.e. that we have free will rather than having our 'choices' determined behind our backs as it were. What if our human nature is such that we desire certain things 'naturally', and that our language and seemingly 'free choices' are simply our rationalizations for our needs? This is only the opening stage of a very complex, but fascinating, debate about what it is to be human, and you will find it dealt with in a number of texts should you wish to follow in it (see, for example, Hollis and Smith 1990). The upshot of it, whichever position you eventually adopt, is that there is a genuine debate between those theories that think of the social world as like the natural world (and that the theories we use to analyse it merely report on events rather than construct that reality), and those theories that see our language and concepts as helping create that reality. Theories that think that the natural and the social worlds are the same are known as **naturalist** theories.

In International Relations the more structural realist and structuralist theories dealt with in Chapters 6 and 8 tend to be explanatory theories, which see the task of theory as being to report on a world that is external to our theories; their concern is to uncover **regularities** in human behaviour and thereby explain the social world in much the same way as a natural scientist might explain the physical world. By contrast, nearly all the approaches developed in the last decade or so tend to be constitutive theories, and interestingly the same is true of some liberal thought. For these theories, theory is not external to the things it is trying to explain, and instead may construct how we think about the world. Or, to put it another way, our theories define what we see as the external world. Thus the very concepts we use to think about the world help to make that world what it is (think about the concepts that matter in your own life, such as happiness, love, wealth, status, etc.). To make my position clear I believe our theories of the social world constitute that world; I say this not so that you should believe it but only so that you can see where my biases might lie in what follows.

The **foundational/anti-foundational** distinction refers to the simple-sounding issue of whether our beliefs about the world can be tested or evaluated against any neutral or objective procedures. This is a distinction central to the branch of the philosophy of social science known as **epistemology** (simply defined as the study of how we can claim to know something). A foundationalist position is one that thinks that all truth claims (i.e. about some feature of the world) can be judged true or false. An anti-foundationalist thinks that truth claims cannot be so judged since there are never

neutral grounds for so doing; instead each theory will define what counts as the facts and so there will be no neutral position available to determine between rival claims. Think, for example, of a Marxist and a Conservative arguing about the 'true' state of the economy, or of an Islamic Fundamentalist and a Radical Feminist discussing the 'true' status of women in Muslim societies. Foundationalists look for what are termed **meta-theoretical** (above any particular theory) grounds for choosing between truth claims; anti-foundationalists think that there are no such positions available, and that believing there to be some is itself simply a reflection of an adherence to a particular view of epistemology.

In many senses most of the new approaches to international theory are much less wedded to foundationalism than were the traditional theories that comprised the inter-paradigm debate. Thus, **post-modernism**, some **feminist theory**, and much **normative theory** would tend towards anti-foundationalism, although the **neo-neo debate**, **historical sociology**, and **critical theory** would tend towards foundationalism; interestingly, **social constructivism** would be very much in the middle. On the whole, and as a rough guide, explanatory theories tend to be foundational while constitutive theories tend to be anti-foundational. The point at this stage is not to construct some check-list, nor to get you thinking about the differences as much as it is to draw your attention to the role that these assumptions about the nature of knowledge have on the theories that we are going to discuss. The central point I want to make in this section is that the two distinctions mentioned in this section were never really discussed in the literature of international relations. The last decade has seen these underlying assumptions brought more and more into the open and the most important effect of this has been to undermine realism's claim to be delivering **the** truth.

Each of the distinctions has been brought into the open because of a massively important reversal in the way in which social scientists have thought about their ways of constructing knowledge. Until the late 1980s most social scientists in International Relations tended to be **positivists**; since then positivism has been under attack. Positivism is best defined as a view of how to create knowledge that relies on four main assumptions: first a belief in the unity of science, i.e. that the same methodologies apply in both the scientific and non-scientific worlds. Second, there is a distinction between facts and values, with facts being neutral between theories. Third, that the social world, like the natural one, has regularities, and that these can be 'discovered' by our theories in much the same way as a scientist does in looking for the regularities in nature. Finally, that the way to determine the truth of statements is by appeal to these neutral facts; this is known as an **empiricist** epistemology.

It is the rejection of these assumptions that has characterized the debate in international theory in the last decade. Yosef Lapid (1989) has termed this 'a post-positivist era'. In simple terms, traditional international theory was dominated by the four kinds of positivistic assumptions noted above. Since the late 1980s, the new approaches that have emerged have tended to question these same assumptions. The resulting map of international theory in the late 1990s is one that has three main features: first the continuing dominance of the three theories that together made up the inter-paradigm debate, this can be termed the **rationalist** position, and is epitomized by the **neo-neo debate**; second, the emergence of non-positivistic theories, which together can be termed the **reflectivist** position, and epitomized by the **post-modernist**, **critical theory**, **historical sociology**, **normative theory**, and much **feminist** work to be discussed below; and third, the development of an approach that tries to speak to both rationalist and reflectivist positions, and this is the position, associated mainly with the work of Alexander Wendt (see especially 1992), known as **social constructivism**. Fig. 9.1 illustrates the resulting configuration of the theories in the late 1990s.

Note that this is a very rough representation of how the various theories can be categorized. It is misleading in some respects since, as the previous three chapters have shown, there are quite different versions of the three main theories and some of

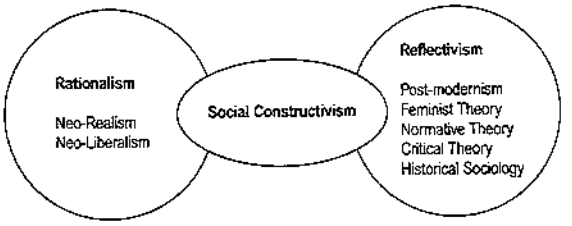

Fig. 9.1. **International theory in the late 1990s**

these are less rationalistic than others. Similarly, some of the approaches classified as 'reflectivist' are markedly less so than others; for example historical sociology tends to adopt similar theoretical methods as do rationalist approaches, although it tends to reject the central unit of rationalism, the state, hence its classification as a reflectivist approach. Having said which the classification is broadly illustrative of the theoretical landscape, and you might best think of it as a useful starting point for thinking about the differences between the theories involved. As you learn more and more about them you will see how rough and ready a picture this is, but it is as good a categorization as any other. But so as to show you some of the complexities involved, think about quite what the reflectivist approaches are reflectivist about: for feminists it is gender, for normative theories it is values, for post-modernists it is the construction of knowledge, for historical sociologists it is the state/class relationship, and for critical theorists it is the knowledge/power relationship. There are similarities but there are important differences.

Key Points

- Theories can be distinguished according to whether they are **explanatory** or **constitutive** and whether they are **foundational** or **anti-foundational**. As a rough guide, explanatory theories are foundational and constitutive theories are anti-foundational.
- The three main theories comprising the **inter-paradigm debate** were based on a set of positivist assumptions, namely the idea that social science theories can use the same methodologies as theories of the natural sciences, that facts and values can be distinguished, that neutral facts can act as arbiters between rival truth claims, and that the social world has regularities which theories can 'discover'.
- Since the late 1980s there has been a rejection of **positivism**, with the main new approaches tending more towards **constitutive** and **anti-foundational** assumptions.
- The current theoretical situation is one in which there are three main positions: first, **rationalist** theories that are essentially the latest versions of the **realist** and **liberal** theories dealt with in previous chapters; second, **reflectivist** theories that are **post-positivist**; and thirdly **social constructivist** theories that try and bridge the gap between the first two sets.

Rationalist Theories: The Neo-Realist/Neo-Liberal Debate

Much of the ground involved in this debate has been covered in the chapters on realism and liberalism. It is also discussed in later chapters, especially the one on regimes (see Ch. 12). All I need to do here is to make some general points about this debate, so that you can see how it fits into what we have already said about the theories concerned. Essentially, the **neo-neo debate** is the 1980s and 1990s version of the long-standing confrontation between realism and liberalism. Ole Waever (1996) has spoken of this debate as the 'neo-neo synthesis', whereby the two dominant approaches effectively merge to produce a central core of the discipline. As he notes, this synthesis sees neo-realism and neo-liberal institutionalism focusing on a common set of questions and competing with one another to see which theory can provide the best explanation. It is important to realize that this synthesis would not have been possible without the dominant strand in realism becoming neo-realism (or what Timothy Dunne calls **structural realism II**), and the dominant strand in liberalism becoming **neo-liberal institutionalism**. Indeed throughout the history of international relations theory, realism and liberalism have been portrayed as alternatives, and as incompatible. But in the 1980s, realism became more concerned with how anarchy (rather than human nature) affected the policies of states, and

liberalism focused more on how international co-operation might make it possible to overcome the negative effects of anarchy. Each approach shared a specific view of how to create knowledge, and, as the 1980s went by, they began to define very similar research programmes. Essentially each looked at the same issue from different sides: that issue was the effect of international institutions on the behaviour of states in a situation of international anarchy. Neo-realists thought that institutions could not outweigh the effects of anarchy; neo-liberals thought that they could.

What resulted from this significant overlap was a common research programme, with adherents of each approach writing articles trying to show that their 'side' was right. This spawned a massive pile of articles, and for many really did seem to announce that international relations theory had finally arrived. After all, these rival arguments about the role of institutions in mitigating anarchy had the advantage that they could be expressed in quantitative terms; so, the main journals were full of very quantitative articles, each referring to both the articles of their own side, but also increasingly to the articles of the other side. In this important sense the two sides became involved in a very detailed debate about state behaviour in a condition of anarchy. What I want to stress here is not simply that the two sides debated but that they focused on the same things to explain. The result was a period of considerable unity in the discipline, with the two main theories looking at the same problems (albeit from opposite sides) and using the same methods to study them. For at least a decade from the mid-1980s this neo-neo debate dominated the mainstream of the discipline.

What was the debate about, then? Well, I have summarized the main lines of it in Box 9.1.

I think that the main features of the debate are really quite straightforward, but let me draw out the two main points. First, neo-realists stress the importance of relative gains whereas neo-liberals stress absolute gains. What does this mean? Well for neo-realists what matters to states is not so much how well they will do out of various outcomes but how well they will do **compared to their rivals.** Neo-liberals, on the other hand, think that leaders will be more interested in their absolute level of gain, preferring the outcome **that gives them most regardless what their competitors receive.** Another way of putting it is that neo-liberals worry about how to increase the size of the cake so that all can gain bigger slices, whereas neo-realists contend that, no matter how large the cake, each actor will look carefully at the size of their slice compared to their neighbour's. This problem may well be familiar to you if you have brothers or sisters! Quite a lot follows from this: as you will quickly see, if you think that states are going to be most concerned with how they do compared to their rivals then you think of the possibilities of international co-operation rather differently than if you think that only the absolute gains matter. Second, neo-realists think that the effects of international anarchy cannot be mitigated by institutions, whereas, of course, neo-liberals, because they think that increasing the size of the cake is the most important thing, think that institutions can make a difference, perhaps by reducing misunderstanding and by co-operation to make bigger cakes by pooling efforts. Neo-realists tend to think that physical security matters more to states than do neo-liberals, and therefore look more

Box 9.1. The Main Features of the Neo-realist/Neo-liberal Debate

1. Neo-realists see anarchy as placing more severe constraints on state behaviour than do neo-liberals.
2. Neo-realists see international co-operation as harder to achieve, more difficult to maintain and more dependent on state power than do neo-liberals.
3. Neo-liberals stress absolute gains from international co-operation, while neo-realists emphasize relative gains. Neo-realists will ask who will gain more from international co-operation, whereas neo-liberals will be concerned to maximize the total level of gain for all parties
4. Neo-realists assume that international anarchy requires states to be preoccupied with issues of security and survival, whereas neo-liberals focus on international political economy. Therefore, each tends to see the prospects for international co-operation differently.
5. Neo-realists concentrate on capabilities rather than intentions, whilst neo-liberals look more at intentions and perceptions than at capabilities.
6. Neo-realists do not think that international institutions and regimes can mitigate the constraining effects of international anarchy on co-operation, whereas neo-liberals believe that regimes and institutions can facilitate co-operation.

Source: Summarized from David Baldwin (1993: 4–8).

at national security issues, whereas neo-liberals concentrate more on political economy issues.

But note that despite these considerable overlaps, there are some obvious weaknesses in the neo-neo synthesis. Let me first note, following Baldwin (1993), that the two approaches share a lot of assumptions. He notes four: **first** that neither side seems concerned with the issue of the use of force; each seems to downplay its relevance for the modern world, whereas for decades it had tended to be one of the key differences between realism (which thought that force was a natural feature of international politics) and liberalism (which thought that it was not). **Second**, whereas liberals have tended to argue that actors are moral agents and realists have argued that they are power maximizers, neither side in the neo-neo debate seems concerned with morality and each agrees that actors are value maximizers. **Third**, and very importantly for our focus on globalization, whereas earlier rounds of the debate between realists and liberals saw the former stressing the centrality of the state as actor and the latter stressing the role of non-state actors, the neo-neo debate sees both sides agreed that the state is the primary actor in world politics. **Finally**, although historically realists have tended to see conflict as the key feature of world politics and liberals have seen co-operation as more important, in the neo-neo debate each side sees both co-operation and conflict as the focus. In short, neo-realists and neo-liberals share important assumptions which together mean that they agree on much more than liberals and realists have traditionally tended to agree on.

A further weakness is that the neo-neo debate is in fact a **very narrow one**. Although I do not want to minimize the importance of the relative gains/absolute gains debate, it clearly does not cover many of the central features of contemporary world politics. By focusing on states it automatically ignores major features, and by avoiding moral questions it locates itself in a very narrow debate. It looks very much like a debate restricted to the prosperous nations of the West, and takes for granted many of the features of this globalized world that theory should in fact call into question, such as identity, nationalism, economics, religion, and gender. All these kinds of questions are excluded from international relations theory as defined by the neo-neo debate.

Having said all of which, please note that the neo-neo debate remains the central debate in international relations theory, especially in North America; perhaps that is because it so neatly mirrors United States' foreign policy concerns. Moreover, it is very important to note that the neo-neo synthesis means that realism and liberalism are in effect variants of the same theory since they share so much. The debate between the two neo's comprises the **rationalist** side of international relations theory, opposed to those approaches known as **reflectivist** which we will discuss below. By debating with each other, note how the two theories preclude debate with other theories that do not share the same assumptions about how to create knowledge.

Key Points

- The **neo-neo synthesis** is the latest stage of the debate between realism and liberalism, made possible by the forms these theories took in the 1980s.
- By the late 1980s, the **neo-neo synthesis** had developed into a major research programme whereby both neo-realists and neo-liberals focused on the same features of world politics and used the same methods to study them. As such the **neo-neo synthesis** represents one set of theories of world politics, which we can best characterize as **rationalist**; its opponents are **reflectivist** theories.
- According to Baldwin, there are six **main features** of the neo-neo debate; most important of these is the distinction between a focus on **relative** or **absolute** gains.
- It is important to note just how many assumptions neo-realism and neo-liberalism share; critically each sees the **state** as the most important actor, and sees actors as **utility maximizers**.
- The neo-neo synthesis is **a very narrow debate**, one which ignores major features of a globalized world political system. As such is appears to fit very precisely **the foreign policy concerns of the United States**.

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Reflectivist Theories

In this section I want to look at a set of theories that have emerged in the last decade or so, although of course there have been versions of each of them throughout the history of international relations theory. The point to stress is that each has only gained significant attention and adherents in recent years. Many of the other chapters in this book will mention some of these theories and so all I want to do here is to offer you an idea of the main themes of each one. You will find quite a lot of material on feminist theory in Chapter 25, on some aspects of historical sociology and critical theory in Chapter 7, and on normative theory in Chapter 24. What I want to do in this section is to introduce you to the five main areas in which reflectivist work is undertaken. One word of warning: these five areas of work **do not add up to one theory of reflectivism**. That is to say that the various works I will be dealing with cannot easily be simply added together and presented as one theory to rival the **neo-neo synthesis**. This is because there are massive differences between the various reflectivist theories, so much so that they disagree with each other quite significantly over their empirical focus, and, more fundamentally, on how they see knowledge being constructed. In their own way each is **post-positivist**, but they are post-positivist in different ways! **Historical sociology** for example is far nearer to the **neo-neo synthesis** in its view of how to construct knowledge than it is to **post-modernism**. But I am classifying the five approaches as reflectivist because I think they all reject one or more of the key assumptions (either the statism or the positivism) of rationalist accounts. In short, **reflectivist accounts are united more by what they reject than by what they accept**. Since I am going to deal with five theoretical perspectives I am not going to try and summarize all the main points, I couldn't anyway in the space available; instead I am going to try and pick out some representative examples of work in the area, and refer you to the **Guide to Further Reading** for suggestions of where next to look.

Normative Theory

One of the most interesting developments in international theory in the last decade has been the re-emergence of **normative theory** as a focus of international theory. For decades this work was out of fashion as the mainstream of the discipline fell under the spell of **positivism**. Remember that the main claims of positivism included the thought that there was a clear division between 'facts' and 'values'. What this meant was that it was simply not scholarly to spend too much time on debates about what the world should look like. Instead what was preferred was a concern with the way things were. There are two basic problems with this position: first that it is a very narrow definition of what politics is about, since for thousands of years students of politics have been fascinated with the search for 'the good life', with the strengths and weaknesses of specific ways of life and of certain forms of political arrangement. Thus, defining politics as limited to the empirical domain is a very restricting move, and you may well think a political one (i.e. a move designed to support certain, that is the existing, political arrangements); after all if all we can do is to discuss **how** things operate and not **why**, then this naturalizes existing power divisions. So, when I have power the study of politics should be restricted to how it operates; if you raise the question of whether I should have power, then if I can dismiss this as 'value-laden' or 'normative' this immediately de-legitimizes your work.

A second problem with the marginalizing of normative work is the rather serious objection that **all** theories reflect values, the only question being whether or not the values are hidden or not. An example is the one given in the previous paragraph; if I can tell you that things just 'are the way they are', then this clearly represents my views of what the social world is like and which features of it are fixed and which are not. In my view, as the author of this chapter, all theories have values running throughout their analysis, from what they choose to focus on as the 'facts' to be explained, through the methods they use to study these 'facts', down to the policy-prescriptions they suggest. Thus it is not that normative theory is odd, or optional; rather all theories have normative assumptions and implications, but in most cases these are hidden.

In the last decade or so, then, there has been a major resurgence of normative theory about world politics. Probably the best survey of this literature is by Chris Brown (1992). For his view of what

Box 9.2. Chris Brown's View of Normative Theory

By normative international relations theory is meant that body of work which addresses the moral dimension of international relations and the wider questions of meaning and interpretation generated by the discipline. At its most basic it addresses the ethical nature of the relations between communities/states, whether in the context of the old agenda, which focused on violence and war, or the new(er) agenda, which mixes these traditional concerns with the modern demand for international distributive justice.

Source: Brown (1992: 3–4).

normative theory is see Box 9.2. In his book he sets up his survey by outlining two main normative positions about world politics, **cosmopolitanism** and **communitarianism**. Cosmopolitanism is the view that any normative theory of world politics should focus on either **humanity as a whole** or on **individuals**; on the other hand, communitarianism maintains that the appropriate focus is the **political community** (the state). What this distinction means is that the terms of the debate are whether there is a basis for rights and obligations between states in world politics or whether the bearers of these rights and obligations are individuals, either as individuals, or as a whole, in the sense of meaning humanity. For example do states have the right to hold large nuclear stockpiles to defend themselves if these weapons could potentially wipe out humanity? Or, is it acceptable for some cultures to perform 'female circumcision' because 'that is their way of doing things' or are there rights that the women concerned have that are more important than the rights of the state to make its own decisions? This leads us into complex questions about intervention and human rights, but you can quickly see how massive normative debates might ensue from these and related issues.

In the bulk of his book, Brown uses the distinction between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism to examine three main focal points of normative international theory: the moral value to be assigned to state autonomy, the ethics of interstate violence (**Just War Theory**), and the issue of international justice with specific regard to the obligations that the richer states of the world have to poorer countries. As you can imagine, cosmopolitans and communitarians have rather different views on these issues. To take the first question, cosmopolitanism clearly rejects the notion that states have a right to autonomy if that autonomy allows the state to undertake behaviour that conflicts with the moral rights of either humanity as a whole or of individuals; communitarianism on the other hand opposes any restrictions on autonomy that do not arise out of the community itself. Similarly, cosmopolitanists and communitarians will differ over when it is right for states to intervene in the affairs of others and over how we should evaluate calls for a more just distribution of economic resources. Particularly influential theorists on the first question have been Beitz (1979), Frost (1996), and Nardin (1983); for the second question the main writer has been Walzer (1977); and for the third question the key writers have been Rawls (1971) and Barry (1989).

Key Points

- **Normative theory** was out of fashion for decades because of the dominance of **positivism**, which portrayed it as 'value-laden' and 'unscientific'.
- In the last decade or so there has been a resurgence of interest in normative theory thereby connecting international theory with the main debates that have been going on in the discipline of politics. It is now more widely accepted that **all theories have normative assumptions either explicitly or implicitly**.
- The key distinction in normative theory is between **cosmopolitanism** and **communitarianism**. The former sees the bearers of rights and obligations as individuals, the latter sees them as being the state.
- **Chris Brown** identifies three main areas of debate in contemporary normative theory: the **autonomy of the state**, the **ethics of the use of force**, and **international justice**.

Feminist Theory

Chapter 25 will deal in some detail with the main varieties of feminist theory, and I do not wish to repeat that summary here. What I want to do instead is to give you a simple overview of the four

main types of feminist theory before spending most time looking at one variant of it. I want to be clear, however, that the variant I am going to spend most time on, **feminist standpoint theory**, is not necessarily my 'preferred' variant of feminism. I look at it simply because Chapter 25, on gender, does a comprehensive job of showing the great strength of one of the other variants, **liberal feminism**; the section below on **post-modernism** overlaps with what I would want to say about a third variant, **feminist post-modernism**; and the final variant, **socialist/Marxist feminism** has much in common with some of the material on **world-system theory** discussed in Chapter 7.

Feminist work on world politics has only become common since the mid-1980s. It originally developed in work on the politics of development and in peace research, but by the late 1980s a first wave of feminism, **liberal feminism**, was posing the question of 'where were the women in world politics'. They were certainly not written about in the main texts, such that they appeared invisible. Then writers such as Cynthia Enloe (1989; 1993) began to show just how involved were women in world politics. It was not that they were not there but that they in fact played central roles, either as cheap factory labour, as prostitutes around military bases, or as the wives of diplomats. The point is that the conventional picture painted by the traditional international theory deemed these activities as less important than the actions of statesmen (sic). Enloe was intent on showing just how critically important were the activities of women to the functioning of the international economic and political systems. Thus, liberal feminism, as Zalewski points out (1993*b*: 116) is the 'add women and stir' version of feminism. Accordingly, liberal feminists look at the ways in which women are excluded from power and from playing a full part in political activity, instead being restricted to roles critically important for the functioning of things but which are not usually deemed to be important for theories of world politics. Fundamentally, liberal feminists want the same rights and opportunities that are available to men, extended to women.

A second strand of feminist theory is **socialist/Marxist feminism**. As the name implies the influence here is Marxism, with its insistence on the role of material, primarily economic, forces in determining the lives of women. For Marxist feminism, the cause of women's inequality is to be found in the capitalist system; overthrowing capitalism is the necessary route for the achievement of the equal treatment of women. Socialist feminism, noting that the oppression of women occurred in pre-capitalist societies, and continues in socialist societies, differs from Marxist feminism in that it introduces a second central material cause in determining women's unequal treatment, namely the patriarchal system of male dominance. For Marxist feminists, then, capitalism is the primary oppressor, for socialist feminists it is capitalism plus patriarchy. For socialist/Marxist feminists, then, the focus of a theory of world politics would be on the patterns by which the world capitalist system and the patriarchal system of power lead to women being systematically disadvantaged compared to men. As you can well imagine, this approach is especially insightful when it comes to looking at the nature of the world economy and the differential advantages and disadvantages of it that apply to women.

The third variant of feminist theory I want to mention is **post-modernist** feminism. As the name implies this is a series of theoretical works that bring together post-modern work on identity with a focus on gender. Here, in distinction to other variants of feminism, the concern is with gender, and not women. Gender refers to the social construction of differences between men and women, and for post-modern feminists the key issue is what kind of social roles for men and women are constructed by the structures and processes of world politics. In other words, what kind of 'men' are required to serve in armies? Note the recent fierce debates about both women and homosexual men and women serving in the armed forces. How, to put it simply, has world politics led to certain kinds of 'men' and 'women' being produced? This is a radical question, one which we cannot go into here, but although it seems so very far removed from the main theories of world politics, and therefore you might be tempted to ignore it, please reflect on the thought that what you may be as a man or a woman may not be 'natural'; instead it may be that what it means to be a a man or woman in your society when you read this is very different to its meaning for other readers.

The final version of feminist theory I want to mention, and in fact the version I want to highlight, is **standpoint feminism** (Zalewski 1993*a*). This variant developed out of **radical** feminism. which basically claims that the world has been dominated by men and by their ideas. Accordingly,

radical feminists proposed that the experiences of women had been ignored, except where they have been unfavourably compared to male experiences. The aim then is to re-describe reality according to a female view. In the work of influential feminist theorists such as Sandra Harding (1986), this approach gets developed into standpoint feminism, which is an attempt to develop a female version of reality. Since knowledge to date has been male knowledge, the result has been only a partial understanding of the world. Standpoint feminists want to improve on that understanding by incorporating female perspectives. This is a controversial move in feminism since it assumes that there is such a thing as a feminist view of the world (as distinct from a variety of female views according to their social/economic/cultural/sexual locations). It also runs the risk of essentializing and fixing the views and nature of women, by saying that **this** is how women see the world. None the less despite these dangers of standpoint feminism, it has been very influential in showing just how male-dominated are the main theories of world politics. For an extremely convincing example of how standpoint feminists look at world politics, see Box 9.3, which is J. Ann Tickner's reformulation of the famous 'Six Principles of Political Realism' developed by the 'godfather' of realism, Hans Morgenthau. In each case you will see how Tickner shows how the seemingly 'objective' rules of Morgenthau in fact reflect male values and definitions of reality, rather than female ones. You will then see how she reformulates these same rules according to female rather than male characteristics.

Key Points

- There are four main variants of feminist theory, **liberal, Marxist/socialist, post-modern,** and **standpoint feminisms.**
- **Liberal** feminism looks at the roles women play in world politics and asks why they are marginalized. It wants the same opportunities afforded to women as are afforded to men.
- **Marxist/socialist** feminists focus on the **international capitalist system.** Marxist feminists see the oppression of women as a bi-product of capitalism, whereas socialist feminists see both capitalism and **patriarchy** as the structures to be overcome if women are to have any hope of equality.
- **Post-modernist** feminists are concerned with gender as opposed to the position of women as such. They enquire into the ways in which **masculinity** and **femininity** get constructed, and are especially interested in how world politics constructs certain types of 'men' and women'.
- **Standpoint** feminists, such as **J. Ann Tickner** want to correct the male dominance of our knowledge of the world. Tickner does this by re-describing the six 'objective' principles of international politics developed by **Hans Morgenthau** according to a female version of the world.

Critical Theory

Critical theory has a long intellectual tradition, being a development of Marxist thought dating from at least the 1920s when it developed out of the work of the **Frankfurt School.** It has significant overlaps with **World System Theory,** but has become particularly influential in international theory since the early 1980s. The most influential figures have been Andrew Linklater (1990) and Robert Cox (1996).

I am going to base my comments on critical theory on a very good survey of **critical theory** by Mark Hoffman (1987). Hoffman notes that it was first articulated in detail by Max Horkheimer in a 1937 article. Horkheimer was concerned to change society and he thought that the theories to achieve this could not be developed in the way that natural science develops theories. Social scientists could not be like natural scientists in the sense of being independent from and disinterested in their subject matter; they were part of the society they were studying In a major contribution to thinking about the nature of the social sciences, Horkheimer argued that there was a close connection between knowledge and power. He thought that in the social sciences the most important forces for change were social forces, and not some 'independent' logic of the things being explained. At this point, Horkheimer differentiates between 'traditional' and 'critical' theory: traditional theory sees the world as a set of facts waiting to be discovered through the use of science. We have seen this view

Box 9.3. J. Ann Tickner's Reformulation of Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism

Morgenthau's Six Principles

1. Politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature which is unchanging: therefore it is possible to develop a rational theory that reflects these objective laws.
2. The main signpost of political realism is the concept of interest defined in terms of power which infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible. Political realism stresses the rational, objective and unemotional.
3. Realism assumes that interest defined as power is an objective category which is universally valid but not with a meaning that is fixed once and for all. Power is the control of man over man.
4. Political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action. It is also aware of the tension between the moral command and the requirements of successful political action.
5. Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe. It is the concept of interest defined in terms of power that saves us from moral excess and political folly.
6. The political realist maintains the autonomy of the political sphere. He asks 'How does this policy affect the power of the nation?' Political realism is based on a pluralistic conception of human nature. A man who is nothing but 'political man' would be a beast, for he would be completely lacking in moral restraints. But, in order to develop an autonomous theory of political behaviour, 'political man' must be abstracted from other aspects of human nature.

Tickner's Six Principles

1. A feminist perspective believes that objectivity, as it is culturally defined, is associated with masculinity. Therefore supposedly 'objective' laws of human nature are based on a partial masculine view of human nature. Human nature is both masculine and feminine: it contains elements of social reproduction and development as well as political domination. Dynamic objectivity offers us a more connected view of objectivity with less potential for domination.
2. A feminist perspective believes that the national interest is multi-dimensional and contextually contingent. Therefore it cannot be defined solely in terms of power. In the contemporary world the national interest demands co-operative rather than zero-sum solutions to a set of interdependent global problems which include nuclear war, economic well-being, and environmental degradation.
3. Power cannot be infused with meaning that is universally valid. Power as domination and control privileges masculinity and ignores the possibility of collective empowerment, another aspect of power often associated with femininity.
4. A feminist perspective rejects the possibility of separating moral command from political action. All political action has moral significance. The realist agenda for maximizing order through power and control prioritizes the moral command of order over those of justice and the satisfaction of basic needs necessary to ensure social reproduction.
5. While recognizing that the moral aspirations of particular nations cannot be equated with universal moral principles, a feminist perspective seeks to find common moral elements in human aspirations which could become the basis for de-escalating international conflict and building international community.
6. A feminist perspective denies the validity of the autonomy of the political. Since autonomy is associated with masculinity in Western culture, disciplinary efforts to construct a world view which does not rest on a pluralistic conception of human nature are partial and masculine. Building boundaries around a narrowly defined political realm defines political in a way that excludes the concerns and contributions of women.

Source: Tickner (1988: 430–1, 437–8).

earlier when we discussed **positivism**, and Horkheimer's target is indeed the application of positivism to the social sciences. He argued that traditional theorists were wrong to argue that the 'fact' waiting to be discovered could be perceived independently of the social framework in which perception occurs. But the situation was worse than that because Horkheimer argued that traditional theory encouraged the increasing manipulation of human lives. It saw the social world as an area for control and domination, just like nature, and therefore was indifferent to the possibilities of human emancipation.

In its place Horkheimer proposed the adoption of **critical theory.** As Hoffman notes, critical theory did not see facts in the same way as did traditional theory. For critical theorists, facts are the products of specific social and historical frameworks. Realizing that theories are embedded in these frameworks allows critical theorists to reflect on the

interests served by any particular theory. The explicit aim of critical theory is to advance human emancipation, and this means that theory is openly **normative**, with a role to play in political debate. This of course is the opposite of the view of theory proposed by traditional or **positivist** theory, in which theory is meant to be neutral and concerned only with uncovering pre-existing facts or regularities in an independent external world. In the post-war period the leading exponent of critical theory has been Jürgen Habermas, whose most influential claim has been his notion of the **ideal speech situation**, whereby individuals would exhibit **communicative competence** to lead to a rational consensus in political debate. Such a situation would lead to the development of an emancipatory politics. This is often known as a situation of **discourse ethics.**

In international theory the first major critical theory contribution was in 1981 by **Robert Cox** (see Cox in his 1996: Ch. 6). Cox's article was enormously influential because it was written in part as an attack on the main assumptions of **neo-realism**, which he criticizes most effectively because of its hidden **normative** commitments. Rather than being an 'objective' theory, neo-realism is exposed by Cox as having a series of views about what states should pursue in their foreign policies, namely neo-realist rationality. It is also revealed as a partial theory which defines the state in a specific (and non-economic) way, and rules out of its purview a set of other political relations. In short, Cox argues that neo-realism typifies what Horkheimer meant by traditional theory: Cox calls it **problem-solving theory**, which 'takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework for action. The general aim of problem solving is to make these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble . . . the general pattern of institutions and relationships is not called into question' (1996: 88). The effect then is to **reify** and **legitimize** the existing order. Problem-solving theory therefore works to make the existing distribution of power seem natural. But, Cox points out, in a famous quote, despite this, **'Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose'** (1996: 87). Theories see the world from specific social and political positions and are not independent. There is, he says, **'no such thing as theory in itself, divorced from a standpoint in time and space.** When any theory so represents itself, it is the more important to examine it as ideology, and to lay bare its **concealed** perspective' (1996: 87).

In contrast, Cox proposes that international theory should be **critical theory**. Hoffman has very clearly summarized Cox's ideas about critical theory, and they are reprinted in Box 9.4. Particularly interesting is the view of reality (ontology) adopted by critical theorists. Echoing the themes of many of the other **reflectivist** approaches, Cox notes that social structures are **intersubjective**, meaning that they are socially constructed. Thus although they do not have the same status for positivists as things like trees and buildings, the structures for a critical theorist have very similar effects. Therefore Cox focuses on how the 'givens' of traditional theory, such as 'individuals' or 'states' are produced by certain historical and social forces. Thus a state is not, *contra* neo-realism, always a state; states differ enormously throughout history and they are very differerent things at different times. For Cox, then, the state is not the given of international theory that neo-realism sees it as. Instead the state emerges out of social forces, as do other social structures. Cox is particularly interested in how these social structures can be transcended and overcome, hence his focus on the nature of **hegemony.**

Since Cox's introduction of critical theory into international theory, there have been a number of very significant contributions from other critical theorists. I am not going to summarize these, since I do not have the space, but two particularly interesting examples are the contributions of Andrew Linklater (1990) and the development of **critical security studies**, based on the work of writers such as Ken Booth (1991) and Richard Wyn Jones (1995). For a good summary of the work of these, and other, critical theorists see Devetak (1996*a*). Central to all these writers is a concern with how the present order has evolved. Thus critical theory is not limited to an examination of the inter-state system but, rather, focuses on all the main examples of power and domination. This makes it particularly suited for contemporary world politics because it does not treat the state as the 'natural' actor and instead is concerned with all the features of domination in a globalized world.

Box 9.4. Robert Cox's Critical Theory

1. It stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about; it is a reflective appraisal of the framework that problem-solving takes as given.
2. It contemplates the social and political complex as a whole and seeks to understand the process of change within both the whole and its parts.
3. It entails a theory of history, understanding history as a process of continuous change and transformation.
4. It questions the origins and legitimacy of social and political institutions and how and whether they are changing; it seeks to determine what elements are universal to world order and what elements are historically contingent.
5. It contains problem-solving theory and has a concern with both technical and practical cognitive knowledge interests and constantly adjusts its concepts in light of the changing subject it seeks to understand.
6. It contains a normative, utopian element in favour of a social and political order different from the prevailing order that also recognizes the constraints placed on possible alternative world order by historical processes: the potential for transformation exists within the prevailing order but it is also constrained by the historical forces that created that order.
7. It is a guide for strategic action, for bringing about an alternative order.

Source: Hoffman (1987: 237–8).

Key Points

- **Critical theory** has its roots in Marxism, and developed out of the **Frankfurt School** in the 1920s. Its most influential proponent since 1945 has been **Jürgen Habermas**.
- In an influential 1937 article one of the founders of critical theory, **Max Horkheimer**, distinguished between **traditional** and **critical** theory.
- **Robert Cox** writes of the difference between **problem-solving** and **critical** theory. The former takes the world as given and reifies existing distributions of power. The latter enquires into how the current distribution of power came into existence.
- Cox argues that **theory is always for someone and for some purpose**, and that **there is no such thing as theory in itself.**
- Critical theory sees **social structures as real in their effects**, whereas they would not be seen as real by positivism since they can not be directly observed.
- There are many other contributions of critical theory; particularly important are the works of **Linklater** and of those working in the area of **critical security studies.**

Historical Sociology

Just as critical theory problematizes the state and refuses to see it as some kind of given in world politics, so does **historical sociology**. Indeed the main theme of historical sociology is an interest in the ways in which societies develop through history. In this sense it is concerned with the underlying structures that shape the institutions and organizations that human society is arranged into. Historical sociology has a long history. Dennis Smith, in his excellent introduction to the approach, argues that we are currently on the crest of the second wave of historical sociology, the first wave starting in the middle of the eighteenth century and running until the 1920s when interest in the approach declined. The first wave was a response to the great events of the eighteenth century, such as the American and French revolutions as well as the processes of industrialization and nation-building. The second wave has been of particular interest to international theory, because the key writers, Michael Mann, Theda Skocpol, Immanuel Wallerstein, Charles Tilly, and John Hall, have all to a greater or lesser extent focused their explanations of the development of societies on the relationship between the domestic and the international. Tilly has neatly summarized this interest with the statement that 'states made war but war made the state'. In short, the central feature of historical sociology has been an interest in how the structures that we take for granted (as 'natural') are the products of a set of complex social processes.

Thus, whereas **neo-realism** takes the state as a given, historical sociology asks how specific kinds of states have been produced by the various forces at work in domestic and international societies. I am going to look at two examples of this, one by **Charles Tilly**, the other by **Michael Mann**. The point to keep in mind is that these writers show just how complex is the state as an organization,

thereby undermining the rather simple view of the state found in neo-realist writings. Also note that historical sociologists fundamentally undermine the thought that a state is a state is a state. States differ and they are not functionally similar as neo-realism portrays them as being. Furthermore, historical sociologists show that there can be no simple distinction between international and domestic societies. They are inevitably interlinked and therefore it is inaccurate to claim, as does neo-realism, that they can be separated. There is no such thing as 'an international system' that is self-contained and thereby able to exert decisive influence on the behaviour of states; but of course this is exactly what Waltz wants to argue. Finally, note that historical sociology shows that the state is created by international and domestic forces, and that the international is itself a determinant of the nature of the state; that thought looks particularly relevant to the debate on globalization, since, as we discussed in the Introduction, one of its dominant themes is that the international economic system places demands on states such that only certain kinds of states can prosper.

Charles Tilly's work is particularly interesting because it is a clear example of how complex an entity is the state. In his 1990 book, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 900–1990*, Tilly poses the following main question: 'What accounts for the great variation over time and space in the kinds of states that have prevailed in Europe since AD 990, and why did European states eventually converge on different variants of the national state?' (1990: 5). The answer that he gives is that the national state eventually dominated because of its role in fighting wars. Distinguishing between capital-intensive and coercion-intensive regimes (or economic power-based and military power-based systems), Tilly notes that three types of states resulted from the combinations of these forms of power, tribute-making empires, systems of fragmented sovereignty (city-states), and national states. These states were the result of the different class structures that resulted from the concentrations of capital and coercion. Broadly speaking, coercion-intensive regimes had fewer cities and more agricultural class systems than did capital-intensive systems, which led to the development of classes representing commercial and trading interests. Where capital accumulation was high relative to the ability of the state to coerce its citizens, then city-states developed; on the other hand where there was coercion but not capital accumulation, then tribute-making empires developed. As D. Smith notes (1991: 83), each of these is a form of indirect rule, requiring the ruler to rely on the co-operation of relatively autonomous local powers. But with the rise in the scale of war, the result was that national states started to acquire a decisive advantage over the other kinds of state organizations. This was because national states could afford large armies and could respond to the demands of the classes representing both agricultural and commercial interests.

Through about a 350-year period starting around 1500, national states became the norm as they were the only states that could afford the military means to fight the kind of large-scale wars that were occurring. States, in other words, became transformed by war; Tilly notes that the three types of states noted above all converged on one version of the state, so now that is seen as the norm. Yet, in contrast to neo-realism, Tilly notes that the state has not been of one form throughout its history. His work shows how different types of states have existed throughout history, all with different combinations of class structures and modes of operating. And, crucially, **it is war that explains the convergence of these types of states into the national state form.** War plays this central role because it is through preparing for war that states gain their powers as they have to build up an infrastructure of taxation, supply, and administration. The national state thus acquires more and more power over its population by its involvement in war, and therefore can dominate other state forms because they are more efficient than either tribute-gathering empires or city-states in this process.

The second example of historical sociology is the work of Michael Mann. Mann is involved in a four-volume study of the sources of social power dealing with the whole of human history! (The first two volumes have appeared dealing with the period up to 1914, see his (1986) and (1993).) This is an enormously ambitious project, and is aimed at showing just how states have taken the forms that they have. In this sense it is similar to the work of Tilly, but the major innovation of Mann's work is that he has developed a sophisticated account of the forms of power that combine to form certain types of states. This is his IEMP model (standing for Ideological, Economic, Military, and Political forms of power). Given that the first two volumes come to nearly 1,400 pages, I am not going to summarize his work!

Box 9.5. Mann's IEMP Model of Power Organization

Mann differentiates between three aspects of power:

1. Between distributive power and collective power, where distributive power is the power of *a* over *b* (for *a* to acquire more distributive power, *b* must lose some), and collective power is the joint power of actors (where *a* and *b* can co-operate to exploit nature or another actor, *c*).
2. Power may be extensive or intensive. Extensive power can organize large numbers of people over far-flung territories. Intensive power mobilizes a high level of commitment from participants.
3. Power may be authoritative or diffused. Authoritative power comprises willed commands by an actor and conscious obedience by subordinates. It is found most typically in military and political power organizations. Diffused power is not directly commanded; it spreads in a relatively spontaneous, unconscious, and decentred way. People are constrained to act in different ways but not by command of any particular person or organization. Diffused power is found most typically in ideological and economic power organizations.

Mann argues that the most effective exercise of power combines all these three elements. He argues that there are four sources of social power which together may determine the overall structure of societies. The four are

1. Ideological power derives from the human need to find ultimate meaning in life, to share norms and values, and to participate in aesthetic and ritual practices. Control over ideology brings general social power.
2. Economic power derives from the need to extract, transform, distribute, and consume the resources of nature. It is peculiarly powerful because it combines intensive co-operation with extensive circuits of distribution, exchange, and consumption. This provides a stable blend of intensive and extensive power and normally of authoritative and diffused power.
3. Military power is the social organization of physical force. It derives from the necessity of organized defence and the utility of aggression. Military power has both intensive and extensive aspects, and it can also organize people over large areas. Those who monopolize it can wield a degree of general social power.
4. Political power derives from the usefulness of territorial and centralized regulation. Political power means state power. It is essentially authoritative, commanded, and willed from a centre.

The struggle to control ideological, economic, military, and political power organizations provides the central drama of social development. Societies are structured primarily by entwined ideological, economic, military, and political power.

Source: Mann (1993: 6–10).

Suffice it to say that his painstaking study of the ways in which the various forms of power have combined in specific historical circumstances constitutes a major contribution to our thinking of how states have come into existence and about how they have related to the international political system. What I have done is to summarize his argument in Box 9.5.

I hope that this brief summary of historical sociology gives you an idea of its potential to shed light on how the state has taken the form that it has throughout history. It should make you think that the version of the state presented by **neo-realism** is very simple, but note also that there is a surprising overlap between the focus of neo-realism on war and the focus of historical sociology on how states, classes, and war interact.

Key Points

- **Historical sociology** has a long history, having been a subject of study for several centuries. Its central focus is with **how societies develop the forms that they do**.
- Contemporary historical sociology is concerned above all with how the state has developed since the Middle Ages. It is basically a study of the **interactions between states, classes, capitalism, and war.**
- **Charles Tilly** looks at how the three main kinds of state forms that existed at the end of the Middle Ages eventually converged on one form, namely the **national state**. He argues that the decisive reason was the ability of the national state to **fight wars.**
- **Michael Mann** has developed a powerful model of the sources of state power, known as the **IEMP Model.** This helps him show how the various

forms of state have taken the forms that they have.

- **Historical sociology** undercuts **neo-realism** because it shows that the state is not one functionally similar organization, but instead has altered over time. But, like neo-realism, it too is interested in war and therefore the two approaches have quite a bit in common.

Post-Modernism

Post-modernism has been a particularly influential theoretical development throughout all the social sciences in the last twenty years. It reached international theory in the mid-1980s, but could only have been said to have arrived in the last few years. It is fair to say that it is probably as popular a theoretical approach as any of the **reflectivist** theories discussed in this chapter. As Richard Devetak comments in his extremely useful summary of post-modernism, part of the difficulty is defining precisely what post-modernism is (1996*b*: 179). Frankly, there is far more to debate on this question of defining post-modernism than there is space for in this entire book! One useful definition is by Jean-Francois Lyotard, who writes that: 'Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity towards metanarratives' (1984: xxiv). The key word here is 'metanarrative', by which is meant a theory that claims clear foundations for making knowledge-claims (to use the jargon, it involves a foundational epistemology). What he means by this is that post-modernism is essentially concerned with deconstructing, and distrusting any account of human life that claims to have direct access to 'the truth'. Thus, Freudian psychoanalysis, Marxism, standpoint feminism, for example, are all deemed suspect because they claim to have uncovered some truth about the world. Post-modernists are also unhappy with critical theory, since they believe that it too is just another metanarrative.

Devetak helpfully analyses the key themes of post-modernism. I will look at two of the themes he discusses, the power–knowledge relationship, and the textual strategies used by post-modernists. Post-modern work on the **power–knowledge** relationship has been most influenced by the works of **Michel Foucault**. Central to Foucault's work has been a concern with the relationship between power and knowledge; note that this is also a key concern of **critical theorists**. Foucault is opposed to the notion (dominant in **rationalist** theories) that knowledge is immune from the workings of power. As noted above, this is a key assumption of **positivism**. Instead, Foucault argues that power in fact **produces knowledge**. All power requires knowledge and all knowledge relies on and reinforces existing power relations. Thus there is no such thing as 'truth', existing outside of power. To paraphrase Foucault, how can history have a truth if truth has a history? Truth is not something external to social settings, but is instead part of them. Accordingly, post-modernists want to look at what power relations are supported by 'truths' and knowledge-practices. Post-modern international theorists have used this insight to examine the 'truths' of international relations theory to see how the concepts and knowledge-claims that dominate the discipline in fact are highly contingent on specific power relations. Two recent examples are the work of Cynthia Weber (1995) and Jens Bartelson (1995) on the concept of sovereignty. In both cases the **concept** of sovereignty is revealed to be both historically variable (despite the attempts of mainstream scholars to imbue it artificially with a fixed meaning) and to be itself caught up in the **practice** of sovereignty by producing the discourse about it.

How do post-modernists study history in the light of this relationship between power and knowledge? Foucault's answer is the approach known as **genealogy**. In Box 9.6, I summarize a very good summary of this approach by Richard Ashley (1987), which gives you the main themes of a genealogical approach.

The central message of genealogy is that there is no such thing as truth, only regimes of truth. These reflect the ways in which through history both power and truth develop together in a mutually sustaining relationship. What this means is that statements about the social world are only 'true' within specific **discourses**. Accordingly, post-modernism is concerned with how some discourses and therefore some truths dominate others. Here, of course is exactly where power comes in. It is for this reason that post-modernists are opposed to any metanarratives, since they imply that there are conditions for establishing the truth or falsity of knowledge-claims that are not the product of any discourse, and thereby not the products of power.

Devetak's second theme of post-modernism concerns the **textual strategies** it uses. This is very

Box 9.6. Foucault's Notion of Genealogy

First, adopting a genealogical attitude involves a radical shift in one's analytical focus. It involves a shift away from an interest in uncovering the structures of history and towards an interest in understanding the movement and clashes of historical practices that would impose or resist structure. . . . with this shift . . . social enquiry is increasingly disposed to find its focus in the posing of 'how' questions, not 'what' questions. How . . . are structures of history produced, differentiated, reified, and transformed? How . . . are fields of practice pried open, bounded and secured? How . . . are regions of silence established?

Second, having refused any notion of universal truth or deep identities transcending differences, a genealogical attitude is disposed to comprehend all history, including the production of order, in terms of the endless power political clash of multiple wills. Only a single drama is ever staged in this non-place, the endlessly repeated play of dominations. Practices . . . are to be understood to contain their own strategies, their own political technologies . . . for the disciplining of plural historical practices in the production of historical modes of domination.

Third, a genealogical attitude disposes one to be especially attentive to the historical emergence, bounding, conquest, and administration of social spaces . . . one might think, for example, of divisions of territory and populations among nation states . . . one might also think of the separation of spheres of politics and economics, the distinction between high and low politics, the differentiation of public and private spaces, the line of demarcation between domestic and international, the disciplinary division between science and philosophy, the boundary between the social and the natural, or the separation of the normal and legitimate from the abnormal and criminal . . . a genealogical posture entails a readiness to approach a field of practice historically, as an historically emergent and always contested product of multiple practices . . . as such, a field of practice . . . is seen as a field of clashes, a battlefield . . . one is supposed to look for the strategies, techniques, and rituals of power by which multiple themes, concepts, narratives, and practices are excluded, silenced, dispersed, recombined, or given new or reverse emphases, thereby to privilege some elements over others, impose boundaries, and discipline practice in a manner producing just this normalised division of practical space.

Fourth, what goes for the production and disciplining of social space goes also for the production and disciplining of subjects. From a genealogical standpoint there are no subjects, no fully formed identical egos, having an existence prior to practice and then implicated in power political struggles. Like fields of practice, subjects emerge in history . . . as such, the subject is itself a site of political power contest and ceaselessly so.

Fifth, a genealogical posture does not sustain an interest in those noble enterprises—such as philosophy, religion, positive social science, or the utopian political crusade—that would embark on searches for the hidden essences, the universal truths, the profound insights into the secret identity that transcends difference . . . from a genealogical standpoint . . . they are instead resituated right on the surface of political life. They are seen as political practice intimately engaged in the interpretation, production, and normalisation of modes of imposed order, modes of domination. They are seen as means by which practices are disciplined and domination advances in history.

Source: Ashley (1987: 409–11).

complicated, but the main claim is that, following **Derrida**, the very way in which we construct the social world is textual. For Derrida (1976) the world is constituted like a text in the sense that interpreting the world reflects the concepts and structures of language, what he terms the textual interplay at work. Derrida has two main ways of exposing these textual interplays, **deconstruction** and **double reading**. Deconstruction is based on the idea that seemingly stable and natural concepts and relations within language are in fact artificial constructs, arranged hierarchically in that in the case of opposites in language one term is always privileged over the other. Therefore, deconstruction is a way of showing how all theories and discourses rely on artificial stabilities produced by the use of seemingly objective and natural oppositions in language (rich/poor, good/bad, powerful/powerless, right/wrong). Double reading is Derrida's way of showing how these stabilizations operate by subjecting the text to two readings, the first is a repetition of the dominant reading to show how it achieves its coherence, the second points to the internal tensions within a text that result from the use of seemingly natural stabilizations. The aim is not to come to a 'correct' or even 'one' reading of a text, but instead to show how there is always more than one reading of any text. In international theory, **Richard Ashley** (1988) has performed exactly such a double reading of the concept of anarchy by providing first a reading of the anarchy problematique according to the traditional literature, and then a second reading that shows how the seemingly natural opposition between anarchy and sovereignty

that does the work in the first reading is in fact a false opposition. By radically disrupting the first reading Ashley shows just how arbitrary is the 'truth' of the traditional assumptions made about anarchy and the kind of logic of state action that it requires. In a similar move **Rob Walker** (1993) looks at the construction of the tradition of **realism** and shows how this is only possible by ignoring the major nuances and complexities within the thoughts of the key thinkers of this tradition, such as Machiavelli and Hobbes.

As you can imagine, such a theoretical position has been very controversial in the literature. Many members of the mainstream think that post-modernism has nothing to say about the 'real' world, and that it is merely playing with words. However, it seems clear to me that post-modernism is in fact taking apart the very concepts and methods of our thinking. It helps us think about the conditions under which we are able to theorize about world politics; and to many, post-modernism is the most appropriate theory for a globalized world.

Key Points

- **Lyotard** defines **post-modernism** as **incredulity towards metanarratives**, meaning that it denies the possibility of foundations for establishing the truth of statements existing outside of a **discourse**.
- **Foucault** focuses on the **power–knowledge relationship** which sees the two as mutually constituted. It implies that there can be no truth outside of **regimes of truth**. How can history have a truth if truth has a history?
- **Foucault** proposes a **genealogical** approach to look at history, and this approach uncovers how certain regimes of truth have dominated others.
- **Derrida** argues that the world is like a text in that it cannot simply be grasped, but has to be interpreted. He looks at how texts are constructed, and proposes two main tools to enable us to see how arbitrary are the seemingly 'natural' oppositions of language. These are **deconstruction** and **double reading**.
- **Post-modern** approaches are attacked by the mainstream for being too theoretical and not enough concerned with the 'real' world; but post-modernists reply that in the social world there is no such thing as the 'real' world in the sense of a reality that is not interpreted by us.

Bridging the Gap: Social Constructivism

This development in international relations theory promises much, since its great appeal is that it sits precisely at the intersection between the two sets of approaches noted above, that is **between both rationalist and reflectivist approaches**. It does this because it deals with the same features of world politics as are central to both the **neo-realist** and the **neo-liberal** components of **rationalism**, and yet is centrally concerned with both the meanings actors give to their actions and the identity of these actors, each of which is a central theme of **reflectivist** approaches. The three main proponents of this view are Kratochwil (1989), Onuf (1989) and Wendt (1992). I am going to concentrate on Wendt simply because his work has been enormously influential in developing the **social constructivist** position. His 1992 article 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics' has probably been cited in the professional literature more than any other article in the last decade. Its title also neatly sums up exactly what is the central claim of social constructivism. Let me be absolutely clear at the outset, I do not think that social constructivism can deliver what it claims, but equally I am sure that it promises to be one of the most important theoretical developments of recent decades; the reason is that if it could deliver what it promises then it would be the dominant theory in the discipline, since it could relate to all other approaches on their own terms, whereas at the moment there is virtually no contact between **rationalist** and **reflectivist** theories since they do not share the same view of how to build knowledge. If Wendt is right then social costructivists can

debate the effects of anarchy and the relative/absolute gains issue with the **rationalists**, and at the same time discuss with post-modernists, feminists, historical sociologists, critical theorists, and normative theorists the meanings attached to action and, crucially, the processes by which the identities of the actors are formed.

Before we get into Wendt's argument, look at the contents of Box 9.7, which is a quote from the then President of the International Studies Association (ISA, which is the main, US-based, professional organization for teachers and researchers of international relations), Robert Keohane. The quote comes from his presidential address to the ISA in 1988.

Box 9.7. Robert Keohane's View of the Rationalist–Reflectivist Debate

My chief argument in this essay is that students of international institutions should direct their attention to the relative merits of two approaches, the rationalistic, and the reflective. Until we understand the strengths and weaknesses of each, we will be unable to design research strategies that are sufficiently multi-faceted to encompass our subject-matter, and our empirical work will suffer accordingly . . . indeed, the greatest weakness of the reflective school lies not in deficiencies in their critical arguments but in the lack of a clear reflective research program that could be employed by students of world politics. Waltzian neo-realism has such a research program; so does neo-liberal institutionalism . . . until the reflective scholars or others sympathetic to their arguments have delineated such a research program and shown in particular studies that it can illuminate important issues of world politics they will remain on the margins of the field, largely invisible to the preponderance of empirical researchers . . . reflective approaches are less well specified as theories: their advocates have been more adept at pointing out what is omitted in rationalistic theory than in developing theories of their own with *a priori* content. Supporters of this research program need to develop testable theories, and to be explicit about their scope . . . above all, students of world politics who are sympathetic to this position need to carry out systematic empirical investigations, guided by their ideas. Without such detailed studies, it will be impossible to evaluate their research program. Eventually, we may hope for a synthesis between the rationalistic and reflective approaches.

Source: Keohane (1989: 161, 173–4).

I hope that you can see what Keohane is saying: he is arguing that unless the reflectivists can develop 'testable hypotheses' then they will be marginalized in the study of world politics. The central thing to note is that this challenge is one made according to the rules for generating knowledge that rationalists accept **but that reflectivists do not accept**. This soon can get very complicated, but the straightforward version of it is that the challenge issued by Keohane is essentially a **positivist** one, and it is precisely positivism that the reflectivists reject. Not surprisingly, rationalists and reflectivists do not tend to talk to one another very much since they do not share a common language. Exactly the identities that rationalists take as given become the starting point for the research project of the reflectivists; accordingly, their versions of the key issues in world politics are nothing like those of the rationalists. There really is very little contact between the two positions and they resemble rival camps, publishing in different journals and going to different conferences. I say all of this simply to indicate just how much is at stake if Wendt and the constructivists can indeed bridge the gap between rationalists and reflectivists: they—the rationalists or the reflectivists—would be at the centre of the discipline. Or to put it another way, constructivists would be the acceptable face of rationalism for reflectivists and the acceptable face of reflectivism for rationalists! If Wendt can establish that his position is capable of serving as the point of contact then he will have created a theoretical synthesis of the various, previously incompatible, positions of the discipline. Wendt's central claim is shown in Box 9.8.

I want to run through his argument by summarizing it in a number of points. As I read it his argument progresses in the following way:

1. He sees the **neo-realist/neo-liberal** debate as central to international relations theory, and being concerned with the issue of whether state action is influenced more by system structure (neo-realism) or by the processes interactions and learning of institutions (neo-liberalism). (391)
2. Both **neo-realism** and **neo-liberalism** are **rationalist** theories, based on rational choice theory and taking the identities and interests of actors as given; for rationalists, processes such as those of institutions affect the behaviour but not the identities and interests of actors. For both

Box 9.8. Wendt's View of the Social Constructivist Project

My objective in this article is to build a bridge between these two traditions (rationalism and reflectivism) . . . by developing a constructivist argument . . . on behalf of the liberal claim that international institutions can transform state identities and interests . . . my strategy for building this bridge would be to argue against the neo-realist claim that self-help is given by anarchic structure exogenously to process . . . I argue that self-help and power politics do not follow logically or causally from anarchy, and if today we find ourselves in a self-help world this is due to process, not structure. There is no 'logic' of anarchy apart from the practices that create and instantiate one structure of identities and interests rather than another; structure has no existence or causal powers apart from process. Self-help and power politics are institutions, not essential features of anarchy. *Anarchy is what states make of it.*

Source: Wendt (1992: 394–5).

theories, the actors are self-interested states. (391–2)

3. There exist social theories that do not take interests and identities as given, and these are known as **reflectivist** or **constructivist** theories, and, whatever their differences, they all focus on how inter-subjective practices between actors result in identities and interests being formed in the processes of interaction rather than being formed prior to interaction. We are what we are by how we interact rather than being what we are regardless of how we interact. (393–4)
4. Whereas **neo-realists** treat the self-help nature of anarchy as **the** logic of the system, Wendt argues that collective meanings define the structures which organize our actions, and actors acquire their interests and identities by participating in such collective meanings. Identities and interests are relational and are defined as we define situations. Institutions are relatively stable sets of identities and interests. Self-help is one such institution, and is therefore not the only way of combining definitions of identities and interests in a condition of anarchy. (395–9)
5. Wendt thinks that we assume too much if we think that states have given identities and interests prior to interaction. There **is no such thing as an automatic security dilemma for states;** such a claim, or one that says that states are in the situation of individuals in Rousseau's famous 'stag-hunt', presupposes that states have acquired selfish interests and identities prior to their interactions. Instead, self-help emerges only out of interaction between states. (400–4)
6. If states find themselves in a self-help situation then this is because their practices made it that way, and if the practices change then so will the inter-subjective knowledge that constitutes the system. This does not imply, however, that self-help, like any other social system, can be easily changed, since once constituted it becomes a social fact that reinforces certain forms of behaviour and punishes others, and it becomes part of the self-identity of actors. Inter-subjective understandings therefore may be self-perpetuating. (405–11)
7. The fact that specific formations of interests and identities may be self-perpetuating does not mean that they cannot be changed. Wendt gives three examples of alternatives to the self-help version of international relations that he has painted. These are by practices of sovereignty, by an evolution of co-operation, and by critical strategic practice. (412–22)
8. The future research agenda for international relations should be to look at the relationship between what actors **do** and what they **are**. In other words the discipline should look at how state actors define social structures such as the international system. Wendt thinks that this is where neo-liberals and reflectivists can work together to offer an account of international relations that competes with the neo-realist account by enquiring into how specific empirical practices relate to the creation and re-creation of identities and interests. (422–5)

In other words, the identities and interests that rationalists take as given and which they see as resulting in the international politics we observe are not in fact given but are things we have created. Having created them we could create them otherwise; it would be difficult because we have all internalized the 'way the world is', but we could make it otherwise.

Now, this is a very powerful argument, but I want to argue that it will not serve as the bridge between **rationalists** and **reflectivists** in the way that Wendt hopes. There are five reasons for this.

The **first** is that Wendt is in fact not really anything like as much of a constructivist as he implies, and certainly not enough to satisfy **reflectivists**. This is because he defines interests and identities very narrowly. Post-modernists, as we have seen, certainly want to say something much more radical about identity than does Wendt, who (I think) is firmly on the rationalist side of the divide, and that means he is not really a reflectivist. Thus his version of constructivism is defined from this perspective. He is in fact a very 'thin' constructivist, and not the kind of 'thick' or 'deep' constructivist that we find amongst the reflectivists.

Second, Wendt certainly accepts that the most important actors in world politics are states, and that their dominance will continue. Indeed, he is clear that his research project resembles that of neo-realism: 'to that extent, I am a statist and a realist' (424). As you will quickly see, this is much more restricted a definition of world politics than the one that the reflectivists would want to propose.

Third, although Wendt says he wants to bring together neo-liberals and reflectivists (constructivists), it is clear to me that he is not bringing together two groups that share the same view of how to construct knowledge; to put it simply, the **rationalists** are essentially **positivists** and the **reflectivists** are essentially **post-positivists**. The latter have a very different idea of how to construct knowledge from that held by the former. In plain language, they cannot be combined together because they have mutually exclusive assumptions.

Fourth, Wendt's structures (institutions) are really rather specific kinds of structures. Unlike materialist theories such as Marxism or feminism, they are composed of ideas. This means that he sees social structures as very 'light' things, comprising the ideas that actors have in their heads. Yet many other social theories would want to argue that social structures reflect strong material interests. Note that there is no place in his account for structures such as capitalism or patriarchy. In other words, many theorists think that ideational structures (Wendt's only form of structure) reflect underlying material interests; we think certain things because it is in our interests to do so. The central point here is that his structures are not material enough, being composed only of ideas.

Finally, Wendt thinks that identities are created in the process of interaction, but critics point out that we do not come to interactions without some pre-existing identity. Rather than our identities being created via interaction our identities are in part prior to that interaction. Think for example of your identity as a woman or a man; although it is clear that some aspects of this are constructed in the ways in which you relate to others via interaction, it is equally the case that some aspects of your identity exist prior to any given interaction. This means that your identity will cause you to construct the other parties to interaction in certain ways. There is never a first encounter. Again, note that this is really saying that his idea of identity is a very light or thin one.

All of these points make me think that Wendt does not quite pull it off. The main reason is that despite his genuine interest in both sets of theories he is, when pushed, revealed as a rationalist, and is actually more of a realist that he initially claims to be. Thus he is not in fact sitting between the rationalists and reflectivists, trying to bring them together, but is in fact on one side of the fence trying to talk to those on the other side; but being on the rationalist side of the fence means that although he uses many of the same terms and concepts as reflectivists, he defines them **rather more narrowly and from the opposite position in the debate about how to construct theories**. But please note that many think that he does manage to bring the two approaches together, and you will want to make up your own mind.

Key Points

- **Social constructivism** offers the prospect of bridging the gap between **rationalist** and **reflectivist** theories.
- There are many constructivists but the best example is **Alexander Wendt** and his 1992 article 'Anarchy is what states make of it'.
- Wendt's attempt is important because **Robert Keohane** pointed out that unless the reflectivists could come up with a research programme then they would remain on the margins of the discipline. Wendt offers such a research programme because he promises to bring neo-liberals and reflectivists together.
- Wendt's key claim is that international anarchy is not fixed, and does not automatically involve the self-interested state behaviour that rationalists see as built into the system. Instead he thinks that

anarchy could take on several different forms because the selfish identities and interests assumed by rationalists are in fact the products of interaction and are not prior to it.

- There are several important objections to Wendt's argument. The main ones are that he is really a rationalist and a realist, so that he is not in fact bringing together rationalism and reflectivism, but is instead defining constructivism in a very narrow way, one that is acceptable to rationalists, but which would not be accepted by reflectivists who want a far deeper definition of identity and interest than he provides. Moreover, Wendt sees states as the 'givens' of world politics, but why should this be so instead of classes, or companies or ethnicities or genders? Finally, note that his view of identity is an ideational one, whereas many argue that material interests determine our ideas and therefore our ideational structures. In short, his account is really much more traditional and rationalist than at first seems to be the case.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to summarize the three main areas of development in contemporary international relations theory. As you can see I have my own views as to which of these three main theoretical positions is preferable, but that is of far less importance than your own views on which perspective best explains world politics in this age of **globalization**. Each of the three positions has clear strengths, and probably the best place for you to start thinking about which is most useful is for you to cast your mind back to the Introduction and the first chapter; in each of these chapters we made a lot of points about globalization, and in the Introduction in particular we highlighted some pluses and minuses of globalization. Crucially, you now need to think about which of the contemporary theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter gives you the best overview of the globalized world we have been discussing.

Clearly, the **rationalist** perspective, and particularly the **neo-neo synthesis** dominates the professional literature in the discipline of International Relations. That is the theoretical debate you will find in most of the journals, particularly the US-based ones. It focuses on the kinds of international political relations that concern many Western governments, particularly the debate about the future security structure of the international system. It is also very strong at looking at economic foreign policy, as the discussions on the relative gains/absolute gains issue suggests. But do you think that it is wide enough a perspective to capture what are to you the most important features of world politics? You might, on the one hand, think that we need theories that define the political realm rather more widely, so as to take in identity, economics, ethnicity, culture, and the like. On the other hand you might think that the most important features of world politics remain those that have dominated for the last two thousand years, namely the problems of war and peace, and of international stability. If you think this then you will probably prefer the rationalist theoretical agenda, and you will certainly do so if you think that these problems are 'natural', that is to say that they are features outside our control in the same way as the concerns of the natural scientist relate to a 'real' world that exists whatever we think about it.

The **reflectivist** theories obviously differ enormously with regard to what they are reflective about. As noted above they are really very different, but I put them together in one category because they are all rejecting the central concerns of rationalism. Do you think that any one of them gives you a better understanding of the main features of world politics than that provided by the rationalist mainstream? Or do you think that they are not really dealing with what are 'obviously' the most important features of world politics? The real problem with reflectivist theories is that they do not add up to one theoretical position in the way that the rationalist theories do. In some important ways, if you are a feminist then you do not necessarily agree with post-modernists or critical theorists. More fundamentally still, you cannot be **both** a critical theorist and a post-modernist! In short, the collection of theories gathered together under the reflectivist label have a set of mutually exclusive

assumptions and there is no easy way to see the theories being combined. Some combinations are possible (a feminist post-modernism, or a normative critical theory) but the one thing that is clearly correct is that the whole lot cannot be added together to form one theoretical agenda in the way that the neo-neo debate serves on the rationalist side. Moreover, the reflectivists do not have the same idea of how to construct knowledge as the rationalists, and therefore they are unable to respond to Keohane's challenge for them to come up with testable hypotheses to compare with those provided by the rationalist position. This means that the prospect of a rationalist–reflectivist debate is very low. The two sides simply see world politics in very different ways. Which side (or which subdivision) do you think explains world politics most effectively?

All of this makes **social constructivism** particularly attractive since it offers the prospect of a *via media*, a middle way that represents a synthesis between rationalism and reflectivism. As discussed above, this position, most clearly associated with Wendt, looks very promising to many, and I will predict that it will become one of the main research themes in international relations in the years to come. But I also noted the problems associated with Wendt's position. Centrally, there is the difficulty that he is not really a reflectivist at all, but, rather, is a rationalist (and a statist and a realist!), and thus his attempt to bridge the gap is always going to be unsuccessful because he is actually not sitting between the two positions, but instead is on one side. This raises the question of whether you think the social constructivist project is the way forward for international theory. Do you think that the two positions can be combined? Or are their views of how to construct knowledge so different that they cannot be combined? The trouble of course is that it sounds eminently sensible to say that the two positions of rationalism and reflectivism need to be combined, and the focus of the neo-liberals on institutions and learning makes it possible to see a way of linking up with reflectivists who focus on identity and the construction of actors. But this poses the ultimate question in social theory, namely whether there are always going to be two ways of theorizing the social world: one an inside account focusing on the meanings that actors attach to their actions; the other an outsider account, which sees the beliefs of actors as the product of material interests. I cannot pretend to answer that question, and this is not because of the space available in this chapter; rather this is such a hotly disputed question in all the social sciences that the only honest thing to do is to say that there is no easy or definitive answer. What I will say is that the answer to it will depend in part on how you see the social world and on what kinds of features of world politics matter to you.

I hope that this chapter has given you a good overview of the main developments in contemporary international theory. My main hope is that you will take from what I have written the thought that there is no one theory of world politics that is right simply because it deals with the **truth**. I also hope that you will be sceptical any time any theorist tells you that s/he is dealing with 'reality' or with 'how the world really is', since I think that this is where the values of the theorist (or lecturer, or chapter writer!) can be smuggled in through the back door. I think that world politics in an era of globalization is very complex and there are a variety of theories that try and account for different parts of that complexity. You should work out which theories both explain best the things you are concerned with and also offer you the chance to reflect on their own assumptions. One thing is for sure: there are enough theories to choose between and they paint very different world politics. Which theory paints the picture that you feel best captures the most salient features of world politics?

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think that the three theories involved in the inter-paradigm debate cover all the main issues in contemporary world politics?
2. Why do the post-positivist theories reject positivism?

3. What does it mean to say that the main difference between theories is whether they are explanatory or constitutive?
4. Are the issues dealt with in the neo-neo debate the central ones in today's globalized world?
5. Do you agree with Robert Keohane when he says that the reflectivist approaches need to develop testable hypotheses, to compete with those provided by rationalism, if reflectivism is to be taken seriously as a theoretical approach?
6. Is normative theory anything more than an optional extra for the study of world politics?
7. Do you find J. Ann Tickner's reformulation of Hans Morgenthau's six principles of realism a convincing demonstration of the need to include female perspectives on world politics?
8. Do you agree with Robert Cox that theory is always for someone and for some purpose?
9. What are the main implications of historical sociology for the study of world politics?
10. What might adopting a genealogical approach, such as that proposed by Richard Ashley, do for our understanding of world politics?
11. Do you think that Alexander Wendt's social constructivism succeeds in bridging the gap between rationalism and reflectivism?
12. Which of the main alternatives discussed in this chapter do you think offers the best account of world politics? Why?

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

There are many books dealing with contemporary international theory. A very good survey is provided by S. Burchill and A. Linklater *et al. Theories of International Relations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996). A more dated but very good coverage of the three theories of the inter-paradigm debate is P. R. Viotti and M. V. Kauppi *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism* 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1993). For two sets of essays on contemporary theory see K. Booth and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) and S. Smith, K. Booth and M. Zalewski (eds.), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). On the neo-neo debate see D. Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) and C. Kegley (ed.), *Controversies in International Relations Theory: Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge* (New York: St Martin's, 1995). On reflectivist approaches, see, for normative theory, C. Brown *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) and M. Frost *Ethics in International Relations: A Constitutive Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); for feminist theory see M. Zalewski 'Feminist Theory and International Relations', in M. Bowker and R. Brown (eds.), *From Cold War to Collapse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), C. Enloe *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (London: Pandora, 1989) and *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1993), and J. J. Pettman *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996); for critical theory see R. Cox with Sinclair, T., *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and A. Linklater *Beyond Realism and Marxism* (London: Macmillan, 1990); for historical sociology see M. Mann *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. i (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. ii (Cambridge

University Press, 1993) and D. Smith *The Rise of Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); for post-modernism, see R. B. J. Walker *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and J. George *Discourses of Global Politics* (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner, 1994). On social constructivism see A. Wendt 'Anarchy is What States Make of it', *International Organization*, 46: 2 (1992), F. Kratochwil *Rules, Norms, and Decisions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and N. Onuf *A World of our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).